Lived Ethos in Norwegian America: Rhetorical Education and Practice

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Erika Claire Strandjord, M.A.
Graduate Program in English

The Ohio State University
2013

Dissertation Committee:
Nan Johnson, Advisor
Dorothy Noyes
James Fredal
Elizabeth Weiser
Abstract

The rhetorical concept of ethos describes how people create character, authority, and identity in persuasive texts and acts. While ethos is usually understood as constructed in the moment, this study extends the scope of ethos to encompass everyday actions. Cultivating an ethos that is imitated and lived out in daily life and not just in textual productions means that the ethos becomes what this study calls *lived ethos*. This study uses rhetoric and folklore scholarship to theorize lived ethos and the rhetorical education that teaches this ethos. Furthermore, this study analyzes the rhetorical education presented by three institutions in the Norwegian-American community in order to examine how an education in lived ethos functions in the community.

Chapter two explores how the fraternal organization Sons of Norway selected elements of the Norwegian and Norwegian-American past to create an admirable and imitable ethos for the present. Using archival materials that from the late years of World War I through the end of World War II, this chapter argues that Sons of Norway used exemplars to create a more-than-American identity that Norwegian Americans could generally identify with and also presented members with exemplars that spoke to the different interests and demographics in the community.

Chapter three proposes a new site of rhetorical exploration: handcrafts. The work of two instructors, Harley Refsal and Kate Martinson, at the Vesterheim Museum in Decorah, Iowa demonstrates how handcraft education persuades students to take up
Norwegian-American identifications. Martinson and Refsal use historical and contemporary exemplars, examples of craft, and the teaching of practice to persuade students to take up practices like woodcarving and nålbinding (a netting technique) as an expression of a Norwegian-American ethos. The learning and practicing of a handcraft leads to an ethos that is lived out in the everyday practice of the handcraft.

Chapter four examines how Old World Wisconsin, an outdoor museum focused on immigrant history, persuades people to identify with their own immigrant history through the use of imaginative empathy, engaging the senses, and taking action within historical environments. Two Norwegian immigrant farmhouses and a school give Norwegian-American visitors a chance to forge identifications with the histories of inequality, struggle, and tradition portrayed at the sites. Norwegian-American visitors create a deeper empathetic tie to the past and can reflect on how present-day practices and everyday life are tied to the past.

Lived ethos links individuals to communities by bringing the past into the present and by persuading community members to see everyday practices as expressions of identity. Lived ethos invites scholars to consider how everyday rhetorical acts shape the world around us and lead to complex identifications that cannot be reduced to a single label like “American.” The move to a more complicated understanding of ethos as it is lived in daily life supports an understanding of individuals and communities as complicated, shifting, and most importantly, mutually sustaining. Lived ethos enables a
rich understanding of identity and rhetorical strategies that use the past to shape the present and open doors for analysis, reflection, and pedagogy.
Dedication

To my parents and my sister, my original (and favorite) exemplars.

_Mange tusen takk._
Acknowledgments

This project never would have happened without the support of many different people and institutions. My thanks first to the staff of the sites where I conducted research. Jeff Sauve and Gary De Krey at the Norwegian-American Historical Association archives in Northfield, Minnesota provided invaluable assistance in locating historical materials produced by Sons of Norway. My thanks also to NAHA for allowing the use of images of Sons of Norway texts. Kate Martinson, Darlene Fossum-Martin, Charlie Langton, and Harley Refsal all generously gave their time to make my research at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum a success. Their interest in and enthusiasm for my project reminded me that my work matters beyond the academy. Finally, thanks to the curatorial staff at Old World Wisconsin who took time from their busy schedules to provide interviews and training materials that gave me a behind-the-scenes look at the museum and its operations. Without the support of everyone at these sites this project could not have happened.

Many thanks are due to my committee. Nan Johnson knew when to push, when to question, and when to say “go for it!” She has influenced me as a scholar and a teacher, and I hope to follow her example. The excellent reading suggestions and insightful criticism that Dorothy Noyes gave added a new and necessary dimension to my work as a rhetorician. James Fredal introduced me to the study of rhetoric at the graduate level, and his enthusiasm for the subject and support of my work made graduate school more
enjoyable. For her enthusiasm about my project alone Elizabeth Weiser deserves thanks, but her ability to see the arguments I was trying to make in early drafts of chapters helped me more than I can say.

Without Elizabeth Brewer and Deborah Kuzawa the early chapters of this project would have been much harder to write. Their support, comments, and conversation reminded me that scholarship should be an interesting discussion that invites people to contribute. Julia Voss, Jen Herman, and Katherine DeLuca provided wonderful encouragement and aid during the final weeks of writing and revising. Annie Mendenhall and Paige Banaji deserve thanks for the many intangible contributions they made. Taylor came to the rescue more than once, and his unflagging support of and confidence in my abilities made all the difference.

Finally, without my parents and my sister this project never would have happened. Thank you for introducing me to Norwegian America even though you had no idea that those “heritage trips” would end up inspiring this project. Thanks also for being with me and cheering me on every step of the way. Every page of this dissertation is for you, but I will not make you read it.
Vita

2002............................................................River Valley High School

2006............................................................B.A. English, Luther College

2008............................................................M.A. English, The Ohio State University

2009 to 2010
Graduate Administrative Associate,
Department of English, The Ohio State
University

2010 to present
Graduate Teaching Associate, Department
of English, The Ohio State University

Fields of Study

Major Field: English
Table of Contents

Abstract ......................................................................................................................... ii
Dedication ...................................................................................................................... v
Acknowledgments ......................................................................................................... vi
List of Tables ................................................................................................................ x
List of Figures ................................................................................................................. xi
Introductory Anecdote ................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 1: Lived Ethos and Rhetorical Education .......................................................... 4
  Learning and Living Ethos: Rhetorical Education and its Effects ............................... 12
    Usable Pasts and Exemplars in Lived Ethos ............................................................. 24
    The Role of Tradition in Lived Ethos ................................................................. 35
    The Education in and Expression of Lived Ethos through Practice ...................... 50
    The Results of Lived Ethos .................................................................................. 59
  Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 67

Chapter 2: “To maintain and further interest in everything that is good and noble”: 
  History, Exemplars, and Lived Ethos in Sons of Norway, 1918-1946 ......................... 71
    Sons of Norway: History and Ethos in New Contexts ........................................ 74
    The Usable Past: Crafting Ethos in Times of Change ......................................... 88
    Customizable Exemplars: Norwegian National Heroes, Workers, and Women .... 122
  Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 139

Chapter 3: Lived Ethos and Handcraft Traditions: Rhetorical Education at Vesterheim
  Norwegian-American Museum ................................................................................. 142
    Handcrafts at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum .................................. 148
    Exemplars of Lived Ethos, Exemplars of Craft .................................................... 156
    History, Examples, and Practice as Rhetorical Education .................................... 171
  Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 202

Chapter 4: Living History and Lived Ethos: Rhetorical Education at Old World Wisconsin
 ................................................................. 206
  Old World Wisconsin as an Institution of Rhetorical Education ............................ 211
  Complicating Ethos through History ..................................................................... 222
  Constructing a Norwegian-American Ethos at Old World Wisconsin ..................... 238
    Imaginative Empathy as Paths to Ethos .............................................................. 241
    Engaging the Senses as Rhetorical Education ...................................................... 250
    Action as Rhetorical Education .......................................................................... 260
  Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 271

Afterword: Reflections on Living and Teaching Ethos .............................................. 274

Bibliography ............................................................................................................... 286
List of Tables

Table 1: Classes offered at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum in 2012. ........ 153
List of Figures

Figure 1: 1920 Sons of Norway Convention Program cover. Courtesy of Norwegian-American Historical Association (NAHA), Northfield, Minn.  .......................................................... 93

Figure 2: 1933 Leif Erikson Festival Program cover. Courtesy of NAHA, Northfield, Minn. .......................................................... 103

Figure 3: Henrik Ibsen as he appears in Why Sons of Norway? Courtesy of NAHA, Northfield, Minn. .......................................................... 125

Figure 4: Andrew Furuseth as he appears in Why Sons of Norway? Courtesy of NAHA, Northfield, Minn. .......................................................... 129

Figure 5: Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum main building in Decorah, Iowa. Photograph by author. .......................................................... 144

Figure 6: The Westby-Torgerson Education Center in downtown Decorah. Photograph by author. .......................................................... 150

Figure 7: A selection of nåler for nålbinding. Nåler range from about five to fifteen dollars in cost. Photograph by author. .......................................................... 168

Figure 8: A nålbinding hand puppet made by the author for the author's niece. Photograph by author. .......................................................... 193

Figure 9: A walking and tram path winds through fields toward the Finnish area of Old World Wisconsin. Photograph by author. .......................................................... 206

Figure 10: The Pleasant Ridge Church at Old World Wisconsin. Photograph by author. .......................................................... 225

Figure 11: The Knud Fossebrekke house. Photograph by author. .......................................................... 230

Figure 12: The Anders Kvaale house. Photograph by author. .......................................................... 233

Figure 13: The Raspberry School. Photograph by author. .......................................................... 236

Figure 14: The spinning wheel and loom for making linen at the Schulz farm. Photograph by author. .......................................................... 251

Figure 15: Socks made from Merino and Cotswold wool for visitors to compare when they visit the Kvaale house. Photograph by author. .......................................................... 257

Figure 16: Heirloom seeds for sale in the Old World Wisconsin gift shop. Photograph by author. .......................................................... 263

Figure 17: Flatbrod and the utensils needed to make it at the Fossebrekke house. Photograph by author. .......................................................... 265

Figure 18: Detail of cutwork and embroidery on a hardangersøm ornamental mat designed and made by author. Photograph by author. .......................................................... 282

Figure 19: The author works on her nålbinding. Photograph courtesy of Katherine DeLuca. .......................................................... 285
Introductory Anecdote

This past December I made the lefse for Christmas Eve dinner on my own. True, my parents started the potatoes boiling on the stove in the morning, but they both had work to do after that. I riced the potatoes, put them out to cool, mixed, rolled, and baked the dough on my own. Five years ago this would have been impossible. I was still mastering the skills necessary to make lefse without getting frustrated after fifteen rounds and quitting despite the pans full of riced potatoes still waiting to be used. This year, however, I knew what had to be done and how to pace myself so that I could use all five pounds of potatoes and still enjoy the experience. Wearing comfortable clothes and listening to the Garrison Keillor collection *Church People: The Lutherans of Lake Wobegon*, I moved between mixing small batches of dough, rolling out thin rounds of lefse, and baking them on the round, flat griddle set over newspapers to protect the countertop from the heat. As each round came off the griddle, pale with deep brown patches where the lefse had stayed in contact with the hot surface, I carried it with a lefse turner to the cooling rack and covered it with a dishtowel to keep the fresh round from drying out. My father came out from the study from time to time to chat. At one point he offered to take a turn at the griddle, but after he got distracted by our conversation and nearly burned a few rounds he was reassigned to conversational duties only.

Even though my mother was not at home for this year's lefse making, she was
present in each of my actions. She taught me everything I know about lefse. My mother learned how to make lefse at Five Points Lutheran Church, a rural church in south-central Wisconsin that serves a Norwegian-American farming community. There is no town, just the church sitting on a high ridge surrounded by fields and forest. Each year the church holds a lutefisk supper, and when my parents lived there before I was born some of the older women decided that it was time to teach younger generations how to make lefse. The women did this in part to pass on the tradition and also to get more and younger help with making the many rounds needed to feed the large crowd that always turned up for the supper. In an act that has become family legend, one year my mother made two hundred rounds of lefse in two days in preparation for the lutefisk dinner, a feat that makes my own thirty rounds this past Christmas seem nothing in comparison.

My mother and I still use the recipe that she got from Borghild, one of the Five Points parishioners. It is simpler than many lefse recipes, calling only for riced potatoes, butter, and flour. When my mother taught my sister and me how to make lefse she told us stories of Borghild. Borghild had come over from Norway to live with her husband on a rural Wisconsin farm, and while she was never well off, she fondly recalled Wisconsin winters during which young folks would build a ski jump and ski off of it for entertainment. Borghild, my mother said, was not vain about her lefse and had supported Five Points Lutheran's lefse class in opposition to some parishioners who insisted that a person had to grow up making lefse in order to do it correctly. Coming from a family of German and Polish descent, my mother had never had a chance to learn about lefse as a child, and so Borghild's support made my mother feel welcome in the community and in
this new tradition.

Now I carry that tradition with me and it is a part of my own lived ethos as a Norwegian American. My mother's blood status as non-Norwegian does not matter because she performs the ethos so well that it is a part of her now and seems as natural on her as it does on me. Our shared lived ethos as lefse makers and Norwegian Americans gives us cultural and well as familial bonds. When I take it upon myself to teach a younger person how to make lefse, I will pass on the stories of Borghild and my mother in order to keep those ties going into the future. Even though I only make lefse once or twice a year, it is an important part of my ethos as a Norwegian American. By living out the actions and attitudes necessary for making lefse, I simultaneously express and create that ethos. Making lefse is also only one facet of my own lived ethos as a Norwegian American. My apartment is decorated with Scandinavian straw ornaments, I practice hardangersom (cutwork embroidery) and nålbinding (knotless netting), and I have taught two friends the basics of nålbinding. These practices together give me an ethos that I take with me as I move from place to place, rooting me in my community's and my own past as I go into the future and practice and revise traditions of which I am a part. The stories my mother told taught me were my first lessons in lived ethos. I learned that a Norwegian-American lived ethos is practiced, not only born. I learned that lived ethos can be a way of welcoming new people into a community and giving these new members practices that ease the transition from outsider to insider. These early lessons led me to consider how rhetoric, education, and identity interact, issues that I consider in the following chapters.
Chapter 1: Lived Ethos and Rhetorical Education

Ethos can be performed, it can be constructed in a single speech or essay, and it can be shaped by words, tones, movements, and appearances. However, ethos can also be lived, practiced, and maintained over time. Cultivating an ethos that is imitated and lived out in daily life and not just in textual productions means that the ethos in practice changes from a construction into what I call a *lived ethos*. A person cannot be born into a lived ethos. A person learns a lived ethos from family, the community, and institutions that families and communities support.\(^1\) In order to investigate lived ethos and how a community structures and teaches it, I use three case studies that show how teaching lived ethos works in the Norwegian-American community. These case studies and the theory of lived ethos that precedes them expand the realm of rhetoric to encompass everyday practices and experiences that create and maintain ethos. Folklore scholars have long understood the importance of the everyday and the non-textual, and I bring their scholarship to bear on rhetoric in order to revise and complicate how the field of rhetoric understands ethos.

A common example of community ethos is the festival. Festivals like the yearly

\(^1\) There are questions that we must ask about lived ethos, such as: Who has the privilege of doing lived ethos? What are the benefits of lived ethos, and what are the costs? In my own case and for many Norwegian Americans, lived ethos is a privilege and not a burden. We choose to practice a Norwegian-American ethos because it is enjoyable and adds to our lives without being a liability. Unless Norwegian Americans choose to physically display allegiance to Norway by wearing obvious symbols of Norwegianness like a Norwegian flag pin, we do not stand out in public spaces. This is a very
Nordic Fest held in Decorah, Iowa are commonly understood as events where a more-than-American identity is expressed and celebrated. Food stands on the main street sell lefse (a flatbread made of potatoes, flour, and butter), rømmegrot (a rich porridge), and varme pølser (sausages wrapped in lefse). Smaller events like a fashion show featuring bunader, the regional folk dress of Norway, provide a chance to enjoy air conditioning, and people also go to the Vesterheim museum to see the judging of handcrafts ranging from acanthus carving to rosemaling (a floral painting style) to weaving. During Nordic Fest weekend, Decorah becomes an epicenter of Norwegian-American feeling and expression, a place people go to in order to celebrate, learn, and experience.

Festivals like Nordic Fest can make it seem like Norwegian-American ethos is only taken out for special occasions. Nordic Fest is easily recognizable and similar to many ethnic heritage festivals in the United States. However, a simply celebratory view of identity ignores smaller and more everyday ways in which a Norwegian-American ethos is crafted and taught. A few smaller vignettes illustrate the ways in which people choose and act out and teach a Norwegian-American identity:

1. A group of people gathers regularly for Sons of Norway meetings at which they socialize, participate in activities, and plan for the future of their organization.
2. A young person goes with a parent to a handcraft class to learn how to carve in the Scandinavian flat-plane style and begins to make carvings for friends.
3. Two parents take their children on a weekend outing to a living history museum dedicated to the immigrant experience and take special care to visit the reconstructed Norwegian immigrant farmsteads. At the end of the day the
parents buy the children craft kits so that they can begin to learn how to do
hardangersøm (Norwegian cut-work embroidery).

4. A family gets together for Christmas and makes lefse, lutefisk (reconstituted
cod), krumkakke, and meatballs. The older generations teach the younger
members of the family about these foods and how to make them through
stories, hands-on learning, and copying recipes.

What binds these very different activities together is the sense the participants have that
they are consciously enacting a Norwegian-American identity and teaching others to do
the same. What is really happening in these vignettes is rhetorical education—the
persuasion to believe and act in certain ways that a community claims as its own.

The fact that non-dominant identities like Norwegian American ones continue to
persist in the face of a dominant, assimilationist American culture suggests that the
rhetorical education people engage in is indeed persuasive. Norwegian Americans, along
with other white and largely assimilated immigrant groups, face the challenge of creating
identification and a shared ethos when there are no longer compelling political reasons to
identify as a separate group and when divisions can be more apparent than similarities.

Although still largely residing in the Midwest, with pockets in the Pacific Northwest and
Texas, Norwegian Americans no longer live predominantly in close communities or
neighborhoods where Norwegian businesses, churches, and social groups dominate life.
Norwegians and Norwegian Americans have also been marrying outside the Norwegian-
American community more frequently, which presents a challenge to a group that for a
long time stayed fairly homogenous.²

The geographical scattering of Norwegian Americans and the demographic changes in the group have led to the dispersal of the community which is further complicated by the fact that not all Norwegian Americans do or believe the same things to demonstrate their Norwegian-American ethos.³ Some members of the dispersed community still consider learning Norwegian to be a vital part of their identity as a Norwegian American whereas others focus more on food traditions; some only put their Norwegian-American identities into practice on holidays while others maintain practices year-round. Despite these differences, there is a sense that Norwegian Americans today are connected to one another and to the Norwegian Americans of fifty (or even one hundred and fifty) years ago.

People who identify as Norwegian American may not live near each other or even meet in person, but the practices in which they engage lead to a belief that Norwegian Americans are a group and share certain beliefs and behaviors even if each member of

² A family anecdote illustrates the importance placed on group identity. When my parents were engaged my mother went to Washington to meet some of my father's extended family. One of his elderly relatives took it upon herself to introduce my mother around and announced to each new person, “She's Polish.” This relative did not point out that my mother and father attended the same school or that they had similar post-college plans but rather focused on my mother's descent (and only half of it—my mother is also of German descent, and the relative's decision to leave that out is interesting). By calling attention to difference instead of similarity, this relative asserted the importance of ethnic identity.

³ It is important to realize that Norwegians and Norwegian Americans have never behaved and believed in the exact same way. Early Norwegian immigrants believed fellow Norwegians who had emigrated from different regions to be very different, and early settlements tended to contain Norwegians from the same area of Norway. Peter A. Munch, in “Segregation and Assimilation of Norwegian Settlements in Wisconsin” (1954), explains: “loyalty to the local district of origin may have had a particular significance with the Norwegians and may be explained in part by the extreme isolation of rural communities in Norway, mainly because of the topographical conditions of the country” (110). Norwegian romantic nationalism in the nineteenth century began to develop a more national and less regional culture in Norway, but many regional divides in belief and practice persisted in Norway and in the United States.
the community does not believe or practice all of them. The power of practice to instill an ethos is evident in that people who are not descended from Norwegian immigrants can, and do, participate in organizations like Sons of Norway, learn to make Norwegian-American foods like lefse, and participate in the education of younger generations into a Norwegian-American ethos. These activities constitute rhetorical education, which means not an education in rhetoric but rather a persuasive education that provides community members with the tools to recreate and strengthen a Norwegian-American ethos that is a lived ethos. Cultivating a lived Norwegian-American ethos involves not only textual productions but also acts that happen in daily life, and it is the everyday nature of lived ethos that gives it power.

My curiosity about how the Norwegian-American community continues to survive in the United States and my interest in the different forms of education that help foster a Norwegian-American lived ethos grew from a desire to understand how I had come to identify myself as Norwegian American. My parents gave both my sister and me books of Norse mythology to read and we made lefse for holidays and also to sell at a local craft fair in Wisconsin. My sister was very interested in the history of Norwegian resistance during World War II and I would join her in games of “spy on the Nazis.” When we would go cross-country skiing in the winter she and I would pretend that we were part of the Norwegian resistance group that blew up the German heavy water plant near Rjukan, Norway. Our Norwegian-American activities were not all oriented around the home, however. The family belonged to Sons of Norway, a Norwegian-American fraternal society, attended lodge gatherings, and read *Viking* magazine, the organization’s
monthly periodical. Our family would to places like Little Norway, Old World Wisconsin, and Decorah, Iowa for what my sister and I called “heritage trips.” With the help of a family friend my sister and I attended Skogfjorden, a Norwegian language camp that is part of the Concordia Language Villages in Bemidji, Minnesota.

In short, we were, and are still, committed to our Norwegian-American ethos; it permeates our everyday lives. And yet as I began to consider how the Norwegian-American community creates a lived ethos and teaches it to existing and potential members I puzzled over the fact that my mother is not Norwegian American at all but was very invested in teaching both me and my sister to do Norwegian-American things and learn about Norwegian and Norwegian-American history and culture. Her performance of Norwegian-American ethos was so compelling that I would (and still do) occasionally forget that she was not Norwegian by blood. How does a non-Norwegian American become so interested in the community that she in effect becomes Norwegian American?

To begin to understand how the Norwegian-American community works to reconstitute itself over time and to incorporate new members, I returned to sites that played a role in my family's own rhetorical education in a Norwegian-American ethos that could be lived out in daily life. The Sons of Norway, handcraft classes at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, and the Norwegian exhibits at Old World Wisconsin form the focus of my study of rhetorical education and lived ethos in Norwegian America. The Sons of Norway is an international fraternal organization founded in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1895 and which now has members in the United States,
Canada, and Norway. My study of Sons of Norway focuses on how the organization crafted a Norwegian-American ethos after World War I and through World War II, a period in American history when Norwegian Americans had to justify their presence in the United States and portray Norwegian history and current events in a way that allowed them to argue that a Norwegian-American identity was desirable. The Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum in Decorah, Iowa has existed since the late nineteenth century and currently offers handcraft classes in areas ranging from woodcarving to fiber arts to painting. The work of two instructors, Harley Refsal and Kate Martinson, demonstrates how handcraft instruction is rhetorical education and teaches students a practice that enables the creation of an ethos that is part of everyday life. Old World Wisconsin is a living history museum in southeastern Wisconsin that portrays immigrant life in the state during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The museum as a whole, and the three Norwegian sites in particular, help visitors empathetically identify with immigrants who may have lived lives similar to those of visitors' ancestors.

The pedagogies of lived ethos that go on in these institutions use some common strategies to persuade members and potential members of the Norwegian-American community to take up the activities that lead to a daily practice of ethos instead of an occasional symbolic performance. First, in presenting and retelling history, institutions tend to focus on Norwegian and Norwegian-American exemplars with which their audiences can identify. These exemplars need not be well known, and in fact are often everyday people. Exemplars give Norwegian Americans models to imitate, and everyday exemplars are important for imitation because their excellence is achievable. Famous
exemplars are still useful, but more so for uniting the Norwegian-American community around a common hero and less for providing a blueprint for living. These exemplars help the community continuously bring the past into the present to provide a narrative of continuity for the group and to help Norwegian Americans decide how to live in the present.

Second, these institutional sites of rhetorical education persuade members and visitors to see themselves as responsible for the continuation of the histories and traditions represented and taught. Institutions cultivate a sense of responsibility by persuading audiences into pathetic attachments to histories or practices and by representing the rhetorical education as a gift that is best passed on through the continuing of the tradition. Pedagogies based in tradition also encourage community members to see how they can add to traditions and shape them to fit their present needs. This gives lived ethos a flexibility that is necessary for its survival; if lived ethos cannot adapt to changing circumstances or insists on a rigid imitation of the past then it cannot continue to exist in meaningful ways in the present or prepare for the future.

Third, the institutions persuade audiences to take up certain practices that make a Norwegian-American ethos something to be lived out in everyday life and not just during the holidays or at festivals. Practice—whether it consists of attending lodge meetings, carving figures in a Scandinavian style, or regularly reflecting on a Norwegian immigrant past—leads to a naturalized ethos, meaning that it has been performed so often that it no longer seems to be a performance but rather appears to be an inherent part of a person's character. By appearing as natural and not as performed, lived ethos is not an identity
that needs to be recreated each time a Norwegian American does something related to a
Norwegian-American ethos. Instead, the person can simply recall and deploy his or her
ethos since it is always available. Practice also enables the incorporation of individuals
into a community and of a community into individuals. When a person engages in
practices recognized by the community as worthwhile and tied to identity, she or he steps
into a space where boundaries of difference are obscured and unity emerges. Conversely,
by engaging in repeated practice the individual draws the community into the self,
creating ties that cannot be broken easily, if at all. Practice and the incorporation that
follows serve to strengthen the bonds of a community and to encourage the continuation
of actions and attitudes that form the lived ethos.

A lived ethos, therefore, is practiced in daily life and connects individuals to a
community grounded in the histories and traditions that distinguish it. While lived ethos
can be deployed in spoken and written texts much like ethos as rhetoric scholars
traditionally understand it, lived ethos also dwells in the everyday and is deployed and
taught in smaller and subtler ways. Lived ethos involves textual and non-textual
practices and dwells in institutions and in more informal spaces. By looking to lived
ethos to study how communities shape themselves and their members in order to survive
in and appropriately accommodate a dominant culture that insists on assimilation,
rhetoricians can better understand the many forms that rhetorical education takes and how
ethos is formed in practice and not just in performance.

Learning and Living Ethos: Rhetorical Education and its Effects

A rhetorical education in lived ethos can be difficult to describe because it is
ongoing and some of the acts that teach an ethos are simultaneously forming that ethos. Patricia Bizzell writes in “Frances Willard, Phoebe Palmer, and the Ethos of the Methodist Woman Preacher” (2006) that “ethos is ineffable, a rhetorical power that we may often feel without being able to point specifically to the elements in the presentation that evoke this emotional response from us” (379). A rhetorical education in lived ethos can also seem ineffable since it may not appear to be persuasive on the surface but simply a telling of history or instruction in a tradition. Rhetoric scholars have traditionally understood rhetorical education to mean instruction in rhetoric, writing, and/or speaking, but a rhetorical education that leads to lived ethos may not teach community members how to publicly communicate; instead, it persuades members and potential members of a community that identifying with the community is worthwhile and important.

A more expansive definition of rhetorical education as persuading an audience to identify with and take up the practices and beliefs of a community has roots in rhetoric scholarship. The first step toward expanding the concept of rhetorical education is to view all education as persuasive in order to open up more areas for rhetorical study. Dale Sullivan argues that all education is by nature rhetorical in “A Closer Look at Education as Epideictic Rhetoric” (1994). He writes:

---

4 See, for example, Susan Kates' book Activist Rhetorics and American Higher Education: 1885-1937 (2001) and Karen L. Hollis' Liberating Voices: Writing at the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers (2004). These monographs exemplify the primary definition of rhetorical education; they both look at pedagogies of writing and speaking and how these pedagogies helped students speak or write to have a voice in and/or to challenge American culture. Even though an education in lived ethos can work as a rhetorical education in this narrower sense, the rhetorical education that leads to lived ethos draws more on the secondary definition of rhetorical education as an education that persuades people into identifications with a group and which provides people with means of cultivating and strengthening those identifications.
Education is a form of epideictic rhetoric that relies on the rhetorical acts of praise and blame (1) to teach reasoning appropriate to professional and public practices, and (2) to instill in the student sentiments or emotions considered appropriate with the orthodoxy which the teacher represents. (71)

Sullivan's take on education as inherently rhetorical enables the consideration of more kinds of education as rhetoric and of the ways that rhetorical education affects not only thought but feeling. Sullivan emphasizes education's homogenizing tendencies, a view stated even more forcefully by Cheryl Glenn in “Rhetorical Education in America (A Broad Stroke Introduction)” (2004) when she writes: “rhetorical education promotes a culture and, in doing so, works to erase those cultures, languages, and traditions that are not those of the dominant culture” (x). Glenn's claim that rhetorical education “promotes a culture” describes how a rhetorical education in lived ethos works to continue a community's life. However, the assumption that rhetorical education erases non-dominant cultures and traditions does not explain how it works in the many communities that are not wholly a part of the dominant culture.

The rhetorical education that takes place in the Norwegian-American community and elsewhere demonstrates how rhetorical education can serve as a response to a dominant culture and create a community that accommodates the demands of assimilation even as it asserts its distinctness. A rhetorical education that enables resistance to dominant culture and persuades people to take up identities that belong to smaller or more marginal communities does get attention in rhetorical scholarship. S. Michael Halloran, in “Writing History on the Landscape: The Tour Road at the Saratoga Battlefield as Text” (2004), writes that the experience of traveling the Saratoga tour road
“is a form of rhetorical education in that the collective identity enacted is what makes it possible for us to become a public, and hence to engage in public discourse” (130). Even though Halloran's use of “the public” suggests a large audience, the public he describes is made up of people who have done the same battlefield tour, which means this public is transient and not terribly large. Halloran's definition of rhetorical education also casts park visitors as agents in their own incorporation into a public and points out that rhetorical education does not need to involve instruction in rhetoric; visitors enact a collective identity but are not instructed specifically in how to use it to persuade others. The work Halloran does to show that rhetorical education is not simply top-down and large scale is furthered in Jessica Enoch's *Refiguring Rhetorical Education: Women Teaching African American, Native American, and Chicano/a Students, 1865-1911* (2008). Enoch defines rhetorical education as “any educational program that develops in students a communal and civic identity and articulates for them the rhetorical strategies, language practices, and bodily and social behaviors that make possible their participation in communal and civic affairs” (7-8). Even though her analysis focuses on classroom education, Enoch's definition points out that rhetorical education prepares students to participate in a non-dominant community in more than textual ways. The educators she studies worked with oppressed groups (often groups of which they were members) and “argued for culture-based educations that enabled their students to enter into and change

---

5 Since 1941 Saratoga has had almost 8 million visitors, and in recent years the number of visitors has dropped, with 65,043 visitors in 2011 and only 57,688 in 2012 (“Saratoga NHP”). Little Bighorn National Monument, another National Parks Service site on a battlefield, had 346,327 visitors in 2012 and has had over 16 million visitors since opening in 1941 (“Little Bighorn NM”). Saratoga's audience is small in comparison and so creates smaller publics when people enact collective identities by visiting the site.
dominant society without having to surrender their cultural heritage and language practices” (4). Contrary to Glenn's claim that rhetorical education erases all cultures but the dominant one, Enoch shows how rhetorical education can serve to enable students to participate in and challenge the dominant culture by maintaining community practices, belief, and language.

The rhetorical education that leads to lived ethos is closely related to the rhetorical education discussed by Halloran and Enoch. This rhetorical education need not take place in a traditional educational institution, but might happen at a club, in a museum class, or during a visit to a living history museum. Rhetorical education into a lived ethos works through community institutions to persuade members of a community to identify with histories, behaviors, and practices of that community and to take these up in daily life. Even though individual members of a community might not learn how to speak or write about their ethos and community identifications, they do learn how to enact their ethos in daily life, making their everyday actions and practices a rhetorical act.

The rhetorical education that takes place in the Norwegian-American community in order to craft and instill an ethos that is lived out in daily life happens in multiple locations. The family is an important educational space, but institutions also play a vital role as central locations of ethos building and teaching.⁶ Studying lived ethos in certain institutions and practices allows for an understanding of the conditions in which

---

⁶ As my brief foray into autobiography demonstrates, a rhetorical education in lived ethos often takes place both in the family and institutions, with family serving as an impetus to get involved in institutional sites and programs. Although the following chapters focus more on the institutional side of lived ethos education, further studies should explore the role of family and how institutional and familial education intersect.
institutions and people teach ethos to others and how certain practices come to represent or perhaps even contain a lived Norwegian-American ethos. Situating and locating ethos in spaces, institutions, and practices gives the Norwegian-American community the ability to point to specific places as gathering spots for community and to activities and affiliations not bounded by place that unite a dispersed community.

Institutions that serve as educational spaces for lived ethos are responsible to the community and can in fact stand in for the community. The Norwegian-American community, for example, is more scattered than it used to be and unless a person lives in a town or area with a high Norwegian-American population she or he might not have easy access to informal spaces of rhetorical education. For this person, traveling to Decorah, Iowa to take a class at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum or joining Sons of Norway would serve as a concrete link to the larger community. Since institutions like Sons of Norway, Vesterheim, and Old World Wisconsin can serve as formalized spaces of community construction and instruction, rhetoric scholarship on the ways in which ethos is situated in communities illuminates how lived ethos gets placed in locations or practices that carry community identity through time. S. Michael Halloran and Nedra Reynolds turn to the etymology of ethos to explain how it encompasses the idea of location. In “Aristotle’s Concept of Ethos” (1982) Halloran writes:

The most concrete meaning given for the term in the Greek lexicon is ‘a habitual gathering place,’ and I suspect that it is upon this image of people gathering together in a public place, sharing experiences and ideas, that its meaning as character rests. (60)

Nedra Reynolds also points to the etymological roots of ethos as a gathering in “Ethos as Location” (1993). She writes that “gathering or meeting is literally at the root of ethos.
This crucial part of its definition emphasizes both the spatial—a gathering place—and the idea of presence, of speakers and listeners” (333). Both Halloran and Reynolds argue that the idea of ethos indicates the importance of spatial gathering places that enable the sharing of ideas and experiences. Institutions provide a space for a community, but as Halloran and Reynolds point out, what matters most is that members of a community gather and share in that space.

If institutions are going to serve a community, then these institutions must reflect the values of that community or these sites will not accurately represent it. Communities and the ethos that they create thus tend to regulate what is and is not allowed in ethos. Halloran claims that ethos “emphasizes the conventional” and the “public rather than the private” (60), which supports the idea that communities and institutions will require members to believe and act in certain ways that agree with established norms. However, Halloran's view overlooks how different communities will have varying ideas of what “the conventional” is and how groups like the Norwegian Americans might craft an ethos that is conventional for them but different from that of the dominant culture. Nedra Reynolds, on the other hand, is interested in the location of ethos as “a way of achieving rhetorical authority from a marginalized position” (330). Reynolds' view of ethos and its location points to how Norwegian Americans and other non-dominant groups can use gathering as a way to construct and assert an ethos that does not necessarily fit with the overarching American ethos that Halloran's gathering place would create.7

7 Halloran's view of ethos as public and norming is common in rhetorical scholarship, and feminist scholars have done much to challenge or at least complicate views of how ethos works as a norming tool by suggesting that it can subvert cultural demands of behavior and action. Reynolds and her work on positioning are just one example. See also Carol Mattingly's *Well-Tempered Women* (1998), Shirley
A lived ethos that is located in gatherings can help explain how non-dominant communities maintain themselves in an assimilationist culture, but for dispersed communities the actual locations where ethos exist matter as well. The location of ethos in physical spaces takes rhetoricians beyond the textual construction of ethos to consider how ethos can dwell in or imbue certain locations, suggesting that ethos has a life of its own and that traveling to a dwelling place of ethos can be an important part of rhetorical education. Carole Blair and Neil Michel suggest in “The Rushmore Effect: Ethos and National Collective Identity” (2004) that ethos can be situated in specific locations. They write that “it is useful to think of Mount Rushmore, both figuratively and literally, as constituting a dwelling place of national character, a construction of the national ethos” (159). Although Blair and Michel spend time analyzing texts that are present at the site, their claim that Mount Rushmore is a dwelling place of ethos—both as a physical site and as a figurative place in the American imagination—argues that ethos is not always constructed in a text but can also be seen as living and even as inherent. The idea of “dwelling” that they propose is related to the idea of ethos situated through habitual gathering discussed by Halloran and Reynolds. However, in Blair and Michel's assessment the location and not the people forms the focus. The site itself is where the ethos dwells. Mats Hellspong and Barbro Klein have argued a similar point in their writing about Swedish cultural institutions as locations of identity construction. In “Folk Art and Folklife Studies in Sweden” (1994), Hellspong and Klein write that institutions

like the Nordic Museum and Skansen, an open-air museum, are popular because the places have “always been able to supply materials for the construction of national symbols” (21). If ethos dwells in places like Skansen and Mt. Rushmore, then these locations can also be places where people find symbols and materials to take with them to help them construct their own ethos. In the context of the dispersed Norwegian-American community, the location of ethos in certain places gives members a common understanding of where to go in order to foster a lived ethos. A nationwide organization like Sons of Norway provides Norwegian Americans with lodges that differ from place to place even as the lodges exist under the same umbrella organization. Norwegian Americans can also travel to a place like Decorah, Iowa to access a Norwegian-American ethos not simply because they can interact with other Norwegian Americans there. The town itself embodies a Norwegian-American ethos: the Scandinavian shops, availability of Norwegian food, symbols like the Norwegian flag, and presence of Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum all point to Decorah's status as a dwelling place of Norwegian-American ethos and provide materials for visitors to take with them either physically or symbolically.

However, solely viewing ethos as dwelling in certain locations does not fully account for how lived ethos comes to inhabit certain spaces; Halloran's and Reynolds' concept of ethos as a gathering and Blair and Michel's idea of ethos as dwelling in certain locations have to come together to show how both spaces and the people who gather there make certain locations liveable places for ethos. Decorah, Iowa did not always represent a Norwegian-American ethos and was in fact founded by Yankees, so
something had to happen to make it a dwelling place. Gregory Clark's work on ethos in *Rhetorical Landscapes in America* (2004) combines the concepts of ethos as a gathering place and ethos as dwelling. Clark argues that “Places like Yellowstone are public symbols of an American national identity. People gather there to transcend their separate identities as, temporarily, they inhabit this place together” (71). Clark discusses here a natural landscape that has become a symbol through discourse about it and its popularity as a destination for American tourists. He combines the sense that communities create ethos and that ethos dwells in certain locations by arguing that places become symbols because people continue to gather at them to create a common identity. Risa Applegarth also explores the connection between place and community in “Genre, Location, and Mary Austin's Ethos” (2011). She writes that “rhetors learn to enact culturally specific notion of 'good will, good sense, and good moral character' through their participation in particular communities and their habituation, within places, to shared norms that make ethos effective” (43, emphasis original). Clark's interest in ethos as located in specific and iconic landscapes and Applegarth's emphasis on place and the norms that come with it get at the same issue that Blair and Michel explore: ethos is not only situated in certain kinds of discourse or in certain interactions, but also in actual locations and happenings.

Clark and Applegarth combine the ideas of communal gathering and ethical dwelling by emphasizing that people “inhabit” and are habituated into a community and the ethos that comes along with it. The idea of inhabiting and participating/habituating rather than arguing into ethos highlights the importance of experience and location. Synthesizing the ideas of gathering and location results in a view of ethos as built not just
from human interaction and the projection of identities onto places but also as something that is eventually contained by the place itself. Much like lived ethos in people, in which repeated action leads to naturalization, ethos can so thoroughly come to inhabit loci that members of a group will be able to access and understand that ethos simply by traveling to and experiencing the space.

The focus on a physical location is important to lived ethos because it suggests that even though it is possible to gather in a more abstract sense by reading materials that connect an individual to a wider community or by engaging in a practice common in a community, it is still important to have common spaces in which people can gather and engage each other and their culture. A historical example of the power of located ethos comes from the Norwegian folk schools that sprang up in the nineteenth century in Scandinavia. Cati Coe writes about the folk school movement in “The Education of the Folk: Peasant Schools and Folklore Scholarship” (2000), and she makes the point that in Norway the folk school movement was tied to educational reform and nationalism (28). Although nationalism and a Norwegian identity were cultivated in many different arenas, the location of the folk school as a place of Norwegian ethos-building demonstrates how an institutional gathering place can teach ethos and serve as a dwelling place for it. The folk schools were built on the idea that “the folk” embodied “the childhood of the nation or race, in that their customs contained survivals from the nation's heroic past, from which the nation had declined into artificiality and spiritual decay in its old age,” and yet the folk were the ones who went to the folk schools most often (23, 34). That the people

---

8 Mats Hellspong and Barbro Klein echo Coe's claim that in the nineteenth century people saw the folk as
who supposedly embodied the true Norwegian ethos were still seen as needing an education that taught them how to be Norwegian points to how important institutional rhetorical education in ethos is to communities. The values and practices of the folk were seen as a way back to a truer Norwegian identity and folk schools were a way to educate people into that ethos and enable students to contribute to contemporary Norwegian society. 9

The folk schools of nineteenth century Norway provide an instructive example in how ethos gets located in communities and then in institutions. The folk were a source of Norwegian ethos, but this ethos then came to dwell and also be taught at folk schools, which made disseminating that ethos easier and also more controllable. This is the danger of locating and teaching lived ethos in institutions: by emphasizing a community's idea of the conventional, institutions can discipline lived ethos in ways that may do harm or impose expectations of behavior on groups of people who may not wish to comply. It is important, therefore, that a rhetorical education in lived ethos be the product of the community and reflect a concern with the ethics of persuasion. Refusing a romantic

having strong ties to a purer past: “People began to develop a view of folk culture as a preserve in a changeable world, as a shrinking link with a romantically colored past, located in the middle ages or in the heroic world of the Vikings” (18). The desire to look back to a past perceived as more authentic and to reclaim that identity as context changes clearly has historical precedent. However, simply seeing the Norwegian-American community's desire to remain a community as a nostalgic attempt to return to some romantic past is not sufficient since it does not take into account how communities shift and adapt identities and practices to accommodate new circumstances, nor does it allow for the creativity and ingenuity of community members.

9 The turn to folk schools can also be seen as an upperclass attempt to control the lower classes and regulate behavior as economic and social changes affected Europe in the nineteenth. The return to the folk and to symbols of Norwegian identity certainly played out in high Norwegian culture, and in fact the elite were sometimes contradictorily seen as the only ones concerned with the folk, who might abandon the old ways for the promise of the new (Coe 35). Two examples of cultural elites who used the folk were Edvard Grieg, who greatly influenced Norwegian music and is considered a Norwegian nationalist composer, and author Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, who won a Nobel Prize for literature and composed the lyrics to what is now the Norwegian national anthem.
interpretation of the past and taking care not to label one group of people as embodying the true ethos of a group will help communities resist trying to create a homogenous group and stifling change.

Usable Pasts and Exemplars in Lived Ethos

A lived ethos that looks to the past depends upon the selection of pasts worth imitating in the present in order to persuade members and potential members of a community that the ethos is worthwhile. In order to achieve this, the community and its institutions turn to the past in order to craft an imitable ethos based in exemplars who can serve as models for behavior and action in the present. The folk school movement in Scandinavia in the nineteenth century is an example of how communities will turn to the past and its exemplars to find a way to live in the changing present. Communities like the Norwegian-American one can avoid some of the problems of the folk school movement by providing a range of exemplars who allow for difference in the community even as they craft a unifying ethos. Admirable and imitable exemplars can be historical or contemporary, but the past is an especially rich resource because history is open to interpretation and historical exemplars cannot argue back. Retelling history and using exemplars involves selecting that which is good and admirable and recasting what could be seen as dangerous in a more positive light. Exemplary histories that persuade group members to take up and live a community ethos do not have to depend upon famous or extraordinary exemplars, but these histories do depend on the pasts being usable in the present.

In order to understand lived ethos it is important to separate usable pasts from
collective memory, the latter of which has received more attention in rhetorical scholarship. The concept of usable pasts provides rhetoric scholars with an alternative to the concept of collective memory and considers how the past can be reinterpreted and reshaped quickly as the need for different versions of the past surfaces. This is not to disclaim the importance of collective memory; it is a useful analytical concept because it deals with how human groups look to the past in order to understand and unite (or differentiate) themselves in the present. Carole Blair, in her essay “Collective Memory” (2006), defines collective memory as “a collective or communal phenomenon, rather than...an individual cognitive function” and she adds that “representation...[is] at the heart of how groups of people remember” (52). Blair’s definition points out the importance of considering the action of groups in representing the past and points out that collective memory is never neutral. However, collective memory as a concept can end up focusing so much on the representation of the past that it misses action in the present. Granted, Blair writes that collective memory is “a performance of social collectives” (53), but this performance in present rhetorical scholarship comes largely through language and seems more focused on the past. The idea of usable pasts that can lead to lived ethos, in contrast, focuses on present acts and practices and how acts claim to relate to past. It moves from act to community, where collective memory seems to move in the opposite

10 Carole Blair is just one example of a scholar who uses collective memory as a framework for understanding how communities relate to the past. Amy Lynn Heyse's “The Rhetoric of Memory-Making: Lessons from the UDC's Catechisms for Children” (2008), Jordynn Jack's “Space, Time, Memory: Gendered Recollections of Wartime Los Alamos” (2007), and Rosalyn Collings “A Recipe for Remembrance: Memory and Identity in African-American Women's Cookbooks” (2005) are just three other examples of recent rhetoric scholarship that use memory to describe constructions of the past. The idea of usable pasts, however, has yet to receive much attention from rhetoricians despite its usefulness as an analytical tool.
direction. The two are not mutually exclusive—usable pasts and lived ethos certainly involve acts of memory and remembering—but the idea of a lived ethos that can result from pasts that are used (rather than remembered) focuses on the acts that incorporate individuals into communities and a community ethos into individuals. Collective memory can also be misleading as a term because memory implies a close connection to remembered events, times, and people. Many of the pasts that Norwegian Americans turn to, like the Viking Age, do not exist in memory and must be reconstructed from other sources before these histories can be used. Memory can play a role in the perpetuation of histories and of the practices that are associated with a group's identity (“I will teach my children to make lefse because my parents taught me how and because it is part of the Norwegian-American immigrant tradition”), but memory and its politics are not what is ultimately at stake. What is at stake is the ability of a group to recreate itself over time and to persuade members of the group to continue practices and beliefs that declare their allegiance to the group. Memory is not enough; practice must follow (or perhaps even precede) memory if lived ethos can flourish.

How groups can or cannot take up the past determines which exemplars communities can use to persuade individuals into an ethos that helps them live in the present, plan for the future, and continue the work of building the community. Folklore scholars Yiorgos Anagnostou and Kathleen Stokker illuminate how histories can and cannot be used. Anagnostou discusses “usable pasts” as a way to describe how ethnic groups work with the past in order to make arguments about the present in Contours of White Ethnicity (2009). Usable pasts, according to Anagnostou, bring elements of the
past into the present through a process of selecting, revising, and reviewing in order to affect the present or future of a community (2). In his examination of popular ethnographies written about Greek Americans, Anagnostou focuses his analysis on “how these pasts are produced and by whom” and on “what interests they advance and for whom” (2). Memory plays a role here, but the political considerations extend beyond how memory is constructed into how and why the past is used. Usable pasts do not only exist in the realm of the collective. Anagnostou writes that identity “is articulated at the intersection of individual agency and powerful cultural determinations” (165, emphasis original). Individuals, in Anagnostou's analysis, play a role in shaping communities even as larger forces shape their community and their own identities. By acknowledging the role of both large/collective and small/individual agency in identity formation, Anagnostou argues that the process of constructing the past is not just a collective endeavor; individuals (in the case of his study, authors of popular ethnographies) also have the ability to select and shape representations of the past to serve both individual and collective ends.

Anagnostou's work helps explain how a lived Norwegian-American ethos functions both communally and individually. The Norwegian-American community has been shaped by the political context of the United States but it has also worked to actively decide how to accommodate pressures to assimilate and still maintain a community identity. Similarly, individual members of the Norwegian-American community are habituated into an ethos and also make decisions about how they will put that ethos into practice and to what degree. These decisions are shaped by what histories the community
and individual members have access to and how these pasts can be retold in the present.

Even though positive pasts are a powerful means of constructing a community identity, Anagnostou argues that negative pasts are also usable. He studies popular ethnographies that deal with negative or dangerous pasts involving patriarchy, “racial prejudice by white ethnics, immigrant xenophobia, [and] apathy toward the plight of others” (97, 130). By showing that not all histories and ethnographies blindly celebrate communities and that some instead capture the complex and problematic ways in which communities relate to their larger context, Anagnostou expands the idea of what a usable past is. Usable pasts do not have to only portray communities and groups in a positive light, but can critique and challenge in order to encourage change or to complicate other portrayals of the past. In the Norwegian-American community, the expansion of what counts as a usable past matters because elements of Norwegian history are difficult to portray in a positive light and hard to ignore: the Vikings and the Quisling-led collaborator government during World War II are two examples. Norwegian Americans still make use of these pasts, however, to argue for or against certain identifications in the present.

However, for the purposes of a lived ethos, a past has to be usable in the present and able to be incorporated into the narratives and practices of the community. Not all pasts are usable in this way when constructing a community ethos that is meant to be lived out. *Remedies and Rituals: Folk Medicine in Norway and the New Land* (2007), Kathleen Stokker's work on historical folk healers both in Norway and in Norwegian-American communities in the United States from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth
century, shows how certain pasts are not usable in the present. Stokker writes of the difficulty of learning about the once-popular practice of folk medicine: "Unearthing these healers' stories is not easy task, in part because nineteenth-century Norway's strong class divisions obscure the healers' accomplishments" (3). Stokker also writes that earlier historians' skepticism about the value of folk healing as well as the Lutheran clergy's suspicion of these practices as having Catholic overtones have also made these histories difficult to recover (11, 15). That folk medicine has not survived as a tradition or even as a prominent part of Norwegian and Norwegian-American history points to the idea that there are indeed unusable pasts because these pasts are either not available or not considered valuable. Folk healing would not be considered a dangerous history today, but it may simply not be usable because of its relative obscurity and modern medicine's success. Stokker does connect her history of folk healers to a renewed interest in natural medicine and home birth, but she does not claim that this renewed interest is in any way tied to a Norwegian or Norwegian-American identity (239). The resurgence of interest in alternative medicine is caught up in other identifications and can perhaps no longer serve as a usable past that works in the present to define Norwegian Americans. Not all pasts are usable, and although groups like Norwegian Americans have great flexibility in how they choose to portray the past, their options are not unlimited.

The selection and revision of usable pasts ties to the use of exemplars as a way to persuade people into a lived ethos; since broad histories do not lend themselves to imitation by individuals, having examples of how to live and behave that are tied to specific people or groups makes histories more usable by communities and individual
members. The idea of the exemplar has a long history in rhetoric, reaching back to Ancient Greece. Carlo Natali argues this point in “Paradeigma: The Problems of Human Acting and the Use of Examples In Some Greek Authors of the 4th Century B.C.” (1989). Natali brings together the work of fourth-century orators, Isocrates, Aristotle, Plato, and others to argue that the past was seen to provide examples “not only as an instrument to be used in persuading others, but also as an instrument of use in finding a line of conduct” (142). Terry Papillion elaborates on this idea in “Isocrates’ Techne and Rhetorical Pedagogy” (1995), in which he connects the positive or negative portrayal of the past to crafting examples that influence the present and future:

This is rhetoric that uses praise and blame — mostly praise — and a strong sense of comparison to set out situations as examples for those around to learn and from which those around could create policy for the future. (158)

Papillion's analysis of examples begins to synthesize the ideas of Natali and Anagnostou; he understands that exemplars are not just models for the present but that they are interpreted and used in the present as positive or negative examples. Anagnostou's understanding of how pasts are used in the present adds complexity to Papillion's work because it acknowledges how exemplars can embody a complicated attitude toward the past in which people in the present affirm certain qualities and reject others contained in a single exemplar. Exemplars, in the rhetorical education of lived ethos, are people, not texts. In the Norwegian-American community, exemplars can come from Norway, the

---

11 Later rhetorical texts often present exemplars (in the form of examples) in the form of texts that students of rhetoric and writing should imitate. Hugh Blair uses numerous examples of writing by Quintilian, Swift, Addison, and Ossian in his Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783) to illustrate styles worthy and unworthy of imitation, and in the nineteenth century Adams Sherman Hill frequently turns to Edmund Burke's writing as an example of good rhetoric (The Principles of Rhetoric, 1878), and
United States, and anywhere else Norwegians have settled. Many exemplars are well-known around the world: Leif Erikson, Edvard Grieg, Henrik Ibsen. Norwegian Americans might not be able to exactly imitate them, but they can imitate qualities like adventurousness, a love of music, and so on. Imitation need not involve an exact copying of what exemplars did, but can involve adaptation to suit present circumstances and abilities.

However, exemplars need not be famous or well-known to be persuasive, which makes more pasts available for use and imitation and also makes an imitable group ethos more attainable. The everyday exemplar does not always have a name but can be accessed through stories and objects, an idea that folklore scholars have examined. In “Entering Tradition: Kim Ellington, Catawba Valley Potter” (2011), Charles G. Zug writes about how Kim Ellington learned pottery and how his teacher would use stories of the past to explain how to be a potter:

[He] would tell stories about the older men he had known while he was firing his kiln with Kim and the other younger potters...Such tales served to humanize the Catawba Valley tradition, teach the qualities of the ideal potter, and provide a cohesive sense of style and region. (37)

Ellington's teacher was an exemplar in that Ellington learned from him and imitated and adapted the practices and techniques he learned, but the teacher also cites exemplars from the past in stories to teach Ellington how to be good man making pottery well.

Exemplars are not only available in texts and stories but also in the objects they leave

John F. Genung writes in *Handbook of Rhetorical Analysis: Studies in Style and Invention* (1891), “Theory, example, practice, — these are the three” (vii). Even though texts overtook people as exemplars in more recent centuries, it is important to note that the examples used by later rhetoricians come from one or a small group of authors. Even though the texts are the focus, the people who produced them become exemplary through their repeated crafting of rhetoric worthy of imitation.
behind, which present-day members of a group can turn to in order to learn how to live out certain identities through action. Writing about Acoma potter Wanda Aragon in “Bringing Them Back: Wanda Aragon and the Revival of Historic Pottery Designs at Acoma” (2011), folklore scholar Karen M. Duffy says: “By putting her mind to the artist's mind, her hand to her hand, Wanda feels what the artist felt...At this point, the connection between herself and the original artist is complete” (213). Duffy is discussing here how Aragon examines historic pottery made by women long dead in order to create pottery designs in the present that reference and grow from the older ones. The women potters of the past, most of them anonymous, serve as exemplars for Aragon as she works within the Acoma pottery tradition. The ability of exemplars to come from everyday people from the past means that Norwegian Americans do not only have Erikson, Grieg, and Ibsen to look up to; an ancestor, a person or group of people who practiced a handcraft, or the Norwegian-American working class can all become exemplars worthy of imitation as individual members and the entire community look to the past in order to decide how to behave and act in the present. The expansion of who is imitable beyond well-known and extraordinary figures is important because it means that a lived ethos can truly be lived, not just acted out in expressions of admiration but in daily practices and physical acts. A variety of exemplars also helps the Norwegian-American community avoid the problem of the folk school movement's romanticization of an entire class; by presenting Norwegian Americans with a copia of exemplars, the community allows for difference and acknowledges that the past is complicated and diverse like the present.
A rhetorical education that uses exemplary histories to teach and instill an ethos enables a community and its individual members to continuously bring the past into the present both as a resource for ethos formation and as a way to find points of connection when the community seems to have more divisions than similarities. Ray Cashman, Tom Mould, and Pravina Shukla write about how individuals make use of the past to dwell in the present in their introduction to *The Individual and Tradition: Folkloristic Perspectives* (2011). They write: “We all use elements of the past to meet our needs in the present and our hopes for the future. In the process we make tradition our own, leaving our marks…they are all…a reflection of the self as forged in the shaping and reshaping of tradition” (1). Their emphasis on how the past not only meets “needs in the present” but also “hopes for the future” points to how the past serves as a rich resource for individuals (and communities) in the present as they decide how to live in the day-to-day and how they want to move toward the future. How institutions that engage in rhetorical education work to bring the past into the present is more debated in rhetorical scholarship. In *Rhetorical Landscapes in America* (2004), Gregory Clark writes that the representation of history at living history museums results in an identification with the present through a disidentification with the past:

> Visitors at living museums do not identify themselves with the people who populate such exhibits as living images of a vanished past. Rather, the visitors identify with each other as they acknowledge together the distance that divides them all from the way of life they have come there to witness. (64)

Clark's analysis does an excellent job of explaining how tourism to splinter communities like the Shakers at the end of the nineteenth century united visitors in opposition to the
lives being lived or portrayed where they go. Clark focuses on museums like Plimoth Plantation, which portray a life so far removed from the present that it seems impossible to bridge the gap, and so his analysis does not take into account living history museums that portray a more recent past. Living history museums that present historical people as exemplary and imitable allow visitors to identify with these exemplars even as these museums also demonstrate how different the present is from the past. Amy Lynn Heyse writes about a different context in “The Rhetoric of Memory-Making: Lessons from the UDC’s Catechisms for Children” (2008), and her analysis suggests that the past can be a source of strong identifications even if it is very different from the present. Discussing how the United Daughters of the Confederacy used catechisms to instill pride in the south in young students, Heyse writes: “Recalling a shared past through the use of myth allows collectives to reaffirm their values, commit themselves to new goals, and communicate with a common language” (429). The UDC saw history not as a distant and different, but as worth emulating in the present. Heyse helps explain how communities put usable pasts to work; groups can use the past as a way to explain and hold up certain values in the present, make decisions about how to proceed, and have common stories to turn to when making decisions about values and actions. Heyse's use of “myth” in reference to the past, however, is troubling because the term implies that the past has a largely imaginative existence, and while that is an important way in which the past functions it leaves out more material ways in which the past resurges into the present.

Heyse's article also makes the important point that the past should not necessarily be brought into the present. The UDC effectively created a version of the past that enabled racism, segregation, and a culture that saw lynching as a viable means of control. The past and what we do with it can be dangerous indeed, and Heyse's article is a much-needed reminder.
Bringing the past into the present as part of lived ethos means going beyond remembering and retelling history and taking action in the present. Folklorist Barbro Klein explores how present day actions reclaim and repurpose the past in her essay “Introduction to Part 3” in *Swedish Folk Art: All Tradition is Change* (1994). She writes:

> it appears that many contemporary Swedish urbanites—the descendants of the nineteenth-century rural poor—yearn for the very sparse existence that their parents were glad to be rid of…And this special longing comes forward in the memory paintings, the miniature environments, and in the summer migrations to the simple dwellings of destitute ancestors. (147)

The irony of contemporary Swedish people wishing to reclaim a way of life that their ancestors wanted to leave behind does not detract from the power the past has to shape action in the present. The Swedes Klein discusses do not simply discuss their desire for pieces of the past, but act in a way that claims an ethos associated with the history of their ancestors. Even though they do not experience the same conditions and can return to their urban life after a holiday in the rustic homes of their forebears, they shape their presents and their futures by continuing to look to the past and to their ancestors as exemplars who can teach them how to live in the present and craft an identity that acknowledges contemporary life while still connecting to what came before.

*The Role of Tradition in Lived Ethos*

Exemplars do not encourage mere imitation, a copying and carrying out of previous actions but rather lead individuals to take responsibility for their ethos and make decisions about how best to live it out in their present context. Acts of bringing the past

---

13 The imitation of examples has its dangers, of course. Scott R. Stroud looks critically at the rhetorical use of examples using Kant as a lens in “Kant on Education and the Rhetorical Force of the Example” (2011). He writes that Kant was suspicious of examples because they “[encourage] a mindless imitation” and “may lead to an empty ‘hero-worship’ or romantic enthusiasm” (424). Certainly
into the present lead to a consideration of the role of tradition in teaching members of a community to take up a lived ethos. Rhetorical education that uses and takes up tradition works both to create a sense of responsibility in a community for the continuation of traditions and to persuade individuals to see themselves as having a creative role in the shaping of tradition. First, it is important to distinguish between the terms tradition and heritage since heritage is commonly used by institutions in the Norwegian-American community to describe the work they do and yet it does not accurately describe how these sites educate people into a lived ethos that changes over time. At Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, for example, heritage and tradition are largely interchangeable, and if there is a distinction it is that heritage denotes Norwegian and Norwegian-American culture and tradition indicates certain behaviors and practices. To illustrate: a brochure advertising Vesterheim that is available at the museum and also at the Decorah Area Chamber of Commerce proclaims on its cover: “Preserving a heritage. Connecting us all” (Vesterheim). In the brochure, “a heritage” stands in for the thousands of objects in the museum and also the collective offerings of Vesterheim's educational programs. However, the term “preserving” suggests stasis, which does not accurately describe the work the museum does to foster present-day Norwegian-American culture and practice. Inside the museum, exhibits distinguish between heritage as indicative of imitation can fall into these traps, but a closer look at lived ethos reveals that a devotion to true imitation is impossible because the full context of the past can never be recaptured. For example, people who practice rosemaling (a Norwegian floral painting style) may imitate patterns and colors from the past, but they use modern paints and paintbrushes and can paint objects that were not painted in the past using this technique. Furthermore, a blind devotion to pure imitation does not work in tradition because it does not allow for individual innovation and creativity, both of which are key in tradition.
all of Norwegian-American culture and tradition as specific practices. The first plaque the visitor sees below the exhibit titled “The Home In America” reads in part: “Each family may choose different ways to reflect their ethnic identity, and each generation has the same opportunity to celebrate their traditions, or find new ways to connect with their heritage.” In this plaque, heritage stands for the whole of Norwegian-American culture and tradition for practices that exist within the whole.

Folklore scholars help explain how heritage is not the best descriptor for the work done by community institutions to persuade people to take up a lived ethos. In most folklore literature “heritage” is the realm of the preserved, dead, or resurrected. According to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in Destination Culture (1998), heritage is “a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past. Heritage thus defined depends on display to give dying economies and dead sites a second life as exhibitions of themselves” (7). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett later expands upon this definition, adding that “Heritage organizations ensure that places and practices in danger of disappearing because they are no longer occupied or functioning or valued will survive. It does this by adding the value of pastness, exhibition, difference, and, where possible, indigeneity” (150). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's analysis of the politics of display as these politics relate to heritage in museum and festival contexts is compelling and illuminates how groups use and are used by these politics. Organizations like Sons of Norway, Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, and Old World Wisconsin could appear to be heritage sites. However, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's analysis focuses on displays meant for outside audiences and her research sites are almost all nationally significant. The scope
of her research means that she emphasizes sites that have been constructed for outside consumption. Smaller sites of rhetorical education and ethos production like Sons of Norway, Vesterheim, and Old World Wisconsin can function as sites of tradition and not of heritage. With lodge meetings, classes, and small special events, these sites can speak to insider audiences and demonstrate how certain practices and ways of life are not defunct but rather different from what these lifeways were in the past. Even if these institutions use the term heritage in published materials and in exhibits, these sites are more accurately understood within the framework of tradition.

Tradition, unlike heritage, is usually conceived of as internally oriented and ongoing instead of displayed and resurrected, which makes it a more appropriate framework for understanding how a rhetorical education in lived ethos works. In her essay “Tradition: Three Traditions” (2009), Dorothy Noyes proposes a definition of tradition that helps explain how lived ethos uses the past not to keep everything the same, but to connect members of a group to their past even as they change and continue to shape their group's ethos in the present. Noyes proposes that we understand tradition not as property or as a demand to precisely copy those who came before:

Let us agree that what is being transferred through the object is not in the first instance authority, which fetishizes the giver, nor property, which fetishizes the object while eventually debasing it into a commodity. Rather, the transfer is of responsibility. . . tradition is not at bottom either a badge of pride or an inheritance to display but a job that must be done.

(248)

Noyes' definition emphasizes the mutual act of giving and receiving and the responsibility that comes along with the gift of a practice. It is not just the act that matters, but the knowledge and stewardship of the act to ensure its survival that makes
tradition. A.L. Epstein makes a similar point in *Ethos and Identity* (1978): “What would seem to be important in the transmission of identity is not practice in itself, but the meaning that attaches to it, and the way it is cathected” (111). Epstein, like Noyes, sees the things that come along with a practice (responsibility for it, understanding its history, knowing its place in a culture) as the key to tradition and the identity that comes along with it. Taken together, this means that a rhetorical education based in tradition must not only pass on practices but also what Noyes calls “metaknowledge” (248); the metaknowledge prevents the tradition from being stripped of meaning and turning to a worship of the object or its maker.

Tradition depends on making recipients feel a responsibility for the practice and the beliefs that come along with it (the “job that must be done”) and on giving community members a sense of agency in shaping the tradition they take up; a rhetorical education that works with tradition helps lead people into practices that create and perpetuate a lived ethos. This education stands in contrast to a pedagogy of heritage that makes people responsible for displaying and maintaining otherwise defunct sites and objects. The sense of responsibility that tradition confers upon individuals is a result of rhetorical education: because the person being taught the tradition is persuaded to believe in its worth and power the sense of responsibility follows. The rhetorical tradition demonstrates how education brings along with it calls to be responsible both for the tradition being passed on and for the community it affects. The familiar image of the good man speaking well attests to how concerned rhetoricians are with encouraging students of rhetoric to be responsible stewards of their education and to use rhetoric for
By cultivating a good ethos and speaking well, students of rhetoric honor the tradition of which they are a part and do not sully it in the public eye. Rhetoricians have also expressed a concern with how an education in rhetoric gives an individual responsibility toward her or his community. John Quincy Adams clearly articulates the responsibility his students will carry when they have completed their education:

That country, in her turn, will have a peculiar claim upon you for the benefit of your counsels; and either in the selected bodies of her legislatures, or in the general assemblies of the people, will give you opportunities to employ, for her advantage and your own reputation, every faculty of speech, which you have received, or which you can acquire. (257-258)

Students of rhetoric get called into responsibility for the rhetorical tradition; even if they do not teach it themselves they are expected to use it not for their own benefit but for the benefit of their larger community and nation. More recently, but in a similar vein, Krista Ratcliffe argues in Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, and Whiteness (2005) that students and rhetors must be concerned with ethics. She writes: “[rhetorical] listening does not presume a naive, relativistic empathy...but rather an ethical

---

14 Plato's Phaedrus and its presentation of Socrates as the teacher who leads students' souls closer to truth is one of the earliest examples of this trend. He demonstrates how to teach responsibility when in the course of the dialogue Socrates leads Phaedrus to see that he must also be responsible in his speechmaking. As rhetoric has adapted to new theories of communication and persuasion the theme of the responsible speaker/writer has remained. George Campbell, in The Philosophy of Rhetoric (1776), teaches his readers to persuade audiences using faculty psychology, but encourages them to do so only for truth and good. Hallie Quinn Brown incorporates a nineteenth-century concern with living a Christian life to prepare for the afterlife when she writes in Elocution and Physical Culture (~1910): “Science and art, theory and practice must go hand in hand to develop, train, and perfect us for this life and the one to come” (176). Finally, in the turbulent and divisive decades of the Vietnam War, Wayne Booth writes: “If it is good for men to attend to each other's reasons — and we all know that it is, because without such attending none of us could come to be and questions about value could never be asked — it is also good to work for whatever conditions make such mutual inquiry possible” (137). All of these rhetoricians are concerned with how to teach rhetoric responsibly and also how to encourage students of rhetoric to practice it responsibly in turn.
responsibility to argue for what we deem fair and just while questioning that which we deem fair and just” (25). Ratcliffe's vision of responsibility calls readers to question themselves and their own positions as they take up a long tradition of argumentation and persuasion, revising the earlier and more certain position Adams takes to fit new circumstances and demands. Rhetoric's concern with its own tradition and how it gets used in communities shows how openly discussing responsibility and how a tradition should be used in a community can encourage students of a tradition to take on that role as responsible practitioner and teacher. Within the Norwegian-American community, responsibility for traditions can be inculcated in individuals by family but also by institutions. The handcraft classes offered by Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, for example, persuade participants to take up the practice of a craft like woodcarving and to carry it on as a marker of a Norwegian-American ethos. Individual carvers learn their place in the history of Norwegian woodcarving and come to understand that they bear some of the responsibility for carrying that tradition forward. How they do that is up to them: they can choose to simply carve for their own pleasure, make gifts of their carvings to others, supplement their income by selling carving, teach others to carve, or do any or all of these at different points in their life as a woodcarver. People choose how to live out an ethos that attaches to tradition, and their choices keep traditions alive and allow traditions to adapt to changing circumstances.

A rhetorical education that uses tradition to persuade individuals to take up a lived ethos needs to both convince people to take up responsibility for the group's continuance and demonstrate how individuals can shape the tradition as they take it forward. The
room for individual creativity and innovation matters because community members are not simply charged with perfectly preserving the past but with helping a living practice continue into the future. When Noyes argues that tradition is the passing of responsibility for a “valued practice or performance” (233), she leaves the door open for traditions to change as communities themselves change; what matters most is the responsibility for the practice and the objects and knowledge that go with it. In the introduction to *The Individual and Tradition: Folkloristic Perspectives* (2011), Ray Cashman, Tom Mould, and Pravina Shukla echo Noyes' portrayal when they write that tradition can be viewed as a process, which emphasizes action and creativity over stasis; they also discuss viewing tradition as a resource, which emphasizes tradition's function as a repository of knowledge that can be used for new purposes in the present (3). These three interpretations of tradition, which view it as the passing of responsibility, a process, and a repository, all emphasize the present and the future. The views of tradition as a transfer and a process, however, are most useful when it comes to the teaching of lived ethos because these views focus on how practices are always in motion from one person to another within a community. The equation of tradition with motion prevents an ethos like a Norwegian-American one from being seen as static and outmoded and instead shows how identities and traditions can shift together.

The changes to tradition are not abstract shiftings over time but based in physical acts and innovations, meaning that the living out of an ethos that has reference to a tradition will in turn shape that tradition and that ethos. Louise Waldén, in “Women's Creativity and the Swedish Study Circles” (1994), writes: “When old techniques are
handed on, the cultural heritage is preserved. But it is preserved by living hands, which means that it is subject to change. Old traditions live on, new ones arise” (187). Waldén focuses on the importance of “living hands,” which makes clear that the passing of tradition from person to person inevitably leads to change; only automata could perfectly replicate the work of the past. The focus on hands is also important because it makes it clear that tradition and the ethos that comes with it is not just carried in texts or discourse but in action and motion. In “The Farms of Lima: Living and Building Between Tradition and Change” (1994), Mats Widbom approaches the issue of tradition and creativity from a slightly different angle, writing:

"Tradition is something that is constantly being reinterpreted and re-created in the present, in dynamic oscillation between continuity and change. It is this movement, the ability to renew one's home within the framework of tradition—to make extensions, refurbish, refresh, replace, and redecorate—that is one of the most powerful incitements to everyday creativity. (140)"

Widbom emphasizes how tradition moves between the past and the present; there is no linear movement forward but a spiral that refers to the past in order to move forward in the present and into the future. Individual creativity and practice moves the tradition forward, but continuously referring to the past keeps the tradition grounded in the valuable meta-knowledge that gives it meaning and community significance. Yücel Demirer makes a similar argument in “Rite of Passage as a Communal Classroom: The Pedagogical Recycling of Traditional New Year Celebrations in Turkey” (2005) when he discusses how Kurds and the Turkish government have both reinterpreted a new year's festival, called Newroz or Nevruz. He writes: “The recycling of a tradition or celebration does not merely imply a salvaging, but also a deliberate recontextualization of cultural
objects toward a new purpose at the cultural level” (136). The new interpretations of Newroz and Nevruz are done on purpose, Demirer argues, and are meant to work in and change the culture of which they are a part. Demirer's argument shows that not only the practices of a tradition change but the purposes of a tradition can change as well. Therefore, changes in practice and meaning for traditions do not indicate decline but rather a deliberate response to shifting contexts. Rather than inventing new traditions out of whole cloth, adapting traditions meets the needs of the present. Revised traditions help communities create and live out an ethos that has reference to the past, values, and practices while living in the present and looking to the future.

A rhetorical education that uses tradition to build lived ethos depends on the adaptability of tradition to meet present needs; without it, traditions would soon lose persuasive power and relevance in the present. In the context of lived ethos, the ability of tradition to adapt to changing circumstances and the freedom it gives practitioners to shape the practice for which they are responsible makes an ethos tied to the past easier to incorporate into the present. If Norwegian Americans felt required to only repeat what had been done in the past, then an ethos based in Norwegian-American identifications would quickly lose meaning and usability in the present. Norwegian Americans who take part in the lefse-making tradition have adapted their practice to modernity, using electric griddles instead of cast iron griddles over a fire, and some who make lefse swear by decidedly modern ingredients like instant potato flakes and 7UP in their dough.¹⁵

¹⁵ Of course not every Norwegian American supports these innovations, which is another feature of a living tradition: difference. Writing about discovering that her grandmother used instant potatoes and 7UP in her lefse recipe, blogger Teresa writes: “Imagine my surprise when my dad admitted to me that my grandmother's 'secret' lefse recipe didn't require a potato ricer. Instead, she used Hungry Jack instant
These innovations have changed how lefse is made, but these changes still come along with all of the meta-knowledge about how to prepare the kitchen, how to use the special utensils that lefse-making requires, and family and community histories of lefse, its preparation, and how to eat it. The innovations serve to keep the tradition alive and moving and so they also serve as a way to cultivate a lived ethos that has recourse to the past even as it seeks to flourish in the present. The changing lefse recipes and practices are only one example of how tradition keeps moving in the Norwegian-American community. The handcrafts taught at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum also demonstrate how community members are invited into practices that they can shape as they move forward. Woodcarving classes and fiber arts classes offered at Vesterheim give students much latitude in deciding how to practice the handcraft beyond the class. In classes taught by Harley Refsal and Kate Martinson, students are encouraged to branch out from examples and create their own designs and try out their own ideas, creating a context friendly to innovation and change.

Pedagogies of tradition come with problems depending how these educational strategies are taken up by institutions; national appropriations of the local and too much emphasis on competition and excellence can detract from a lived ethos that thrives in the everyday. In “Pedagogies and Politics of 'Culture': Chiefly Authority, the State, and the
Teaching of Cultural Traditions in Ghana” (2005), Cati Coe discusses how the institutional uptake of traditions inevitably changes these traditions and how traditions are transmitted. In Ghana, taking cultural knowledge out of a small community context into the national educational system has meant that knowledge of rituals and traditions is now “knowledge how to rather than knowledge of” (87, emphasis original). Coe also writes that the rise of school cultural competitions marks an attempt “to appropriate local traditions and cultural practices for national ends” (100). Nationalizing traditions meant for smaller communities dramatically changes the audience and purpose of the knowledge and can end up stripping much of the meaning from them. Coe's research serves as a caution against the too-free use and appropriation of tradition for persuasive purposes. In particular, Coe's discussion of cultural competitions warns against putting traditional practices that have not previously involved competition into a competitive economy.

Even though the Norwegian-American community's concerns about tradition and pedagogy are on a smaller scale than the shifts in means and ends that Coe maps, certain traditions within Norwegian America have been used in ways that can divide the community and discourage a view of tradition as something that everyday Norwegian Americans can take up and bring forward. Marion Nelson writes in “Norwegian Folk Art in America” (1995) that a Norwegian folk art revival in the United States is marked by “formal instruction in the techniques and styles of the old traditions, often given by artist/craftsmen from Norway...and competitive competitions allow cross influences to occur and encourage high quality” (95). Nelson was director of Vesterheim Norwegian-
American Museum and started the museum's gold medal program, where people who did rosemaling could enter their pieces into a judged exhibition, and upon winning a number of ribbons would be awarded a gold medal (Fossum-Martin). His presentation of competitions as a useful way to persuade people to take up and refine traditional practices is true to a certain extent; Vesterheim's Education Specialist, Darlene Fossum-Martin spoke in an interview about how the gold medal program boosted attendance at Vesterheim's classes, so much so that classes had to have waiting lists. However, while the gold medal program has encouraged participation and the pursuit of artistic excellence, it has also led to divisions within Vesterheim's classes around which are considered prestigious and which are not.16 Also, the rosemaling classes have tended to focus more on technique than on the meta-knowledge that comes with the painting style (Martinson). In Noyes' terms, rosemaling may have fallen into the trap of fetishizing the object, the finished piece, over the histories and other knowledge that have gone along with rosemaling in the past. Pedagogies that involve tradition, therefore, must take care to pass the meta-knowledge along with the practice so that it does not get stripped of meaning.

A rhetorical education involving tradition that includes responsibility for the practice being passed on and the freedom to play with the tradition and make changes to

---

16 Nelson emphasizes skilled and trained artists in his work. Another contributor to *Norwegian Folk Art: The Migration of a Tradition*, Halvard Bjørkvik, makes the counter-point that “one must also remember that artistic talent and the joy of working with one's hands are not limited to any particular class of society” (124). Nelson's focus on rosemaling and styles of woodcarving that require extensive training determines his view of folk art and tradition to a certain extent since they are a more middle/upper class pursuit than other forms (Ellingsgard 190). Bjørkvik's more open view of folk art and tradition is important to the work that Kate Martinson and Harley Refsal do, which is explored in chapter 3.
it helps communities to create a lived ethos that is flexible. Even if the repeated practice of tradition can ultimately make that ethos seem more like a core identity than a construction, lived ethos must change with time and shifting circumstances. In the field of folklore, the understanding that traditions and practices change over time is well-established, showing that identifications and practices do not need to remain static in order to retain their meaning. Lena Johannesson discusses the importance of change in the context of Sweden and the iconic Dala horse, a powerful symbol of Swedish identity, in “On Folk Art and Other Modernities” (1994). She writes:

> When an outsider, German ethnologist Ina-Maria Greverus, came to Dalarna in the 1970s and observed the transformation of the Dala horse from a pastime for winter whittlers to a souvenir industry, she did not find a process of degeneration. Instead, she saw a pattern in which folk art shows its eternal power for innovation and change. (46)

Johannesson's point that even the commercialization of a tradition has not negated or degraded it points to the related idea that even as a community's ethos shifts as it disperses, regroups, or brings in members who are not tied to the community by blood it can shift to accommodate the changes without conceptualizing the shift as a decline. Marjorie Hunt echoes this view in “Delight in Skill: The Stone Carvers' Art” (2011). She writes that tradition is “A dynamic and selective process, it has a strong incorporating power, bringing forward valued aspects of the past to serve in the present and shaping deeply felt human values into meaningful expressive forms” (51). Casting tradition as “dynamic” highlights its power to change and adapt, and Hunt emphasizes that what tradition does is give shape and expression to beliefs and values that have a long affective past. The outward practice of the tradition can change while the values remain the same,
but the values can change as well, making tradition a more flexible creator of ethos than it would be if only the physical practice shifted.

Pedagogies of tradition do much to inculcate community members with the sense that change is inevitable and desirable, but it is important to understand that lived ethos moves beyond the flexibility of a practice to encompass the flexibility of identifications and modes of expression. Ray Cashman echoes Johannesson's implicit claim when he argues that traditions and individuals can be understood in the same way. In “The Role of Tradition in the Individual: At Work in Donegal with Packy Jim McGrath” (2011), he argues: “Like tradition, the individual is best understood not as a bounded, natural, static entity but as an on-going work in progress—enacted, maintained, and revised through performance, recursive and changeable over time” (303). Cashman links the changeability of tradition to the mutability of individuals, and he makes the point that both traditions and individuals are shaped by present-day actions that can return to the past or push forward. Even though Cashman does not use the term ethos, his argument about the link between individuals and tradition agrees with rhetorical scholarship that claims that ethos is by nature flexible and changing. In “Self-Structure as a Rhetorical Device: Modern Ethos and the Divisiveness of the Self” (1994), Marshall A. Alcorn, Jr. argues that “Thus, the concept of ethos should not be imagined as some fixed reality approached by different perspectives. Rather, we should imagine different sorts of ethos assuming many shapes as these structures change over time” (7). Alcorn, Jr.'s argument claims that ethos as a concept itself is flexible, but if the concept is flexible then the ethos that gets constructed is also changeable as well. Similarly, in “The Splitting Image:
Contemporary Feminisms and the Ethics of ëthos” (1994), Susan Jarratt and Nedra Reynolds claim that “ethos is the admission of a standpoint, with the understanding that other standpoints exist and that they change over time” (Jarratt and Reynolds 53). Jarratt and Reynolds agree with Cashman and Alcorn, Jr. that ethos changes, but they add the important piece that an ethos must admit that it is not the only one and that it and other ethos will change. A lived ethos that acknowledges its own mutability and the existence of other kinds of ethos helps communities understand their own place in the current context and also can keep a more hegemonic idea of ethos at bay. The recognition that lived ethos can shift over time and interact with other groups' ethos makes room for difference and for the accommodation of difference rather than a need to subsume other identities.

*The Education in and Expression of Lived Ethos through Practice*

Lived ethos adapts to changing circumstances within and without a group and so enables individuals to have the ability to in turn shape the lived ethos and help their community to use and carry forward the past in the present. How usable pasts and traditions play out in the present depends on the practices which individuals and communities take up. It is practice that puts the meta-knowledge and traditions of a community into a meaningful context. The repeated practice of ethos-building elements leads to the actual living of an ethos that permeates a person's life. Ethos is always in some sense enacted or practiced which can make it difficult to discuss since practices might involve physical action and not words. As S. Michael Halloran writes in “Aristotle's Concept of Ethos”: “the ritual acts that manifest our group identity or ethos
are the very same acts that form it” (63). The recursive process of creation and
expression that Halloran describes here makes it clear that acts—whether textual or not—
are a key part of ethos; through repeated behavior we create and show our ethos to others.
The recursive nature of the ethos Halloran describes, with acts that show the ethos
creating the ethos anew, also points to the importance of living out an ethos. Without the
continuous recreation of identity a community loses its vitality. Rhetoricians still often
turn to texts in order to understand how ethos is practiced and not simply constructed for
a specific moment; this does not mean that rhetoricians have ignored the role that non-
textual practice plays in the creation of ethos, but the focus on finished products and
performances does mean that rhetoricians have overlooked how the rhetorical text,
performance, or act are the result of an ethos created in practice and not the ethos itself.
Practice, therefore, works as rhetorical education because the practice instructs or re-
instructs the practitioner in the ethos even as the practice serves to express that ethos.
Ethos as lived out in practice travels in multiple directions: when it prepares a person or a
community for a public act or performance it ultimately travels out, but it can also serve
as an end in itself and stay with the individual or community and move within the
community.

Both forms of practice involve and lead to lived ethos, but in the first the end goal
is to display the ethos to outside audiences and in the second the ethos exists for insider
audiences or even just the individual as audience. Rhetorical discussions of ethos as a
practice tend to emphasize that the practice of ethos bears fruit when speaking to external
audiences. Dale Sullivan ties ethos to repeated practice in “A Closer Look at Education
as Epideictic Rhetoric” (1994). He describes the process of ethos creation through epideictic education thus: “Epideictic pedagogy produces hexis (habit), and hexis produces ethos” (82). Even though Sullivan is interested in the educational processes that lead to ethos, he envisions ethos as the end product, not as the habit itself, envisioning the process as linear instead of as a circle. Ethos exists in the performance which is made easier through habit. Similarly, James J. Brown, Jr. writes in “Essjay's Ethos: Rethinking Textual Origins and Intellectual Property” (2009) that “A discussion of ethos is not a discussion of stable origins but is rather a discussion of a continuous process of becoming author, becoming speaker, becoming writer” (241). Brown's focus on the continuous process of ethos points to the importance of practice, but like Sullivan he is interested in the ways in which this ethical becoming leads to acts of authoring and speaking, of performing. In the context of lived ethos this view of practice as a rehearsal for performance can make sense. The example of Norwegian folk dance groups demonstrates how practice that leads to performance can work as lived ethos. Groups that dance at festivals like the ones held for Syttende Mai in Decorah, Iowa and Stoughton, Wisconsin practice their dances regularly to prepare for the performances. These practices work as a rehearsal of ethos (in this case, an ethos built on identifications with Norwegian folk dancing, music, and dress) and the ethos is publicly recognized in performances of the dances. This does not detract from the ethos work that goes on in practices, which can be significant for the dancers and their teachers, but it does give the ethos a goal beyond the everyday work of dancing. Lived ethos can encompass these
performance-oriented practices, but it also dwells in the everyday that may never see performance.

Feminist rhetoricians have done much needed work to introduce discussions of everyday practices into studies of ethos which helps explain how lived ethos depends on habits that may or may not end with a public display of identity. Patricia Bizzell, in “Frances Willard, Phoebe Palmer, and the Ethos of the Methodist Woman Preacher,” argues that certain habits of dress, tone, and style can influence an audience's perception of ethos: “Often [ethos] makes it impact in the opening moments of a speaker's address, as we take in her physical appearance, clothing, vocal tones, and immediate surroundings without necessarily noting that we are doing so” (384). Even though Bizzell focuses on the public presentation of ethos in preaching, her discussion touches on elements of a speaker's address that might come from daily practice and habit: clothing, speaking style, and appearance. Likewise, Kimberly Harrison examines the textual practices of Confederate women diarists in “Rhetorical Rehearsals: The Construction of Ethos in Confederate Women's Civil War Diaries” (2003). Her article examines how “in private rhetorical spaces, women prepared to meet effectively the rhetorical challenges created by the war and to present a public image that accounted for the feminine ideals valued by their culture and that allowed them to act in order to secure their safety” (244). Even though Harrison sees the end goal of the diaries as enabling public action and speech, her

---

17 Carol Mattingly's book *Appropriating Dress: Women's Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America* (2002) pioneered the study of dress, appearance, and ethos. Mattingly analyzes how women speakers accommodated and resisted/revised expectations of dress and behavior, and while her work is focused on history, the theoretical implications are important for present-day understandings of ethos as well.
focus on the private practice of keeping a diary as creating ethos pushes rhetoricians to consider how private practices and habits allow people to craft an ethos. Lindal Buchanan takes the focus on women's practices in the private sphere further in “Forging and Firing Thunderbolts: Collaboration and Women's Rhetoric” (2003). Buchanan looks at women's collaboration as a means of fostering ethos in an environment hostile to women rhetors, pointing out that through indirect/supportive collaboration (which in the historical context Buchanan examines involved child care, housework, and other largely domestic activities) women rhetors of the nineteenth century were able to speak publicly and still appease the cult of true womanhood (45). Buchanan's work is important because it shows how women worked in smaller communities to create an ethos that let them exist in and speak to dominant culture even as they challenged it which helps explain how non-dominant communities use ethos to exist in a dominant culture without assimilating completely into it. However, Buchanan, Harrison, and Bizzell all explore how women practiced an ethos that accorded with a dominant culture's expectations, and lived ethos can also work to distinguish or separate a group from the dominant culture. Furthermore, the ethos practices they describe are geared towards a public performance that is not necessary to a lived ethos.

The practice involved in teaching and expressing a lived ethos can bridge the divide between private and public acts. Collaboration and private work, as Buchanan points out, can enable public acts of ethos, and these private collaborations and practices are vital to the success of public displays of Norwegian-American ethos during celebrations of Syttende Mai, festivals like Nordic Fest, or church lutefisk suppers. The
mother and father teaching their children how to make lefse, the person giving a ride to a friend to folk dance practice: these are simple acts of collaboration that enable the living out and survival of Norwegian-American ethos. A top-down approach is insufficient because it ignores these small but vital persuasive acts. Although the following chapters look at how institutions use rhetorical education to persuade people into a Norwegian-American ethos and to connect them to the Norwegian-American community, these observations still apply. The institutions I investigate are voluntary and small in comparison to more publicly visible institutions and landmarks like Mt. Rushmore. Also, the chapters that follow consider how individuals can take up the ethos presented by these institutions into their daily lives. These considerations touch on how the individual and the community interact and avoid looking at only one or the other.

A rhetorical education involving practice also needs to take into account how people and communities interact with spaces to teach and learn lived ethos. The practice of traveling to certain places to create ethos is related to the rhetorical acts that make spaces dwelling places of ethos in the first place. However, in the context of lived ethos, what matters most is the practice of experiencing and inhabiting these spaces to take an ethos back into daily life and not how repeated acts of travel enhance a site's ethos. S. Michael Halloran, in “The Rhetoric of Picturesque Scenery” (1993), writes of his own tourist experience: “In fact, the whole trip was something like an edifying discourse. In retracing the supposed path of pioneers and viewing the scenes and artifacts of their time, we were rehearsing an American ethos, participating in a rite of civic religion” (227). Halloran's reflections show how the act of traveling and of viewing objects can create an
ethos (as long as there is meta-knowledge to go with the act, for without it there is no guarantee that the audience will come up with the correct ethos). Gregory Clark agrees with Halloran in *Rhetorical Landscapes in America* (2004), when he writes about “some of the ways residents of a vast and diverse nation have been prompted by the symbolic experiences they share as tourists to adopt for themselves a common sense of national identity” (4). Even though Halloran and Clark are still discussing how people enter into an ethos that is part of the dominant culture, they bring new sites to light as places to look for ethos formation. Their focus on the acts of traveling and touring as important to ethos formation signals how non-textual sites and practices that do not necessarily end in a public declamation or written document can be ways of taking part in the recursive process of expressing and forming an identity. Handcraft students who come to Decorah, Iowa to study at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum visit a location that is a dwelling site of Norwegian-American ethos: the King and Queen of Norway visited Decorah and Vesterheim in 2011 and have visited before, signaling this site's importance to Norway and Norwegian Americans. Visiting Decorah and Vesterheim as places can thus become a practice that fosters a lived Norwegian-American ethos, a practice that is only enhanced by the handcraft practices taught at the museum.

Even though the act of traveling to a place can serve as a practice that builds ethos, the ability to bring that ethos into the everyday in concrete ways matters more to lived ethos, for otherwise the ethos engendered will be more symbolic than lived. In folklore the concept of practice as a meaningful process illuminates how everyday acts create identities. Even seemingly simple acts can take on the rhetorical power to build
ethos and a community which Simone Cinotto writes about in “Sunday Dinner? You Had to Be There': The Social Significance of Food in Italian Harlem, 1920-40” (2011). Cinotto writes about the importance of the family meal in forming an Italian familial and community identity: “The convivial consumption of food...was ultimately a strategy of investments in family and community ties, aimed at maintaining group solidarity as well as delaying the uncontrolled embrace of middle-class values” (19). The practice of immediate and extended families gathering together for meals, Cinotto argues, was an important and intentional strategy in maintaining a coherent family and community identity as Italian immigrants faced the changes that a new life in Harlem brought. The practice was not overtly pedagogical, but through the repeated practice of eating together, younger generations were taught what to eat and with whom to eat, creating through repetition identifications that would carry through generational, economic, and social change. Cinotto's argument demonstrates how seemingly simple acts that might not seem rhetorical at first are in fact persuading community members into a practice that cements communal ties and an ethos that is meant to be lived out and passed on over time.

Practices inevitably change, however, and can be threatened by forces within and without the community that make a practice more difficult or potentially dangerous to its material life. Pravina Shukla discusses the dilemma faced by community members wishing to preserve the practice of wearing Swedish regional dress to Sunday church in “The Maintenance of Heritage: Kersti Jobs-Björklöf and Swedish Folk Costume” (2011). She writes:

Costumes are preserved visually by artists and photographers, and they are preserved physically in the museum (and in family storage chests).
The only way they can be preserved in social context—their meanings and communications still functional—is through actual use...In preservation, there is a dilemma...If you keep it, the clothes are safe; if you wear it, the clothes are alive. (156)

If a community uses practice as a pedagogical strategy to create a lived ethos, then the community must abandon some of the safety that comes with preservation and make allowances for the changes that will come when original materials are worn out and need to be replaced. The negotiation of change and how it comes can also help communities decide how an ethos lived out in daily life should shift with the times.

Ultimately, the importance of practice as a pedagogical strategy in the rhetorical education of community members into lived ethos rests on the power of practice to bring the abstract knowledge, histories, and stories of a group into the present through the movements of the body. Louise Waldén writes about this power in “Women's Creativity and the Swedish Study Circles” (1994). Speaking of her own experience of handcrafts, she writes:

the [book] knowledge became more real, more concrete, when put to practical use in the work of my hands. Perhaps this is one reason people continue to do things with their hands that can be done much faster—and often with greater perfection—by machine. Another reason may be the need to pass on the cultural heritage that is inherent in the traditional manual crafts. (186)

Waldén's point that the practice of traditions is not dependent on perfection helps argue against a too-great concern with preservation; as Shukla says, the meaning and life of a practice only remains if people actually engage in that practice and use materials that may not last. Lived ethos results from a focus on practice over preservation. It depends upon “the work of...hands” that may lead to change and the destruction of some things in
order to maintain a living community based on daily acts that bring a group's past stories and knowledge into the present. Sons of Norway, for example, began as a group that used Norwegian at meetings and in publications, but then in the late 1930s moved to make English the official language of the organization (“A Brief History of Sons of Norway”). The practices of the organization and the lodges did not disappear because of this change, and Sons of Norway still encourages learning Norwegian by promoting summer language camps and providing language-learning resources on its website. The change to English allowed the work of the organization to continue rather than turning all of its energy into preserving a language that had ceased to be a primary practice of its members.

The Results of Lived Ethos

A lived ethos that is based in exemplary histories, the use of tradition to encourage responsibility and creativity, and the everyday practice of identity results in the ethos becoming naturalized: community members live out the ethos because it seems like the natural and responsible thing to do. Naturalizing an ethos helps incorporate individuals into a community and the community into individuals, strengthening the bonds between them and cementing a lived ethos in practices and the beliefs and values that come with them. As practices help persuade community members into a lived ethos and enable groups to adapt to changing circumstances, practices also work to naturalize a lived ethos. Dorothy Noyes discusses this process in *Fire in the Plaça: Catalan Festival Politics After Franco* (2003). Discussing the yearly Corpus Christi festival called the Patum, Noyes writes: “repeated performance, grounded in everyday material relations,
can gradually transmute experience into something like essence” (4). Noyes is discussing the yearly participatory festival that helps define the town of Berga in Catalan, but the concept that the repetition of certain actions transforms what can be seen as performance into something more like “essence” is important to the use of practice as a way to persuade community members into a lived ethos. If the ethos becomes naturalized and performed to the point where the individual and community no longer feel that it is performed but rather expressed (drawn out from within instead of put on for an occasion), then the persuasion is complete. Noyes presents action as what leads to knowledge, writing that “Right behavior incarnates right understanding” (35). Although she does not use the term “practice” here, Noyes persuasively presents the repeated acts that make up a practice as a way to understanding and thus as a way to being. In rhetorical terms, practice takes repeated acts, whether everyday or centered around a celebration or festival, and turns them into an ethos that comes from the practice but which also gives the practice meaning. When Dale Sullivan writes that “hexis [habit] produces ethos” (82), he presents a rhetorical view of the ideas Noyes delineates in Fire in the Plaça. Connecting Noyes' conception of experience and essence with Sullivan's discussion of hexis and ethos shows that an ethos can manifest in experiences and that the repeated experience of a certain ethos can naturalize it. The ethos is there all along, but the practice manifests the ethos and simultaneously reinforces it.

Even though many acts of lived ethos dwell with the individual, lived ethos seeks to mediate a relationship between the individual and the community that can best be explained as incorporation, in which an individual is bodily taken into the community
and the community taken into the body. Rhetoricians have explored the issue of how individuals and communities negotiate boundaries and identities, but in order to fully understand how incorporation works, folklore's understanding of performance and bodies needs to come into play as well. At first, incorporation seems to pose a problem because it could apparently result in the disappearance of the individual into the group and not allow for difference and dissent. Certainly, for communities to have an ethos there must indeed exist a certain amount of elision of difference, and rhetoricians understand this well. In “Aristotle's Concept of Ethos” (1982), S. Michael Halloran writes that “ethos emphasizes the conventional rather than the idiosyncratic, the public rather than the private...To have ethos is to manifest the virtues most valued by the culture to and for which one speaks” (60, emphasis original). Ethos, in other words, is focused on the public and the community even when it is contained in or manifested by an individual. Halloran's assessment of ethos is based in his understanding of Aristotle's focus on the polis and how people speak in it, and he envisions people speaking within their community. R. Allen Harris, however, sees the community as disciplining the individual in “Generative Semantics: Secret Handshakes, Anarchy Notes, and the Implosion of Ethos” (1993). He writes: “a rhetor's individual choices are constrained: the group ethos strongly influences the rhetorical decisions of its members; therefore, their personae. You can't stray too far from the expected patterns of your group, or you simply won't be in that group any more” (126, emphasis original). Harris focuses on the ways in which individuals' choices and acts either keep them in line with a group's ethos or mark them as different. In Harris' definition, ethos is a measuring stick more than a public space in
which individuals are formed. Harris agrees with Halloran in that he sees ethos as a part of group discipline and existence; ethos' function of binding communities is not all negative, but rhetors must conform—at least to a certain degree—in order to be considered members of a community and to be persuasive. Reynolds explicitly names the exclusionary power of ethos in “Ethos as Location,” writing that communities are not utopian locations of unfettered communication and free of conflict but are also built on exclusion and marginalization (329). Incorporation, then, could be read as a force that drowns the individual in the community or rejects those who will not surrender, denying difference and dissent.

Incorporation, despite its somewhat sinister potential, helps unite divided people into a community and still allow and honor difference. Writing about the city of Berga in Fire in the Plaça (2003), Dorothy Noyes writes that “In a deeply factionalized community with a history of civil war and a present of economic threat, the incorporation of individuals into active community membership is the primary goal of the Patum, and the history that militates against that incorporation must be overtly silenced and covertly transformed” (38). In the Berguedan context the elision of difference is necessary to make a community that exists as a whole and in which community members can take active roles in despite histories of conflict and present-day uncertainties. Unlike rhetoric scholars like Harris, however, Noyes sees incorporation as a practice that does not deny other views that still represent difference. She writes: “Whereas the Patum as representation maps the social divisions of Berga in a way that all can read, the Patum in performance collapses all distinctions into illegibility” (121). In other words, standing
back and viewing the Patum as representative of Berguedan society brings out markers of difference and division, but the actual experience and performance of the Patum makes these divisions impossible to see and understand. Incorporation thus is not a permanent eraser of difference, but can involve a temporary transcendence of difference followed by the everyday life afterwards which is marked by the results of incorporation.\(^\text{18}\)

However, incorporation works in a circle, not in a straight line from individual to community, meaning that incorporation goes both directions and also depends on recursiveness. Noyes claims that incorporation is “reciprocal” and involves the incorporation of “Berga into individuals and individuals into Berga—the purposeful, never final constitution of a Berguedan social body” (82). The cycle of mutual incorporation, in which individuals are drawn into the community and also draw the community into themselves, is a result of lived ethos. For example, a family that makes regular trips to Old World Wisconsin in Eagle, Wisconsin is drawn into the living history museum both physically and intellectually. While on the grounds they are a part of the museum's landscape, structures, and life. However, the family also draws the museum into themselves by interacting with interpreters, taking in (both figuratively and literally) the sights, smells, sounds, and tastes of nineteenth-century Wisconsin life. It can take one trip to accomplish this incorporation, but the return to the museum and its offerings

\(^{18}\) It would be exhausting and impossible to live in a state of pure incorporation. In *Fire in the Plaça*, Noyes discusses at length the demands the Patum puts on bodies, and even if moments of incorporation do not involve a physically taxing festival difference cannot be ignored or subsumed forever. Noyes' analysis of the Patum suggests that incorporation has a flow to it; the Patum is where incorporation collapses all difference, but then for the rest of the year the town of Berga has to continue to find a way to exist as a community dealing with a fraught past and uncertain present. The return to the Patum again and again affirms the community's coherence even as circumstances change.
matters because it keeps the work of incorporation going and serves to recreate the identifications that draw visitors in first to a museum community and second into communities that individuals and family groups might have historical ties to. Noyes explains the importance of repetition (or a return to the site of incorporation) thus: “Embodied memory cannot be lost, though you can crowd it round, try to drown it out with stronger messages. But the language of the body does not differentiate: all similar motion provokes similar emotion” (212). Noyes' analysis here points to the importance of bodies and repeated action to incorporation; even resistant people cannot deny the power of a return to actions that evoke memories of previous actions.19

Noyes' interest in the body and the possibility of the unwanted return of incorporative identifications suggests that individual agency might have a limited role, if any role at all. Kenneth Burke's interest in how internal persuasion works, however, adds another dimension to Noyes' concept of incorporation by taking into account the importance of the self persuading the self when considering how people and communities are incorporated into one another. Burke writes in *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950):

> Education (“indoctrination”) exerts such pressure [of identification] upon him from without; he completes the process from within. If he does not somehow act to tell himself (as his own audience) what the various brands of rhetorician have told him, his persuasion is not complete. (39)

Burke illuminates the role of the individual in ethos formation, which can extend to

---

19 Noyes discusses the impossibility of unmaking identifications in the context of how Patum participants can make themselves Catalan/Berguedan but cannot unmake previous Francoist actions. Incorporation works both as a blessing and a curse, therefore. It also suggests that people should take care when incorporation is in play; if an incorporation (or by extension a lived ethos) cannot be unmade, then people should be aware of how they are being incorporated into communities.
incorporation as well. The individual might be caught up in experiences of identification, but if that person does not complete the process through internal persuasion then the incorporation is not sufficient. Even if the body’s past actions cannot be forgotten and even if “similar motion provokes similar emotion,” the individual can still persuade or not persuade her- or himself to continue to participate in the histories, traditions, and practices of a community. Consider Old World Wisconsin again. Even a resistant child who does not want to go on the visit to the museum cannot avoid the physical experience of the place and the identifications that lead from it. Whether the child later chooses to cultivate or ignore those identifications, however, influences whether those identifications lead to lived ethos or not.

From a rhetorical standpoint, incorporation helps lived ethos negotiate the boundaries between individuals and communities by at least temporarily and partially erasing boundaries of difference. While pedagogies that use exemplars or tradition encourage imitation or creativity and difference, incorporation insists on collapsing unique contributions into one great communal whole. This is at play in the Patum that Noyes studies, in which certain people take charge of preparing others for the different dances performed in the festivals and the dancers themselves prepare and contribute in ways that citizen participants do not. It is also at play in more everyday actions that can constitute lived ethos. The family that visits Old World Wisconsin may not be aware of

---

20 Importantly, Burke here posits that a person can be his or her own audience and introduces the concept of self-persuasion. Whereas rhetoric as a field often assumes an external audience, Burke adds an internal audience to the rhetorical situation. In the context of lived ethos this expansion of the concept of audience matters because people may not always practice a lived ethos for an external audience but might do it for personal pleasure or out of a sense of duty. Even if there is an imagined outside audience when ethos is practiced alone, the internal orientation of the persuasion still dominates.
the many contributions that curators and staff have made to the exhibits and their interpretation or how they themselves bring experiences, questions, and knowledge that shape the work of the museum on the day they visit. The museum obscures these individual works in favor of the whole. Similarly, Sons of Norway conventions take the everyday work of lodges and members and turn it all to the purpose of celebrating a larger Norwegian-American unity. Representatives of different lodges and guests join together in singing the Norwegian national anthem (also a feature of lodge meetings) and in this small incorporative act erase their differences and proclaim a greater unity. Even after the visit to the museum or the convention ends, the aftereffects of incorporation linger in memories and in the possibility of repeating the experience another time.

By creating spaces where difference is temporarily overcome and a greater whole proclaimed, incorporation works persuasively to embed individuals in a community and vice versa, allowing communities to recreate themselves and to assert their role in shaping the lives and actions of their members. Incorporation encompasses the use of exemplars with which present-day people can identify, traditions that tie the present to the past and continue valued practices that shift and grow, and practices that bring ethos into everyday life and turn it into something like essence instead of performance. Lived ethos, even though it encourages difference and individual practice within a community, finally works to draw a group together so that it can continue to survive and work in the context of a larger culture.
Conclusion

The following chapters analyze how a rhetorical education in lived ethos plays out in three different sites: Sons of Norway publications and conventions from 1918-1946, handcraft classes taught by Kate Martinson and Harley Refsal at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, and the representation of immigrant life at Old World Wisconsin. These sites all work to persuade Norwegian Americans to identify with the past in order to live out a Norwegian-American ethos in the present and use exemplary histories, traditions, and practices as pedagogies that are meant to follow participants into their daily lives.

Chapter two explores how the fraternal organization Sons of Norway selected elements of the Norwegian and Norwegian-American past and presented them in a way that would “further interest in all that is good and noble in the Norwegian national character” (Constitution 3). Using archival materials that were created from the late years of World War I through the end of World War II, this chapter argues that Sons of Norway used exemplars to create a more-than-American identity that Norwegian Americans could generally identify with and also presented members with exemplars who spoke to the different interests and demographics in the community. The years after WWI and through WWII were important to the Norwegian-American community because this time marked a period of increasing anti-immigrant sentiment and because the Nazi occupation of Norway created further challenges for the group. The Sons of Norway was active during this time period, hosting biannual national conventions and producing promotional materials, and lodges put together picnics, concerts, and drill teams.
Chapter three proposes a new site of rhetorical exploration: handcrafts. While folklorists like Barbro Klein and Mats Widbom (Swedish Folk Art, 1994) have looked extensively at handcrafts and handcraft movements and their relationship with tradition and identity, rhetoric scholars have yet to recognize the teaching and learning of handcrafts as an important site of rhetorical education. These sites are worth exploring as loci of ethos formation, and the work of two instructors, Harley Refsal and Kate Martinson, at the Vesterheim Museum in Decorah, Iowa demonstrates how handcraft education persuades students to take up Norwegian-American identifications. Martinson and Refsal's pedagogy—in both plan and practice—persuades their students to take up practices like woodcarving and nålbinding (a netting technique) as an expression of a Norwegian-American ethos. The Vesterheim classes are popular, and while many participants come from the area, people travel from around the country to visit Decorah and attend the classes. Refsal and Martinson use anonymous and everyday exemplars, copious examples of work, and a call to practice tradition in order to persuade students of the power and worth of handcrafts. The learning and practicing of a handcraft, therefore, leads to an incorporation into tradition and the community from which the tradition comes, and thus to an ethos that is lived out in the everyday practice of the handcraft.

Chapter four examines how outdoor museums focused on immigrant history persuade people to identify with their own immigrant history through the use of imaginative empathy, engaging the senses, and taking action within historical environments. Living history museums have been written about by Richard Handler and Eric Gable (The New History in an Old Museum, 1997) and Barbara Kirshenblatt-
Gimblett (*Destination Culture*, 1998). Old World Wisconsin contains physical objects like immigrant cabins and the tools, furnishings, and materials of daily life that would have been available to the people inhabiting the buildings as well as interpreters who explain the living conditions and possible daily habits of the immigrants. The museum as a whole encourages visitors to engage thoughtfully with the past, to acknowledge its complexity, and to reflect on how past practices are relevant in the present. In particular, two Norwegian immigrant farmhouses and a school give Norwegian-American visitors a chance to forge identifications with the histories of inequality, struggle, and tradition portrayed at the sites. By engaging with history through imagination, the physical senses, and through action, Norwegian-American visitors create a deeper empathetic tie to the past and can reflect on how present-day practices and everyday life are tied to the past.

The rhetorical education and practices used to foster Norwegian-American ethos in the assimilationist culture of the United States points to new understandings of ethos and the rhetorical nature of everyday practices. The case studies of Sons of Norway, handcraft classes at the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, and Old World Wisconsin show the breadth of rhetorical practice in the Norwegian-American community and also demonstrate the importance of retelling history in persuading people to adopt and live out a Norwegian-American ethos. The concept of lived ethos opens up new territory for rhetorical scholarship and provides a lens with which to examine everyday practice in a rhetorical light. These new explorations will result in a deeper and more complex understanding of how groups reconstitute themselves across time by using
rhetorical education and the call to lived ethos.
Chapter 2: “To maintain and further interest in everything that is good and noble”: History, Exemplars, and Lived Ethos in Sons of Norway, 1918-1946

Sons of Norway, a Norwegian-American fraternal organization, was founded in 1895 and exists today as a group that brings people of Norwegian descent and other interested individuals together across the United States, Canada, and Norway. Since its inception, the organization has worked to unite people of Norwegian descent and to create a sense of common cause and community as Norwegian immigrants have adapted to life in North America. One of the most important rhetorical strategies that Sons of Norway has used to foster a lived Norwegian-American ethos in the United States is the retelling of history. The usable pasts found in large, nation-centered histories and small, exemplar-focused histories that Sons of Norway chooses to retell, recast, or ignore shape the ethos available to members of the organization and the kinds of practices they undertake to live out their identity. As an organization dedicated to promoting unity among people of Norwegian descent in the United States and Canada and to maintaining all that is “good and noble” in the Norwegian character, Sons of Norway understandably favors histories that show Norwegians and Norwegian Americans in a positive light and

21 Special thanks to Gary De Krey and Jeff Sauve, the archivists working at the Norwegian-American Historical Association Archives located in Northfield, Minnesota on the St. Olaf College campus. Their expertise and interest in this project were key to its success.

22 Although the organization's original name was Sønner af Norge, I refer to it throughout this chapter by the English translation since it has been used in many Sons of Norway publications since the 1920s.
focuses on the accomplishments rather than the failings of the people. The positive models and stories Sons of Norway provides in materials published between 1918 and 1946 are meant not only to give the audience a sense of pride in ancestors and contemporaries but also to encourage the incorporation of these histories into a Norwegian-American ethos that Sons of Norway members will take with them after leaving a meeting or convention and live out in their daily lives.

Although a celebration of the past and the creation of an ethos that winnows out negative characteristics could be interpreted as conservative, the ethos created by Sons of Norway still works to subvert the assimilationist bent of American culture. In *Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian American Through Celebration* (1994), April R. Schultz argues that celebration does not necessarily erase difference or diffuse its power. She argues that occasions like the 1925 Norse-American Immigration Centennial, although created to be non-threatening to American culture, can end up “invert[ing] the dominant assimilationist ideology” by portraying identities rooted in Norwegian nationalism (10). The exemplary histories used by Sons of Norway work in a similar way to affirm belonging while creating an ethos based on exemplars and Norwegian identifications. The positive and imitable ethos presented by Sons of Norway in materials published from World War I through World War II uses celebration to undermine the pressure to assimilate and gives members imitable exemplars to help them live out their Norwegian-American ethos in private, with other Norwegian Americans, and in very public spaces.

The repeated decisions Sons of Norway makes to only portray the praiseworthy
(or to reinterpret the blameworthy) makes sense given that after World War I the United States experienced a push for the Americanization of its immigrant population which put pressure on existing organizations that worked to unify and maintain immigrant communities and identities. Furthermore, during World War II there were early news reports portraying the people of Norway as easily capitulating to the Nazi invasion which Sons of Norway felt the need to counter through a revision of the peaceful post-WWI ethos the organization had crafted. The changing rhetorical situation following WWI and through WWII determined which pasts were usable and how Sons of Norway could revise and recast history to make a Norwegian-American ethos livable in the United States.

The organization used the past in two ways to craft an ethos that members could live out in their daily lives. First, Sons of Norway used the past to create a general and unifying ethos based in heroic retellings of Viking history and stories of Norwegian resistance against the Nazis. These overarching histories gave Norwegian Americans a lived ethos that made space for them in the United States and justified their interest in maintaining identifications that were more than American. Second, Sons of Norway made everyday people and practices exemplars of a Norwegian-American ethos, giving members imitable examples to help them see mundane tasks and interests as a way to live as Norwegian Americans. Providing members with exemplars who achieved international acclaim in the fine arts, who farmed or worked with their hands, and who were everyday or extraordinary women allowed Sons of Norway both to teach members how to live a Norwegian-American ethos in daily life and to unite an economically and
culturally diverse group of Americans. Ultimately, the Norwegian-American ethos created and revised by Sons of Norway is based on usable pasts that could be revised and reinterpreted as circumstances changed, enabling members to continue to live out a Norwegian-American ethos in their public and private lives. The exemplary histories allow for personal reflection, public discussion and celebration, and finally the public assertion that Norwegian Americans belong in the United States and benefit the country by maintaining a more-than-American identity.

**Sons of Norway: History and Ethos in New Contexts**

Ingrid Semingsen, author of *Norway to America: A History of the Migration* (1978, 2008), writes that Sons of Norway is the “largest and most enduring purely Norwegian-American organization” (146). The organization was founded in 1895 in Minneapolis, Minnesota and the eighteen founders, all men, intended to provide mutual assistance and insurance to Norwegian Americans during a time of economic depression. Einar Bredland, author of *Sons of Norway Third District Lodge History* (1995), explains that in the 1890s “times had for a couple of years been panicky” and that “relief was extended from man to man, or from woman to woman, and one of the purposes in forming Sons of Norway was to render assistance to one another and to other people of their own nationality” (2). Bredland also notes that the original name of the society was “Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson,” the name of a Norwegian nationalist who was famous for his novels and for writing the lyrics to what is now the Norwegian national anthem, but that upon further consideration the eighteen founders chose to name the society “Sønner af Norge” (Sons of Norway) because it would be easier for non-Norwegians to pronounce
The organization's concern with being understandable to an outside audience at this early date points to how Sons of Norway sought to function in the United States as a group that would help its members live out their Norwegian-American ethos in ways that would be legible to Norwegians, Norwegian Americans, and others.

Although Sons of Norway had a primary purpose of providing assistance and insurance to members, it also sought to maintain interest in Norwegian culture and practices. Bredland claims that “[the founders] may not have been profound students of literature or ardent lovers of art, but they keenly sensed the value of these things and fully understood that if there were to be any cultural life, which they might enjoy, it would have to be that which their old fatherland could offer them” (2). Carl G.O. Hansen, in “What Motivated the Organization of Sons of Norway” which appears in the 1942 supreme lodge convention program, agrees with Bredland's claim about the importance of culture to Sons of Norway. Hansen writes: “From its very inception, Sons of Norway has striven to promote the best interests of the Norwegian-American group.” He goes on to describe how the organization has arranged speaking tours and provided support for

---

23 The supreme lodge of the Sons of Norway was the highest governing body. Beneath it there were district lodges, which oversaw Sons of Norway's work in its seven districts. Local lodges were beneath the district lodges and met the most frequently. District lodges would meet annually or biannually, and the supreme lodge had a convention every two years. Delegates from the districts would attend the conventions and would bring their families with them. A local Sons of Norway lodge would host the supreme lodge convention and members from the local lodge and other lodges near by would often participate in the conventions as well. None of the Sons of Norway histories mention specific attendance records for the supreme lodge conventions, but they do note how many delegates attended. At the 1942 supreme lodge convention held in Chicago, Illinois, there were 56 delegates (Bredland 125). However, the attendance numbers for many of the non-business events of the convention would likely have been higher. Carl G.O. Hansen notes in his History of Sons of Norway that at the 1938 supreme lodge convention held in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, the closing event of the convention was attended by about 500 people (318). Conventions would also often involve a mass initiation of new members, and the initiation of 138 members at the 1940 convention in Brooklyn, New York, drew “thousands” according to Hansen (341).
cultural programs and initiatives. Cultural work and practice were important to Sons of Norway from the start and the organization sought to provide institutional support for the Norwegian-American community.

Sons of Norway quickly expanded beyond its eighteen original members, boasting a membership of 312 by 1900 (Bredland 8). At this point Sons of Norway was still confined to the Minneapolis and St. Paul area in Minnesota, but in the first decade of the twentieth century this changed. By 1903, Sons of Norway had 1,034 members and had lodges in Minnesota, North Dakota, and Wisconsin (15-16). One of the reasons for the growth of the order, as explained by Carl G.O. Hansen in his official *History of Sons of Norway* (1944), was the influx of Norwegian immigrants at the beginning of the twentieth century, when 188,505 Norwegians came to America (26).24 The larger number of new Norwegian immigrants coupled with Norway's 1905 independence from Sweden led to an increase in Norwegian patriotic feeling in North America which in turn helped boost membership in societies like Sons of Norway. The early years of the twentieth century also marked a time during which Sons of Norway consolidated its work with other groups and began admitting more members. A separate fraternal society, also named Sons of Norway, was growing on the west coast during this decade; the two organizations merged in 1910, making Sons of Norway membership leap to 6,383 (Bredland 37). One of the major changes to Sons of Norway in the years before World War I was the admittance of women as members in lodges. In his *History* Hansen writes

---

24 Hansen was asked by Sons of Norway to write a history of the order as the organization's 50th anniversary approached. He did so, and his history was first published serially in *Sons of Norway*, the monthly magazine of the society, and was then published as a book (Norborg 159-160).
that at the 1912 head lodge convention in Fargo, North Dakota, “The word ‘male’ was stricken [from the constitution]...thus giving women the opportunity to become members of the order” (98). Although a separate organization for women, Daughters of Norway, still existed and did not merge with Sons of Norway until 1950, this change enabled more people of Norwegian descent to participate in fraternal activities, mutual assistance, and cultural work.

Despite the challenges brought by World War I and a steep decline in the number of Norwegian immigrants, Sons of Norway continued to grow until the Great Depression led to a decrease in the number of members. The high point of membership came in 1928, when at the time of the twentieth supreme lodge convention 24,591 people belonged to the organization (Bredland 78). An essay titled “The 45th Anniversary of Our Order,” published in the program for the 1940 supreme lodge convention, records the success of Sons of Norway in the face of the challenges brought by the first World War. The unnamed author writes: “Despite the World War, periods of depression, and other untoward circumstances, and the practical cessation of immigration from Norway, Sons of Norway continued to grow.” The Great Depression, with its economic and social difficulties, caused Sons of Norway to falter some in the 1930s. In 1934, the membership had dropped to 15,199 members, and Einar Bredland claims that this was a turning point for the organization, which worked to increase its assets and shore up and reorganize struggling lodges (95-96). Membership increased again after 1934 but did not reach its

---

25 The supreme lodge convention of 1940 was held in Brooklyn, New York from the 19-23 of June. 51 delegates attended the convention, and guests included representatives from 5 local lodges, Judge Matthew Troy as the personal representative of Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, and the Norwegian Consul General Rolf A. Christensen (Bredland 112).
former size until 1944, when Sons of Norway reported having 24,487 members (134).

Sverre Norborg, whose history of the order, *An American Saga*, was published in 1970 by Sons of Norway, traces the successful growth of Sons of Norway after World War II. He notes that lodge membership continued to increase after World War II due to a renewed effort to recruit new members, reaching 35,846 in 1954 and 45,879 in 1967 (176, 192).

Sons of Norway still exists today to promote Norwegian and Norwegian-American culture and language and also to provide insurance. As of December 31, 2011, Sons of Norway has 397 lodges and a membership of 61,756 (“About Us”).

Sons of Norway has a history of prioritizing the maintenance of meta-knowledge and the continuation of a Norwegian-American ethos over the preservation of objects and practices that could render the organization, and a Norwegian-American identity, defunct. An example of this is the organization's shifting position on Norwegian as a language. Until 1946, maintaining interest in Norwegian as a language was listed as a purpose of Sons of Norway in the society's constitution. Even though Sons of Norway still keeps up an interest in Norwegian by providing information about Norwegian language camps, language lessons on the organization website, and printing portions of the monthly *Viking* magazine in Norwegian, English has supplanted Norwegian as the language of business and fellowship. English-speaking lodges were first allowed in 1918 (Bredland 55), and at the end of the 1930s the English language became even more prominent in the organization. In “A Brief History of Sons of Norway: The Mother Lodge,” which appeared in the Golden Anniversary Convention program from 1944, the author notes

---

26 The 1944 supreme lodge convention was held in Minneapolis, MN and 65 delegates represented the...
that “About 5 years ago” the existing leaders of the organization felt that it was time to make room for a new generation of leadership and that making English the official language of Sons of Norway would make it easier for younger members to take up positions in the lodges. The unnamed author writes that “Everyone realized that this was necessary in order to continue” and that “The results have been very satisfactory.” The change to English was an important, if difficult, step for Sons of Norway because it made the organization more appealing to potential members who did not speak Norwegian and allowed people who only spoke English to participate more fully in the life of the lodges. A concern with language did not disappear from Sons of Norway, but by focusing more on making changes that reflected the actual lives of its members, Sons of Norway ensured its survival as an institution that cultivated an ethos its members could live out.

This is not to say that Sons of Norway cheerfully abandoned the past in order to make sure it had relevance in the present. In an essay titled “Sons of Norway's Destiny As a Fraternal Group” published in the 1946 Supreme Lodge Convention program,27 Carl G.O. Hansen argues that Sons of Norway's value as an institution lies in its ability to maintain a connection to the past when families can no longer take on that role. He

---

Sons of Norway districts. Attendance was higher than the number of delegates, though, with about 500 people attending the closing banquet (Bredland 134,137). Since this was the golden anniversary of the order a special program was printed, and Einar Bredland mentions it several times in his description of the convention, saying: “the souvenir journal contained historical articles and hundreds of pictures” and that “Among its features were brief histories of the Order and of each district” (138). The care that went into putting the souvenir program together and the inclusion of histories of the organization and the individual districts suggests that it was meant to celebrate the history of Sons of Norway but also to be a repository of information for delegates, visitors, and perhaps others who could not go to the convention but would see the program when delegates brought it back.

27 The 29th supreme lodge convention was held in San Francisco, California and the 14 supreme board members and 87 delegates debated and adopted 67 changes to the constitution of Sons of Norway in order to modernize the organization (Norborg 145, 151).
writes that institutions like Sons of Norway have been “A most potent means” of bringing the virtues of the homeland to flourish in and to improve immigrants' countries of adoption (29). If anything, Hansen sees the cultural work of the Sons of Norway as increasing over time as native-born Norwegian immigrants become scarcer. He writes:

but as the second, third, and later generations come into the arena and this source of direct information from parent to child no longer is obtainable, there will arise a craving to learn something about the stock from which they have sprung. For such, an organization like Sons of Norway will be able to render signal service. (39-40)

Hansen's prediction echoes the common understanding that the first and second generations tend to forget and that the third generation wishes to reclaim a heritage perceived as lost or in danger of being lost. Hansen, though, does not mourn this shift but instead seeks to persuade the reader that Sons of Norway has and will effectively preserve and promote Norwegian American history and the lived ethos that it can foster. By calling Sons of Norway a “most potent means” of maintaining Norwegian virtues and by saying that the society will “render signal service,” Hansen promotes the view that a fraternal society like Sons of Norway will nurture a Norwegian-American ethos in a way that used to take place primarily in the family. Members, however, must support this work in order for it to continue, and so Hansen also subtly puts responsibility on the readers' shoulders to keep the work of the organization going. Sons of Norway and its dedicated members, in other words, become a Norwegian-American family with far more resources and organization, making it the best means of maintaining the Norwegian-American group in the future.

Sons of Norway's self-conception as an institution that would continue the work
of the family in keeping up a connection between the Norwegian Americans of the present and the Norwegians and Norwegian Americans of the past made Sons of Norway an institution of rhetorical education in the years of World War I through World War II. Members and potential members had to be persuaded of the value of a Norwegian-American ethos in these difficult years and also had to be taught how to live out this ethos in their daily lives. Due to its commitment to the past, Sons of Norway was able to turn to exemplars and exemplary histories in order to persuade members and the nation at large of the value of a more-than-American ethos and to provide examples for imitation. Although the organization used multiple approaches from the local lodge to national lodge level to do this, Sons of Norway consistently used retellings of history and the elevation of exemplars as imitable models to give members bases for their own ethos. In his essay “Sons of Norway's Destiny As a Fraternal Group,” Carl G.O. Hansen argues that the Norwegian and Norwegian-American past is a valuable resource for Norwegian Americans and for the nations of North America. Hansen, the editor of Sons of Norway's magazine as well as the organization's Educational Director, praises the contributions of Norwegian Americans to the United States and Canada, beginning the article by praising the United States and Canada for their openness to immigrants and arguing that “It is by the transplantation of Old World values and their development in the new environments that the [U.S. and Canada] have attained their present high state of civilization” (29).

---

28 Cati Coe's work on Norwegian folk schools would seem to contradict this perception since it shows how institutions took up the work of identity formation in Norway well before Sons of Norway took up the task. Whether Sons of Norway's claims are historically accurate or not matters less than its perception that it was taking up the mantle that had previously been passed on organically within the family and doing something new and vital.
Hansen's argument aims to persuade Norwegian-American readers to see themselves as responsible for the United States' and Canada's success and to see their history and the ethos that comes from it as explaining their worth. History, therefore, is not only for the past, but is something that can be used in the present as Norwegian Americans live out and practice an ethos that ultimately strengthens their countries.

The importance of history was embedded in the life of Sons of Norway and in the Sons of Norway constitution, which was revised over the course of decades to reflect changes in the priorities of the institution. The constitution persuades members to believe that history is an important piece of a Norwegian-American ethos, that history is relevant to the present, and that Sons of Norway is an institution worthy of entrusting this history to. The constitution of Sons of Norway is divided into chapters, with individual chapters detailing the name, purpose, organizational structure, and meeting protocol for the society. Although much of the constitution's work is expositional and explains how Sons of Norway is structured and run, it also persuades readers to see the history of Norwegians and Norwegian Americans as key to maintaining a Norwegian-American ethos that can be lived and not just preserved.

The constitution of Sons of Norway aims to persuade members and leaders to see knowledge of Norwegian and Norwegian-American history as of central importance to the Norwegian-American community and its ethos. The second chapter of the constitution, titled “Objects and Purpose,” lists the services Sons of Norway provides as well as the goals it wishes to achieve, persuading members to see the goals listed as important to their own lives as well as to the life of Sons of Norway. The second chapter
of the constitution follows the first chapter, titled “Name and Organization,” that establishes the name “Sons of Norway” and explains that the society is divided into a supreme lodge, district lodges, and local lodges. The list that appears in chapter two seems to do the same explanatory work as chapter one, but the ordering of the list as well as the level of detail provided about the objects and purpose of Sons of Norway reveals that it also functions as a rhetorical document. In the 1926 edition of the constitution, the chapter “Objects and Purpose” reads:

1. To unite in a fraternal organization men and women of Norwegian birth or descent or such as have been Norwegian citizens, and who are sober and of good moral character.
2. To maintain and further interest in the Norwegian language and whatever is good and noble in the Norwegian national character.
3. To further knowledge of and loyalty to our new fatherland, and give it the fruits of the social and political consciousness of the members, developed in full understanding of the value of the Norrøna tribe and the demands of our new circumstances.
4. To promote better mutual understanding and unity among the Norwegian Americans.
5. To preserve the history of the Norwegian pioneers of America.
6. To write life insurance.

The constitution works to create ethos in this section by claiming that Sons of Norway accepts members who “are sober and of good moral character” and that the organization will maintain “whatever is good and noble in the Norwegian national character.” Although it does not use the word “ethos,” by discussing “character” the constitution

29 The constitution of Sons of Norway could be revised by the supreme lodge convention with changes going to local lodges for approval. A majority vote in the local lodges would then make any changes made by the convention official (Norborg 151). Almost every supreme lodge convention made some changes to the constitution. The constitutions were printed in booklet form, which made them easy to distribute to lodges and members as needed.

30 “Norrøna” usually appeared as the compound word “norrønafolk” in Norwegian literature as a poetic term for the Norwegian people of the Old Norse period (Haugen 282). The constitution seems to have translated the “folk” half of norrønafolk as “tribe,” emphasizing the close links between Norwegians and Norwegian Americans.
makes it clear that members are expected to live admirable lives that have reference to Norwegian values and practices. Not only membership in Sons of Norway, but the present and future of the Norwegian-American community depend on how the individual members live (or fail to live) an admirable Norwegian-American ethos.

Even though Sons of Norway members are expected to possess good characters in the present, this chapter of the constitution portrays history as a way to fully grasp the significance and importance of a Norwegian identity and to understand what a “good and noble” character is in this context. The list of objects and purposes presents the past as a way to forge ethos in the present. The third purpose in the list, “To further knowledge of and loyalty to our new fatherland, and give it the fruits of the social and political consciousness of the members, developed in full understanding of the value of the Norrøna tribe and the demands of our new circumstances” (3), looks both forward and backward in time. This list item persuades members to see that they have a duty to contribute to the United States socially and politically (not just economically with their labor) and that these contributions should stem from their self-understanding as members of the Norwegian-American community. So even though the contributions discussed here occur in the present and future, these are based in the past and are communal contributions. The emphasis on community and a collective identity carries through in the mention of the “full value of the Norrøna tribe.” By using the word “tribe” the constitution's authors portray Norwegians and Norwegian Americas as a group with a long and close-knit past which deserves to be known and continued in the new context of North America. The word “tribe” also suggests strong ties of kinship as well as of belief.
and behavior. This reinforces the rhetorical portrayal of Norwegian Americans as a strong and enduring community even in the new space of North America. Finally, the fifth purpose on the list reminds readers that their own history of immigration and settlement is a valuable part of their present-day ethos. It says that another purpose of Sons of Norway is “To preserve the history of the Norwegian pioneers in America.”

This statement of purpose persuades readers to see their own immigrant history as a continuation of the history of the “Norrøna tribe” and to see themselves as members of this tribe who will remember and continue to produce history. In this early edition of the Sons of Norway constitution, history is a repository of values and identity worthy of preservation and continuation in daily life so that Norwegian Americans can understand the value of their background and how to live in the United States in a way that benefits the nation while staying true to a Norwegian-based ethos.

The argument that history provides values to live out in the present carries through in the 1946 edition of the constitution; however, the later document draws an even closer connection between history, community, and ethos. This edition of the constitution persuades readers to see the history of Norwegians in the United States and Canada as an important piece of group and national identity.31 Chapter II, “Objects and Purpose,” has expanded significantly in the 1946 version of the constitution. The first

---

31 The constitution of Sons of Norway published in 1946 reflects the major changes made by the convention that met in August 1946 in San Francisco. Sverre Norborg writes that “Sons of Norway found itself before an open door to a great future, and it was felt necessary to give the laws of the Order a complete overhaul in order to make maximum use of the spectacular opportunities of the new day” (145). One of the biggest, and most controversial changes made to the constitution involved admitting members (with the permission of the Board of Directors of the Supreme Lodge) who were not of Norwegian descent or affiliated by marriage with someone of Norwegian descent if they were highly interested in the work of the organization (151).
seven items in the chapter read:

(1) To unite in a fraternal organization men and women of Norwegian
birth or descent, their affiliates through marriage, or such who have been
Norwegian citizens, and are of good moral character.
(2) To further love and loyalty to our home lands, The United States of
America and The Dominion of Canada, and to contribute to the life of
our countries of our Norwegian heritage.
(3) To promote an understanding of mutual interests among the people
of Norwegian extraction in the United States and Canada.
(4) To aid in preserving the history of the pioneers of our countries, who
came here from Norway, and the part the people of Norwegian descent
have played in the development of the United States and Canada.
(5) To maintain and further interest in everything that is good and noble
in the Norwegian national character.
(6) To maintain a close relationship with the people of Norway.
(7) To sponsor or support such cultural, charitable and social service
projects as are related to its general purposes as a fraternal society. (5-
6)

Situated between the purposes of promoting unity between Norwegian Americans and
maintaining interest in “everything that is good and noble” in the Norwegian character,

32 Interestingly, this list of objects and purposes has not changed much from 1946 to the present day. The
latest edition of the Sons of Norway constitution dates to 2010 and states in section 1.2.4 “Objects and
Purposes of the International Lodge”:

1.2.4.1. To unite in a fraternal benefit society men and women of
Norwegian or other Nordic birth or descent, and their affiliates
through marriage. (8/96)
1.2.4.2. To express love and loyalty to our respective homelands,
and to contribute to the life of our countries, to our heritage
and to maintain a close relationship with them. (8/94)
1.2.4.3. To promote an understanding of mutual interests among the
people of Norwegian or other Nordic extraction. (8/96)
1.2.4.4. To aid in preserving the history of the pioneers of our countries,
and the part the people of Norwegian or other Nordic descent
have played in the development of them. (8/96)
1.2.4.5. To maintain and promote interest in everything that is good and
noble in the Norwegian and other Nordic national character. (8/96)
1.2.4.6. To sponsor or support such cultural, charitable and social
service projects as are related to its general purpose as a fraternal
benefit society.
1.2.4.7. To make available certain insurance, and other contract benefits
and financial services as permitted by law. (Charter, Constitutions and Procedures 9)
Aside from some wording changes and the elimination of the purpose “To maintain a close relationship
with the people of Norway,” this list is identical to the one in the 1946 constitution.
the claim that Sons of Norway will preserve the history of Norwegians in North America is persuasively presented as a means to promote unity and maintain character. The focus on “the part the people of Norwegian descent have played in the development of the United States and Canada” works rhetorically to focus readers’ attention on the positive histories of people of Norwegian descent. The constitution implicitly claims that Norwegians and their descendants have worked only to improve the U.S. and Canada and have not held back or harmed these countries. The statement that Sons of Norway exists in part “To promote an understanding of mutual interests” in the Norwegian-American community also focuses members' attention on the ways in which the community is united and away from internal squabbles, a priority that has moved up the list from the 1926 edition of the constitution. In the 1946 constitution, members are persuaded to place importance on unifying around common histories and causes. Preserving a history of success and mutual interests becomes a way to unite Norwegian Americans by giving them a common, positive past to look to. The common and positive past becomes a repository for ethos; members can look to it in order to understand how to behave in the present and how to craft a present-day Norwegian-American ethos.

The portrayal of history as a resource which Sons of Norway and its members can turn to in order to learn about the Norwegians who came to North America and the characteristics that made them worth remembering directs readers of the constitutions to see history as important and applicable to their own lives. The representation of history as admirable and imitable helped Sons of Norway respond to the changing rhetorical context of the United States from World War I through World War II. Sons of Norway
continuously selected, revised, and presented the past to members, who could then take up a Norwegian-American ethos that used these pasts to justify a Norwegian-American presence in the United States as liveable and desirable in the present.

The Usable Past: Crafting Ethos in Times of Change

The period from World War I through World War II marked a time when Sons of Norway and Norwegian Americans in general faced a complex and shifting rhetorical situation. Emigration from Norway dropped, Americans became more suspicious of perceived outsiders, and the U.S. government sought to restrict immigration after World War I. Norwegian Americans found themselves alternately held up as models of assimilation or castigated for maintaining their community and language, making it difficult to live out a Norwegian-American ethos without seeming to contradict those who praised the group or to affirm the accusations of critics. In the Reports of the Immigration Commission: Dictionary of Races of Peoples (1911) the Norwegians are described as “ideal farmers” and are said “to Americanize more rapidly than do the other peoples who have a new language to learn” (Dillingham 120). Norway is also praised for having the lowest illiteracy rate in all of Europe (120). Similarly, Kendric Charles Babcock, a professor of history and also a Specialist in Higher Education with the United States Bureau of Education from 1910-1913, praised Scandinavian immigrants. In The

33 This was the fifth volume of 42 produced by the Immigration Commission. The Immigration Commission was formed in 1907 and consisted of three members from the U.S. Senate, three from the House of Representatives, and three other members appointed by the President. The commission was tasked with making “a full inquiry, examination, and investigation...into the subject of immigration.” The commission would “report to Congress the conclusions reached by it, and make such recommendations as in its judgment may seem proper” (Dillingham ii).
34 People from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and even Finland were often lumped together into the category of “Scandinavian.” Norwegians, however, immigrated to the United States in far larger
Scandinavian Element in the United States (1914), Babcock writes that “In acquiring the use of English and in maintaining high standards of education, the Scandinavians have an unimpeachable record which no other foreign, non-English-speaking element can equal” (109). Nine years later, Emory Stephen Bogardus, a prominent sociologist, praised Scandinavians as a group in The Essentials of Americanization (1920). He writes: “Because of his insignificant percentage of illiteracy, he has soon learned English, and has been assimilated readily. In fact, he has become assimilated in less time than any other non-English speaking immigrant” (157). The praise for Norwegians and Scandinavians given by the Immigration Commission, Babcock, and Bogardus portra...
of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the president general Mrs. George T. Guernsey gave an address claiming that “It has been tragically demonstrated that no man can grow an American consciousness so long as he speaks a foreign language” (20). Her attack on groups that maintained their native language through education, newspapers, and voluntary associations was in part against Norwegian Americans, who through summer schools and a vibrant newspaper culture kept up the use of Norwegian and maintained strong community ties. Guernsey goes even further and becomes more specific in her censure when she states: “If I had my way I would transport thousands of Minnesota Scandinavians into the Southern States,” presumably to expose them to real Americans and break up their community ties (22). The contrast that Guernsey draws between a “loyal American consciousness” and an identity that embraces practices from another country leaves no room for accommodation and adaptation (22); she insists on full assimilation, a position that was quite common at the end of a war that left many Americans suspicious of possible old loyalties among European immigrants.

Although Guernsey's proposal to remove Scandinavians from the Midwest lies at an extreme of anti-immigrant sentiment, she was not alone in calling for Scandinavian immigrants to leave behind their language and cultural practices. Theodore Roosevelt, in his famous “Hyphenated Americans” speech, argued that immigrants having identities that were not simply American were dangerous. The New York Times reported on October 13, 1915 that Roosevelt delivered this speech before a crowd of 2,500 men and women at Carnegie Hall and that he “scored as traitors those who were not wholeheartedly for their country first, last and all the time, and offered his suggestions for the
Americanization of those who comes to the United States as immigrants” (“Roosevelt Bars the Hyphenated”). Although he was most against German and Irish Americans, the report of Roosevelt's speech in the Chicago Daily Tribune quoted him as also attacking Scandinavian Americans:

The one absolute certain way of bringing this nation to ruin, of preventing all possibility of its continuing to be a nation at all, would be to permit it to become a tangle of squabbling nationalities, an intricate knot of German-Americans, Irish-Americans, English-Americans, French-Americans, Scandinavian-Americans, or Italian Americans... each at heart feeling more sympathy with Europeans of that nationality than with the other citizens of the American Republic.” (“Roosevelt, 100”)

By claiming that a more-than-American ethos will destroy the nation, Roosevelt puts immigrant groups like Scandinavian Americans (and by virtue of being part of that group, Norwegian Americans) in the position of proving their loyalty to the United States and justifying their continuing practices of speaking Norwegian and maintaining a Norwegian-American community.

Norwegian Americans argued back and asserted their rights to identify themselves as more than American and to live out a Norwegian-American ethos. One response to Guernsey's speech was published in the Lutheran Church Herald, a weekly publication of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, which had an estimated membership in 1918 of 485,000 (Kasberg 62).35 An item published in the Lutheran Church Herald in 1919 responds directly to Guernsey's speech and calls the DAR “powdered and hobble-skirted society snobs” and argues that “elementary principles” of the United States

35 In 1918 the Lutheran Church Herald cost only $1.00 for a year-long subscription and was “the official organ for [the] Synod in the English language” (Kasberg, back cover).
include “the freedom of language, speech, and press, and a tolerant, cosmopolitan spirit” (“Americanization Efforts” 258). Sons of Norway responded to anti-immigrant sentiment but in much milder language than the unnamed author of the article in the Lutheran Church Herald. In the 1918 annual report for the Ole Bull Lodge in the Wisconsin-Illinois District, a resolution states:

We pledge ourselves jointly and individually to use every effort in our power to sustain by act and deed President Wilson, our government and the army and navy of the United States and our noble Allies until Germany, the enemy of civilization, is cowed and no longer a menace to the peace of the World. (“Lodge Report” 12-13)36

This resolution, unlike the Herald article, responds to the political climate in the United States by reaffirming loyalties and not making any claims about Norwegian Americans' right to their own language and practices.

Similarly, the 1920 program cover for the Supreme Lodge Convention of Sons of Norway, held that year in Madison, Wisconsin, makes a visual argument that a love of Norway is not incompatible with loyalty to the United States and that this love is central to living a Norwegian-American ethos. The program cover features a drawing of the United States with cities marked on the map (see fig. 1).

36 This lodge report seems to only have an internal audience; the lodge passing the resolution and the district that received the annual report would be the only ones to see it. However, by passing this resolution, members of the lodge could then tell others about the patriotism of Sons of Norway and how the organization supported the United States' war efforts.
In contrast to most maps of the United States, cities with major Norwegian American populations are marked with larger dots and fonts, with Minneapolis, Minnesota the most prominent. Two hands meet and clasp in the center of the country and are surrounded by
the words “Enige og tro indtil Dovre falder” (United and true until Dovre falls). These words, especially because they are in Norwegian, seem to be pushing a Norway-oriented identity on Sons of Norway and the convention participants. However, the program also directs participants and others who see the program to see Sons of Norway as an organization that safely bridges Norwegian and American identifications. The text below the map reads “Loyalty to America” and below that “Love and Gratitude to Mother-Norway.” Here the text persuades its readers to see themselves as owing two different kinds of allegiance to Norway and the United States. Since loyalty was the main concern of influential figures like Theodore Roosevelt and also the most politically-charged term, portraying Sons of Norway and its members as loyal helps to defuse criticisms of Norwegian Americans. However, by asserting that Norwegian Americans owe “love and gratitude” to Norway the program argues that these feelings do not interfere with loyalty and are desirable. Although this program cover does not directly use history to make its argument (although the use of the Eidsvoll oath is a strong allusion to an important moment in Norwegian national history), its argument that Norwegian Americans can have strong ties to Norway and that these ties make them better Americans is echoed and developed further in the materials that Sons of Norway published during and after World War I. These materials ground a retelling of history in exemplars, admirable figures and

37 Dovrefjell is a mountain range in Norway, and the saying “United and true until Dovre falls” is a symbol of Norwegian nationalist feeling. The delegates at the Constitutional Convention of May 1814 ended the convention with these words and the holiday Syttende Mai (celebrated in Norway and the United States) marks this convention. Norway would not gain complete independence from Sweden until 1905, but the nationalist fervor surrounding the holiday helps to explain why the motto, also known as the Eidsvoll oath, remains a popular way of expressing love of and loyalty to Norway.

38 The 1920 convention welcomed 42 delegates. A major issue discussed at the convention was how to bring in younger Norwegian Americans by making it clear that Sons of Norway was “an American institution” (Hansen 160-161).
groups of people meant to be imitated in action, belief, and/or character. Exemplars provide a persuasive tie to the past and also suggestions for way to live in the present, serving to explain the roots of a Norwegian-American ethos even as they teach members of Sons of Norway how to live.

Sons of Norway creates and uses exemplars first to craft an ethos that Norwegian Americans can generally identify with and take up in their daily lives; this ethos is meant to apply to the whole community and to unify it both internally and in the public mind. Exemplars function as a concrete basis for an identity grounded in Norwegian national pride and also in practices that Sons of Norway members can engage in to construct and perform a Norwegian-American ethos in their daily lives. After World War I and during World War II, Sons of Norway used and revised national narratives in order to present members with an ethos that could allow them to celebrate or defend Norway and Norwegians as needed in order to realize and proclaim the value of Norwegian identifications in the United States. Sons of Norway turned to usable pasts that the institution could select, revise, and retell in order to create an ethos that responded to present circumstances and enabled members to live as Norwegian Americans in the United States.

After World War I, Sons of Norway retold the story of Leif Erikson in order to justify Norwegian immigration to the United States and rewrote Viking history to portray Norwegians and Norwegian Americans as peaceful and progressive, the opposite of how Germans were viewed in the wake of the war. However, Sons of Norway had to revise this ethos when Norway was invaded in 1940 to defend Norway and Norwegians against
claims that they were indifferent to the Nazi occupation or even supporters of it. Sons of Norway worked to rewrite present-day history almost as it happened during this period to reshape the peaceful ethos of post-WWI to one that presented “fighting Norway” and advocated for support of the Allied cause. Sons of Norway uses the past and its exemplars in publications from these years in order to construct and revise the Norwegian-American ethos. The organization creates exemplars that allow for flexible interpretations of history and that serve as rallying points for a community constructing ethos in shifting rhetorical circumstances.

The Vikings and Leif Erikson provide Sons of Norway and Norwegian Americans in general with a readily available and useable group of exemplars to unify the Norwegian-American community around a common past as the organization’s members live in an uncertain present.³⁹ Sons of Norway selects and edits Viking history in order to craft a Norwegian-American ethos based in exploration, settlement, and prosperity; more specifically, at the end of World War I, feeling the need to legitimate a Norwegian-American presence in the Americas, Sons of Norway diligently retells the Viking past and recounts the explorations of Leif Erikson in order to strengthen the claim that Norwegian Americans belong in the United States. The organization largely erases histories of violence and conquest to make this claim non-threatening and to enable Sons of Norway to represent Norwegians and Norwegian Americans as ideals of peace and progress. Since the Vikings and Leif Erikson exist as much in the imagination as in

---

³⁹ I have chosen to use the spelling of Leif Erikson used by Sons of Norway during this time period. A few other spellings of his name are: “Leif Ericson,” “Leif Eriksson,” “Leif Ericsson,” “Leif Eirikson,” and “Leifr Eiriksson.”
scholarly history, histories of early Norwegian exploration provide not only arguments in favor of a Norwegian presence in the United States and also malleable exemplars. However, Sons of Norway faced a challenge in doing this since the Vikings are not splendid role models known for their cultural sophistication and cosmopolitan spirit. Rather, most popular history portrays Vikings as ruthless raiders who enjoyed sacking villages and who relied more on brute strength than the civilized pursuit of organized war. Sons of Norway deals with this ethos problem by revising history, claiming that the Vikings were responsible for the flowering of Europe, by portraying raiding and trading as revitalizing for other nations, and by focusing most of their attention on Leif Erikson's attempt to colonize what is now Canada, creating an exemplar for later immigrants. Members of Sons of Norway cannot directly imitate the Vikings by sailing off to find new lands, but Norwegian Americans can understand their own presence in the United States as a result of a Viking spirit and can also extrapolate other positive qualities like a desire for adventure and a cosmopolitan outlook from the stories told by Sons of Norway. Sons of Norway literature portrays Viking history in a positive light and associates present-day values with this history in order to craft a historically-based ethos that has power in the present. Simply by living in the United States, therefore, Sons of Norway members can see themselves as living out an ethos that stretches back almost a

---

40 See, for example, the 2013 History Channel miniseries Vikings, which depicts the Viking raid of Lindisfarne in gory detail and focuses on violence, sex, and sexual violence in many episodes. The series finds room to tell a story of exploration and valor, however. The History Channel website for Vikings states: “The HISTORY® original series Vikings transports us to the brutal and mysterious world of Ragnar Lothbrok (Travis Fimmel), a Viking warrior and farmer who yearns to explore—and raid—the distant shores across the ocean. His ambition puts him at odds with local chieftain Earl Haraldson (Gabriel Byrne), who insists on sending his raiders to the impoverished east rather than the uncharted west” (“About Vikings”). Sons of Norway whitewashes Viking history to a great extent, but it is interesting to see a contemporary miniseries portraying a much more brutal past through the lens of western exploration.
millennium.

Drawing a positive ethos from early Norwegian history involves a great deal of selection and revision in order to ensure that members can use this past and its attendant exemplars in the present. Viking history is largely glossed over in Sons of Norway materials which tend to pick up Norwegian history around the time of Norway's conversion to Christianity. When the Vikings do appear, they carry no taint of violence. In a pamphlet titled *Why Sons of Norway?* that was published in both 1939 and 1942, Carl G.O. Hansen gives the Vikings credit for the flourishing of Europe. The 1939 edition of the pamphlet claims in a section titled “History” that Scandinavians during the Viking Age “went forth to revitalize other nations, and thus Scandinavia has been a cradle for England, Scotland, Ireland, Normandy, Sicily, Russia, and America” (1). The rhetoric of this section of the pamphlet relies on replacing more negative images of Vikings with the idea of “revitalizing” and thus portraying violence and conquest as invigorating instead of destructive. This section also aims to persuade readers to see the Vikings as the impetus for European progress. The Vikings did indeed travel to and even colonize the areas mentioned, but Hansen takes the argument a step further by strategically claiming that the Vikings influenced countries that would later be central to the colonization of the Americas. By focusing on the British Isles and Normandy, Hansen implies that the Vikings, with their adventuresome spirits, influenced the later exploration and colonization of the United States and Canada. This implication becomes

---

41 Carl G.O. Hansen notes in his *History of Sons of Norway* (1944) that at the 1938 supreme lodge convention the delegates decided that 1939 would be “set aside for a membership drive, particularly directed towards bringing sons and daughters of members into the order” (316). Although histories of Sons of Norway do not mention the pamphlet *Why Sons of Norway?*, it seems likely that the first edition of the pamphlet was published as a part of this membership drive.
an overt claim when Hansen lists America as one of the countries of which Scandinavia
was a cradle, possibly referring to the exploration and temporary settling of parts of
Canada and also to the Scandinavians' influence on other European countries that would
play a major part in the western hemisphere. The retelling of Viking history in *Why Sons
of Norway*? gives readers a collective exemplar that is easy for readers to imagine
themselves as part of and also persuades readers to see themselves as bearers of the
Viking legacy of revitalizing nations. Furthermore, the Viking exemplars help justify the
presence of Norwegians in America; if Vikings were in part responsible for the
colonization of the Americas and the founding of nations like the U.S. and Canada then
Norwegians have a definite right to live in the United States, and this right is a part of
their present-day ethos.

As a descendent of the Viking spirit of exploration, Leif Erikson is the exemplar
who looms largest in Sons of Norway materials as the true first European explorer of the
Americas and as a symbol of later Norwegian immigration. His portrayal in Sons of
Norway histories persuades readers to see themselves as symbolic descendants of Erikson
and bearers of his legacy as a western pathfinder. The histories often begin by
establishing Erikson's validity and place in history and persuading readers to see him as a
genuine and worthy example to admire. In the 1939 edition of *Why Sons of Norway?*,
Leif Erikson has a section devoted to him titled, “Leif Erikson, the First White Man to
Set Foot on This Continent.” The pamphlet very briefly describes Erikson's voyage in
the year 1000 to the eastern coasts of North America but fills most of the section with
descriptions of the various celebrations of Erikson's achievement, statues that have been
erected in his honor, and places that have been named after him (8). The pamphlet frames the list with this claim: “The historicity of these early Norse voyages to America have of late years been given recognition in various forms” (8). The emphasis on “historicity” establishes Leif Erikson's credibility as the discoverer of North America. Additionally, it aims to persuade readers to see Erikson as deserving a place in American history and not just Norwegian and Norwegian-American history. The list that follows starts with states that celebrate Leif Erikson Day (Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Illinois—all states with large Norwegian-American populations) and ends with examples of how the United States federal government has recognized Erikson. The final validating evidence is this: “A congressional resolution signed by President Roosevelt made October 9 a national Leif Erikson Day in 1935, also urging that the day thereafter be observed in all states of the Union” (8). Ending with Congress' and President Roosevelt's recognition of Leif Erikson's role in the Americas leaves the audience with the idea that Leif Erikson is not only a hero to Norwegian Americans but also to the United States as a whole. This idea makes Erikson an exemplar that can help Norwegian Americans bridge their identities as Americans and Norwegians and also gives Norwegian Americans a way to publicly affirm their Norwegian-American ethos.

Sons of Norway gives present-day members a way to imagine themselves as inhabiting a historical Norwegian ethos first by presenting Leif Erikson as the true discoverer of North America and second by directly linking Erikson's travels to the later journeys of Norwegian immigrants. This link allows Norwegian Americans to see their very presence in the United States as living out a Norwegian-American ethos; Norwegian
immigrants and their descendants can understand their life in the Americas as linked to Erikson's journeys and see immigration as a Norwegian act. As “Leif Erikson, the First White Man to Set Foot on This Continent” shows, the figure of Leif Erikson becomes a vessel for the claims of Norwegian Americans to a place in the New World. In other materials published by Sons of Norway, Leif Erikson and those who traveled with him are closely linked to later Norwegian immigrants. These publications present Erikson as an exemplar that later people imitated by traveling west. The handbook First Degree Ritual of Sons of Norway, published in 1936, gives the script for running meetings and inducting new members, and it also turns to the usable past of Viking exploration to argue for a Norwegian presence in America. In the induction ritual, the Vice President of the lodge instructs candidates for admission in the history of Norwegians in America, saying: “Lief [sic] Erikson was the lucky discoverer of this our great and glorious country. Torfinn Karlsevne was America's first settler. Snorre was the first white child born on American soil” (7). Not only does Erikson replace Columbus as the discoverer of America in this telling, but he also becomes the conduit for immigrants as the man who enabled Karlsevne to settle and Snorre to be born on American soil. The ritual makes the connection between Erikson and the more recent Norwegian immigrants even more overt in the paragraph that follows:

42 Sons of Norway had only one degree of membership in contrast to other fraternal societies like the Masons that had many degrees that members could achieve. In 1934 the supreme lodge convention called for “the supreme board to have a new ritual composed and to send copies of the draft to the local lodges in ample time to pass on them before the next supreme lodge convention” (Hansen 286). The new ritual was accepted with a few minor changes at the 1936 supreme lodge convention and the new ritual was printed and distributed to lodges for their use (302). The ritual was used to conduct meetings and also to induct new members. Inductees would have heard these words as they were welcomed into the lodge, and members present at the induction would either have a role in the ceremony or hear these words again.
Later on thousands of modern vikings flocked to this country, and here we live with the right of allodial possession. We are the heirs of the western pathfinders and settlers. My friends, do not forget that you are descended from a small, but robust, enlightened, and honest people. (7-8)

By saying that Norwegian Americans have a right to total possession of the land, the speaker makes a radical claim for the rightness of a Norwegian presence in the Americas, and if members of the order agree then they are persuaded of this right as well. Calling later Norwegian immigrants and their descendents “heirs” persuades members to see that right of possession as an inheritance. Following that, the call to “not forget” the inheritance of positive traits like robustness and honesty works rhetorically to convince participants that they bear the responsibility for cultivating and passing on these admirable traits. Thus, the Norwegian-American ethos presented by this ritual calls Sons of Norway members to not only see themselves as deserving their place in America but also as responsible for maintaining their group's reputation. Simply living in the United States, therefore, is not enough to truly live a Norwegian-American ethos; members of Sons of Norway must also live their ethos through remembering their history and cultivating the admirable characteristics of the group.

Leif Erikson's role as original European discoverer of the Americas remains a constant in Sons of Norway histories, but beyond that he becomes a blank page on which authors compose a variety of personas. This presents Erikson as a flexible and persuasive exemplar. His adaptability as an imitable example is important because it allows Erikson to serve as a unifying exemplar even while he appeals to different segments of the Norwegian-American community. In the First Degree Ritual, Erikson is the lucky discoverer who laid down the path other immigrants would take. In the program for the
Leif Erikson Festival held in 1933 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Erikson is still the original Norwegian immigrant, but he also becomes a brave adventurer bent on bringing Christianity to the west. The program's cover shows a statue of Erikson (see fig. 2), helmeted, bearded, and wearing a belted tunic over his other clothes. Erikson points with his right arm, presumably to the west and the New World.

Figure 2: 1933 Leif Erikson Festival Program cover. Courtesy of NAHA, Northfield, Minn.
This statue seems to have a simple message: Erikson the discoverer points toward his discovery. However, behind Erikson sits what looks like an immigrant trunk, its metal fastenings and rounded top very like the trunks immigrants brought with them across the Atlantic in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The visual association between Erikson and later Norwegian immigrants subtly but powerfully ties the distant past to more recent history, persuading readers to imagine their own immigrant pasts as tied to the original explorations led by Erikson. Festival attendees looking at this image can imagine themselves taking up the mantle of Erikson or at the very least think with pride on this symbolic ancestor of all Norwegian Americans.43

The festival program goes beyond connecting more recent immigration with Erikson's voyages at the beginning of the millennium and makes him a model of Christianity as well, which bolsters his ethos among a group that was largely Protestant and which could speak persuasively to Sons of Norway members who see religion as important. The first page of the Leif Erikson Festival program is titled “Who Was Who in America in the Eleventh Century” and consists of excerpts from Ola Johann Saervold's pamphlet The Discovery of America, published in 1931.44 Saervold describes Leif

---

43 The histories of Sons of Norway written by Carl G.O. Hansen, Sverre Norborg, and Einar Bredland do not mention this particular Erikson festival. However, Norborg notes that the 1930s were a period during which Sons of Norway increasingly promoted the celebration of Leif Erikson Day on October 9 and the naming of public spaces after him (113). Hansen, in his history/collection of observations My Minneapolis (1956), describes how Minnesota governor Floyd B. Olson (the “B” stands for “Bjørnstjerne”) signed a bill into law in 1931 declaring October 9 Leif Erikson Day. Minneapolis had a large Leif Erikson festival that year, and after that there were no more major festivals until 1935, when President Roosevelt signed a congressional resolution declaring October 9 Leif Erikson Day (287-290). Even though the 1933 Leif Erikson Festival was apparently not large or worth noting in detail, it involved important figures like Governor Olson, who delivered the main speech at the event, and Carl G.O. Hansen, who directed the Norwegian Glee Club.

44 The Discovery of America, as Carl G.O. Hansen tells in My Minneapolis (1956) was distributed to the members of the Minnesota legislature in 1931 as Norwegian American groups lobbied to have October
Erikson as someone who “embraced Christianity” and was sent by the king, Olaf Tryggvason, “as the first European ambassador to the Western World, to proclaim Christianity in Greenland” (“Leif Erikson Festival”). This telling portrays Erikson not just as a discoverer but also as a missionary. Giving Erikson both adventuresome and noble purposes like religion makes him a more admirable figure than if he were simply a holdover from the marauding Vikings; Erikson is thus a more persuasive example for emulation to a contemporary audience. Saervold also claims that “King Olaf thought he [Erikson] was a man of great accomplishments, and he is described as a large and powerful man, of very imposing bearing and handsome, of great sagacity, and most just in all things.” The litany of good qualities appearing here makes Erikson an exemplar in both actions and character: as the discoverer of America, bearer of Christianity to the west, and owner of excellent physical, mental, and moral qualities he is attractive and admirable, a figure to imitate. Sons of Norway members may not look like Erikson, but they can work to imitate him in wisdom and in just actions. Therefore, even though Norwegian Americans attending the 1933 Leif Erikson celebration will most likely never be heralded for great explorations or discoveries, they can still imitate Erikson and live a Norwegian-American ethos based on more attainable characteristics.

Sons of Norway works to connect members with the past through the use of Erikson and the Vikings as exemplars, but the organization also explicitly brings the Vikings into the present by calling contemporary Norwegians and Norwegian Americans

---

9 named Leif Erikson Day. Hansen writes that the pamphlet did much to persuade members of the legislature to pass the bill, and also notes that Governor Olson signed the bill into law with the same pen Saervold used to draft the pamphlet (289-290).
“modern vikings” and ascribing progressive and peaceful values to present-day communities. In the *First Degree Ritual* used by lodges for meeting and new member inductions, the Vice President of the lodge says that candidates for admission are descended from “modern vikings” who came to the Americas (7). Reclaiming the term “Viking” as a descriptor of contemporary Norwegians and Norwegian Americans not only works rhetorically to connect them to the past but also brings in the concept of “modern” to suggest progress and contemporaneity. The seeming paradox of a modern Viking persuades readers to further forget the violent realities of the past and to instead cling to a constructed ethos of Vikings as brave, hardy, and beneficial to the world. The ethos of the modern Viking is further expanded in Sons of Norway publications that portray modern Vikings as present-day Norwegians who are exemplars of peace and progress. In the 1939 edition of the pamphlet *Why Sons of Norway?*, there is a section titled “The Modern Vikings” that goes into detail about Norway's and Scandinavia's accomplishments. Carl G.O. Hansen writes: “The descendants of the ancient Vikings are today the most peace-loving peoples in the world. All their enterprises are confined to the pursuits of peace” (3). Even though the world was teetering on the brink of another massive war, the emphasis on peace portrays Norwegians and other Scandinavians as above the kinds of quarrels that led to the first World War (during which Norway was neutral) and as working toward a peaceful future. The author makes the status of the Scandinavian countries as role models clear, saying that these countries stand “as the examples of brotherliness in their international relations as well as in co-operation in all fields where co-operation is possible” (3). The claims in this section aim to persuade
readers to believe that if descendants of Vikings can be models of peace and cooperation then there is hope that present political crises can be resolved. Here the entire Scandinavian region is an exemplar, and not for individuals but for nations. Like the exemplar Leif Erikson, the present-day Norwegians discussed in Why Sons of Norway? give Norwegian Americans imitable qualities based in a Norwegian ethos that are also compatible with an American one. Norwegian Americans can understand themselves as modern Vikings of peace and progress, and so living out and advocating for these ideals becomes a part of a lived Norwegian-American ethos. Furthermore, Sons of Norway members can point to individual, communal, and national characteristics that go along with their status as modern Vikings, making a Norwegian-American ethos more than an individual or small group interest.

While the usable pasts that Sons of Norway used in publications could push members into a lived Norwegian-American ethos, the opportunities to put a Norwegian-American ethos into practice that the institution gave members also served as examples of simple acts that would bring a Norwegian-American ethos into daily life. The 1933 Leif Erikson Festival in Minneapolis, Minnesota brought Sons of Norway members together in their lodge hall to celebrate Erikson as the discoverer of America. The audience could not only read the pamphlet section “Who Was Who in America in the Eleventh Century,” but they could also listen to an address given by Minnesota Governor Floyd B. Olson, who was of Norwegian and Swedish descent himself, and could enjoy the Norwegian songs sung by the Norwegian Glee Club, directed by Carl G.O. Hansen (“Leif Erikson Festival”). These events in the festival gave the audience a chance to
listen and reflect on the value of Leif Erikson and of Norwegian Americans to the United States. Members did not have to sing in the choir or give a speech to practice their ethos at this event. They could practice their ethos simply by attending, where they could see themselves as part of the group commemorating Erikson's voyage and affirm their belonging in the Norwegian-American community. Attending Norwegian-American events and listening to Norwegian-American speakers and musicians are relatively simple actions that enact a lived ethos. The public nature of the event and being seen in the audience would reinforce this ethos, but simply participating and being part of the give and take of an event would also work to incorporate members of the audience into the larger Norwegian-American community.

Although Sons of Norway gave members chances to passively participate in events that publicly affirmed and lived out a Norwegian-American ethos, the organization also encouraged members to take an active role by commemorating Leif Erikson in public settings. The movement to have October 9 declared “Leif Erikson Day” was supported by Sons of Norway; members of the order were present when the Wisconsin governor signed a bill into law making the ninth Leif Erikson Day in 1929. At the banquet celebrating the law's passage, a Sons of Norway member, C.A. Hoen, called for the formation of a Leif Erikson Memorial Association, which was subsequently formed and successfully lobbied the United States Congress to make October 9, 1935 a national Leif Erikson Day (Hansen History 230, 294). Sons of Norway members could take part in the work of the organization or offshoots like the Leif Erikson Memorial Association to put their Norwegian-American identities into practice and to work for a wider
recognition of Norwegians in America. Women also took part in celebrations of Erikson, giving them a public space in which to proclaim and practice their Norwegian-American ethos. At the 1940 Supreme Lodge Convention in Brooklyn, New York, the local Ladies' Auxiliary of Sons of Norway took the wives of delegates on a sightseeing tour of Brooklyn, which had a large Norwegian-American neighborhood. The women also went to Prospect Park to decorate the Edvard Grieg statue and to Leiv Eiriksson Park to decorate the Leiv Eiriksson Monument (Sons of Norway 26th Supreme Lodge Convention). The public act of decorating statues and monuments dedicated to Norwegian national heroes would not only work to persuade participating women to see their ethos as important and worthy of celebration but would also give them a public space in which to enact their Norwegian-American identity. While the women who went on this sightseeing tour were not in the convention sessions making decisions about Sons of Norway, they were living out a more-than-American identity in New York, a city seen as both quintessentially American and also as a major immigration center. Asserting and celebrating a Norwegian-American identity in New York by visiting and decorating statues of Grieg and Erikson becomes a rhetorical act in the context of the convention and the city it was a part of; it was not only an internally-focused celebration but a statement to the non-Norwegian publics who might pass by that Norwegian Americans were a valuable presence in the United States. The actions that Sons of Norway members took to acknowledge and celebrate Leif Erikson gave them a chance to live a Norwegian-American ethos for both personal and public benefit. Within the Norwegian-American community, commemorations of Erikson and the retelling of his history served to give an
economically and geographically diverse group a common exemplar to admire and imitate. In the context of the United States, Erikson worked rhetorically to persuade the public to see Norwegian Americans as belonging in America and as bearers of the spirit of exploration, a quality valued in a nation that mythologized westward expansion. Turning the Vikings and Erikson into peaceful examples who could safely be celebrated in private and in public further reassured Americans that Norwegian Americans were worthy members of society and not threatening to the nation.

As World War II began and Norway was invaded, Sons of Norway had to revise the peaceful ethos it had constructed after WWI and argue both for Norway's commitment to liberty at any cost and its status as an enemy of Germany. As with the Vikings, Sons of Norway revised recent history and focused on admirable exemplars that Norwegian Americans could rally around and proclaim in public to make their loyalties clear even as they maintained a lived Norwegian-American ethos. During World War II, Sons of Norway faced a new and complicated rhetorical situation. The Nazis invaded Norway on April 9, 1940, and a collaborator government formed with Vidkun Quisling, the leader of the Norwegian pro-Nazi party, as the head. The first news report to reach the United States about the invasion portrayed the Norwegians as inactive and unresisting which Sons of Norway saw as damaging the Norwegian national character. The report, written by Leland Stowe for the Chicago Daily News Foreign Service, appeared in papers across the U.S. in the middle of April, 1940. In the story that the Los Angeles Times carried on April 16, 1940, Stowe reports that as Nazi troops entered Oslo, “Like children, the people stared. Not one hand nor voice was raised. We could discern no sign of
resentment upon any face about us” (Stowe 4). Similarly, Warren Irvin, a correspondent for the National Broadcasting Company, reported that the Norwegians were largely inactive in the face of the Nazi invasion. In an April 14, 1940 article published in the New York Times, Irvin describes the arrival of the Nazis thus:

With the Norwegian police clearing their compatriots out of the way, two trucks carrying machine guns appeared about 2 P.M. ...Norwegians lined the sidewalks and watched in silence. Here and there a German or a German sympathizer raised a hand in the Nazi salute and the officers at the head of the column saluted in return. (Radiophoto 35)

The Norwegian army did resist the Nazis, and the government did not capitulate but instead fled the country and set up a government-in-exile in England. However, portraying the Norwegians as standing idly by and “like children” was a blow to Norwegian Americans who felt keenly the trauma of having their homeland invaded.

Stowe did further damage to the Norwegian national character in a piece published on February 27, 1941. He wrote a reflection on his months as a war correspondent in Finland, Sweden, and Norway, calling this time of war the “Scandinavian Twilight.” He writes: “When I think of Norway, I think of a people who put their trust in pacifism rather than preparedness, a people who had never been taught

45 The Los Angeles Times prefaces the article with the following editorial remark: “Leland Stowe, ace correspondent of the Chicago Daily News Foreign Service, has just returned to the United States after 17 months' service in most of the crucial sectors of the war. Freed of the limitations of censorship and able to consider the whole picture from the campaign in Finland to the campaigns in Greece and Libya, Stowe has been asked to summarize his impressions for the benefit of American readers” (“Norway's and Sweden's”). The Los Angeles Times' commendation of Stowe's reporting was not unique. Stowe had won a Pulitzer Prize in 1930 for foreign correspondence, and when he passed away in 1994, the New York Times published an obituary that praised his work as a foreign correspondent during WWII, saying: “He filed news articles that vividly described the Soviet invasion of Finland in the winter of 1939-40, and wrote exclusive accounts of the German seizure of Norway in April 1940 and of the subsequent defeat of a British-French expeditionary force in northern Norway. His coverage of that campaign won him the gold medals of the University of Missouri School of Journalism and Sigma Delta Chi, the journalists' society” (Perez-Pena).
that if you want freedom you must be ready, first and foremost, to defend it yourself” (“Norway's and Sweden's”). He contrasts this with Finland, which was invaded by the Soviet Union: “When I think of Finland I think of the gallant 3,000,000. I think of a little people who have fought giants all down the centuries and are alive today because they have always known how to die.” The criticism Stowe levels at Norway for not successfully repelling the Nazi invasion, and the unflattering comparison he makes between the Norwegian people as too soft and the Finnish people as gallant created a need for Norwegian Americans and also the Norwegian government-in-exile to argue back. Sons of Norway revised the peaceful ethos created after World War I to reflect the new rhetorical situation; Viking history was revised again to include a desire to fight, and current events were selected and recast to portray Norwegians positively. The revision of these usable pasts (and presents) enabled Norwegian Americans to reconcile a Norwegian-American ethos with a wartime ethos and to maintain the ability to take public pride in Norwegian identifications.

Much of the ethos work that Sons of Norway did during World War II depended on reinterpreting the Norwegian commitment to peace. The counterargument to the aspersions cast by journalists like Stowe and Irvin rested largely on a defense of the Norwegian pacifism and on telling the story of the Nazi invasion in a way that stressed the Norwegians' valiant fight against the invaders. Pro-Norwegian publications and organizations maintained a commitment to the earlier ethos of peace and progress even as Sons of Norway and others hailed new exemplars of resistance. In response to Stowe's “Scandinavian Twilight” article, Wilhelm Morgenstierne, a Norwegian official and Sons
of Norway member, published a letter in the March 15, 1941 issue of the *Los Angeles Times* titled “Norway Replies to Mr. Stowe.” As the Minister of Norway to the United States, Morgenstierne can take a position of authority in relation to Stowe's claims, and he passionately defends and explains the actions of Norway leading up to and after the Nazi invasion.\(^{46}\) He argues against Stowe's assessment of the Norwegian people as naively depending on neutrality when he writes: “We are not ashamed of having believed the world has reached such a stage of civilization that no new war could start 20 years after the last great holocaust” (A4). Morgenstierne shifts the blame, arguing that optimism, not naivete, was Norway's weakness. He also argues against Stowe's claim that Norwegians did nothing to stop the Nazi takeover of Oslo, explaining that only the Royal Guard was in the city and that they resisted; he then asks: “What would he have had [the citizens of Oslo] do? Fight with bare fists? Throw flower pots at them?” These biting rhetorical questions both explain the Norwegian response to Oslo's fall and also seek to undercut Stowe's assessment that the Norwegians could have fought against the invaders more effectively. Morgenstierne's reply reaffirms a Norwegian ethos of peace that agrees with the ethos constructed by Sons of Norway after WWI, but further revisions to this ethos would emphasize Norway's fighting spirit.

Sons of Norway revised the usable pasts it had employed after World War I to reaffirm the worth of a Norwegian-American ethos and to respond to what it perceived as libel against Norway. The organization reinterpreted very recent history to portray Norway as occupied but undefeated and erased Nazi collaborators like Vidkun Quisling

\(^{46}\) Morgenstierne was also involved with Sons of Norway and at the Golden Anniversary Convention in 1944 gave the address at the “Convention Banquet and Ball” (“The Convention Program”).
from history altogether. These revisions of the past and of current events would help members incorporate a new, wartime ethos into their understanding of themselves as Norwegian Americans and would also enable members to take up a public defense of Norway if they chose. The 1942 edition of the pamphlet *Why Sons of Norway?* includes major changes from the 1939 edition to accommodate the need to respond to the new rhetorical situation of Nazi-occupied Norway and to give members reasons to continue to identify with Norway. A new section, titled “History's Blackest Chapter” recounts Germany's invasion and the Norwegian response. Even though the occupation started only two years prior to the printing of this pamphlet, Sons of Norway already makes major claims about the historical importance of the invasion. Calling the invasion the “blackest chapter” in history is a big step, especially since the United States had recently experienced the attack on Pearl Harbor. Despite the hyperbole, “History's Blackest Chapter” works rhetorically to show the Norwegians as unequivocally good and the Nazis as entirely to blame. This new section in the *Why Sons of Norway?* pamphlet delivers a history that plays up the duplicity and treachery of Germany while erasing Nazi collaborators and emphasizing the brave struggle against tyranny kept up by the Norwegian people. The narration of the Nazi invasion uses hyperbole to convey the horror of the occupation, to convince readers of the purely despicable actions of the Nazis, and to hold up Norwegians as innocent exemplars of peace. Hansen writes that “on the night of April 9, 1940” came “one of the most dastardly acts in all history.” The author goes on to call the actions of the Nazis “barbarities” (3). In the face of such a dastardly and barbarous invasion, the Norwegians were “stunned,” not welcoming (3).
Hansen focuses the blame on the Nazis and takes the audience's focus away from thoughts about collaborator governments. He further emphasizes the nobility of the Norwegian character by detailing Norway's resistance to invasion “in spite of her total lack of preparedness” (3). Describing a valiant 62-day fight against Germany's forces, the pamphlet claims that “The Nazis lost between 65,000 and 75,000 men” while only “between 3,000 and 4,000 Norwegians fell” (3). The staggering disparity in numbers persuades the audience to feel pride in the Norwegians' fight for their own freedom and also provides it with information for sharing with people who might be ignorant of the situation. This information also ends “History's Blackest Chapter,” placing the emphasis on Norwegian resistance instead of on the fall of the country. The Norwegian people, fighting and enduring, become a new exemplar for Norwegian Americans to admire and to imitate once America entered the war. By affirming the Norwegians' love of peace and shock in the face of invasion, Sons of Norway is able to hold onto the pre-war ethos it constructed even as the organization begins to adapt that ethos to new circumstances and demands.

Also, much like Sons of Norway's earlier erasure of violence from Viking history, “History's Blackest Chapter” removes events and people from history in order to shore up the Norwegian ethos as dedicated to freedom, loyalty, and progress. The section briefly mentions Norwegian supporters of the Nazis but downplays their significance, as when the author writes, “What may be termed a 'fifth column' was a very small group which in reality would have been a minor nuisance if there had been no Nazi invasion” (3). By calling Nazi supporters a “minor nuisance” Hansen uses understatement to persuade
readers to see them as insignificant, especially when compared to the descriptions of the Norwegian resistance that follow. The author erases Vidkun Quisling and his traitorous support of the Nazis by refusing to mention his name while simultaneously laying the blame for the invasion at his feet: “In fact, there may not even have been that group if it were not for one man whose name we refrain from mentioning because that very name has become an international opprobrium” (3). By blaming Quisling and erasing him in the same sentence, this section of the pamphlet obscures an ignoble piece of history in favor of promoting a brave and romantic view of Norwegians. Readers, therefore, are persuaded to ignore the less admirable example of Norwegian national character presented by Quisling and other Nazi collaborators and to even disclaim them as Norwegian. Readers can instead focus on positive models like the Norwegians who resisted the Nazis and claim that as part of a true Norwegian-American ethos. As young Norwegian-Americans went to war and as others supported war efforts at home, Sons of Norway members could envision their actions as doing their part not only for the United States, but also for Norway, and to see their support of violence in the aim of peace as a valuable part of a Norwegian-American ethos.

Even as Sons of Norway maintained parts of the peaceful and progressive ethos through World War II, it also revised that ethos to encompass exemplars of resistance and dedication to liberty that Norwegian Americans could rally around in a time of war. In the 1942 version of the *Why Sons of Norway?* pamphlet, “The Modern Vikings” section

---

47 Hansen here refers to the rise of the term “quisling” to describe someone who betrays their own country to support an invader. “Quisling” and “Judas” are roughly interchangeable since they both denote betrayal and treachery. This helps explain why Norwegian Americans were so eager to distance themselves and the Norwegian people from all taint of Nazi collaboration.
reflects this change. The section begins: “The descendants of the ancient Vikings are the most peace-loving people in the world. But the ruthless destruction of all possibility for peace aroused their old fighting spirit” (3). The Norwegians are a true model, peaceful and yet unwilling to trade liberty for it. The “old fighting spirit” of the Vikings can safely come out now that war has come to Norway and the United States; here the pamphlet persuades readers to see Norwegians and by connection themselves as capable fighters in the war since they have war in their blood. This version of “The Modern Vikings,” in contrast to the section in the 1939 edition, contains no references to Scandinavia as a whole and focuses instead wholly on Norway. At the end of the section, the author compares Norway to the United States, writing: “Having the same political ideals, conception of democracy and love of liberty, the truly patriotic Norwegians and the citizens of the United States are in every sense now comrades-in-arms” (4).

Portraying the Norwegians as war allies of the United States persuades reader to see Norway not as occupied and helpless, but as an active and effective anti-Nazi force and a model of democracy and liberty in a world threatened by fascism. Prospective members of the society can read this section of Why Sons of Norway? and believe that their own Norwegian-American identity has a place in the war and that the ideals of liberty and democracy are supported by both their American and Norwegian identifications.

The Norwegian exemplars shaping the newly revised ethos presented by Sons of Norway stand for anti-fascism and are a largely anonymous collective, although this collective is channeled through Norwegian officials who published essays in Sons of Norway materials. A piece titled “Norway, America's War Ally” appears in the program
for the Golden Anniversary Convention held August 10-12, 1944 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and it details the ways in which Norway is an exemplar in the fight against the Nazis. Written by Johan Nygaardsvold, Prime Minister of Norway (in exile) and Sons of Norway member, the piece argues that the recent Norwegian history of World War II is an example for the entire world. Nygaardsvold first portrays Norway as a model of progress and freedom and then quotes former Norwegian minister of foreign affairs Professor Halvdan Koht, who wrote:

> All modern progress in Norway is bound up with democracy, not merely a formal democracy but a true democracy in the widest sense...a democracy founded upon a broadly educated people where everyone felt personally interested in the progress and the well-being of the nation. (Nygaardsvold)

By showing Norway before the war as being dedicated to the principles of democracy, Nygaardsvold persuades readers to see Norway as an ideological ally of the United States in the fight against fascism. Readers can use the portrayal of Norway to see that their democratic ethos is both Norwegian and American and to give them a reason to keep practicing their Norwegian-American ethos despite shifting public opinion about Norway.

The addition of the idea of resistance to fascism leads to the conclusion that a Norwegian (and by extension a Norwegian-American) ethos is highly desirable in the

---

48 The 1944 Golden Anniversary Convention, with 65 delegates and many visitors, involved much discussion of the situation in Norway. At the closing dinner attended by about 500 people, Wilhelm Morgenstierne, the ambassador from Norway and also a Sons of Norway member, gave an address that discussed the contributions of Norwegians and Norwegian Americans to the world and his hopes for the future of Norway after the war. Carl G.O. Hansen notes in his History of Sons of Norway that Morgenstierne “has been the foremost official representative of the motherland in the United States” and “since the treacherous blow was dealt Norway, has been the center and guiding spirit of the Norwegian governmental agencies in the country” (397). Nygaardsvold's essay in the convention program supports the spoken arguments that were made by Morgenstierne and others at the convention.
current circumstances. Nygaardsvold’s explanation of the Norwegian resistance is more compelling following his reiteration of Norway’s commitment to peace: “Peace-loving and exclusively trained for peaceful pursuits, the Norwegians at a stroke discovered that even more than peace did they love justice and liberty.” Like the Why Sons of Norway? pamphlet that claims that the Nazi invasion awakened the “old fighting spirit” of the Norwegians, Nygaardsvold sees the invasion of Norway as a crisis that clarified what the Norwegian ethos contained and that strengthened the Norwegians’ attachment to liberty over peace. Convention attendees reading this essay in the program are persuaded to see the Norwegian national character as deeply committed to peace (which makes it superior to the warlike German character) but also as not afraid of a fight when liberty is threatened, which makes it superior to nations that remained neutral during the war. Convention attendees reading this essay would find it easy to link this Norwegian ethos with their wartime American ethos. The essay enables them to feel proud of their identity and to see the worth of maintaining a Norwegian-American ethos during the war. Furthermore, even though individual Norwegians do not stand out in this narrative, readers can see Nygaardsvold as an exemplar who stands in for the anonymous Norwegians they do not have access to. As the Prime Minister of Norway before the war and as the Prime Minister in exile during it, Nygaardsvold was actually a representative of the Norwegian people, but he also speaks here as a Norwegian with direct knowledge of the national character and the events leading up to the Nazi takeover. In rhetorical terms, he becomes a stand-in exemplar for all Norwegians and provides readers with a person to look to as an authority on the character of the Norwegian people.
While Norway as a whole serves as an important exemplar, Nygaardsvold also uses entire classes of people, including the Norwegian merchant marine and Norwegian army units, to persuade readers to feel proud of their Norwegian identifications and to give them ways to live out their ethos. With about 1,000 ships, the Norwegian merchant marine was not captured by the Nazis when they invaded Norway. Nygaardsvold explains that the Nazis “ordered all Norwegian ships to put into Norwegian or neutral harbors, but not one of the captains of those thousand ships heeded the nazi [sic] orders, and not a single one of the 25,000 men manning those ships deserted.” The loyalty of the merchant marine is a synecdoche for the loyalty of Norwegians to Norway and also persuades convention attendees reading this essay to see the sailors as brave, self-sacrificing, and honorable, all imitable and desirable qualities. Furthermore, the heroic sacrifices (and high death toll) of the Norwegian sailors give Norwegian Americans an example to follow as they go to war themselves or see loved ones go. The essay goes on to describe Norwegians' participation in the war as pilots and soldiers, persuading members to see D-Day and other Allied war efforts as not only an American effort. Nygaardsvold writes: “From D-Day on, Norwegian forces have been in the thick of the invasion struggle...Some of the Norwegian units were in the actual spearhead of the initial attack.” Norwegian Americans probably already knew much of the United States' role in D-Day and the retaking of Europe from the Nazis. Nygaardsvold takes care to inform readers that Norwegians also played a crucial role, and were in fact “in the spearhead” of the attack that led to the liberation of Europe. Giving Norwegian Americans a new perspective on D-Day and the next events in the war, Nygaardsvold
makes room for Norwegian identifications and ethos in a major moment in history overshadowed by other countries. Together with the people of Norway resisting the Nazi invasion and the brave merchant marine, these anonymous exemplars provide Norwegian American convention-goers a new canon of exemplars to admire. Norwegian Americans could also see themselves as imitating these exemplars when they went to war themselves or did work to support the war effort. The loyalty and bravery of the Norwegian merchant marine and of young Norwegians who fought the Nazis in Norway and abroad could be imitated by American soldiers and also by people who did not go to war themselves. The Norwegian-American ethos created by Sons of Norway adapted to the times in order to remain a lived ethos; the flexibility of the usable pasts the institution turned to helped with this as did a willingness to recast a pre-war ethos so that it did not differ radically.

As the rhetorical landscape shifted, Sons of Norway defended and revised a Norwegian-American ethos to justify a Norwegian presence in America, to maintain national pride in Norway, and to clarify that Norwegian and American identifications could coexist in a Norwegian-American ethos. Using widely applicable and often anonymous exemplars, Sons of Norway crafted a positive ethos that its members could live out and unify around as they sought to make space in the United States for their

49 After the war there was great interest in resistance activities in Norway, and memoirs, a film, and documentaries helped flesh out the stories told during the war. *Skis Against the Atom* (a 1954 memoir by Knut Haukelid) and *The Heroes of Telemark* (a 1965 film starring Kirk Douglass) told the story of the Norwegian sabotage of the German heavy water plant near Rjukan, Norway. *Two Eggs on my Plate* (1953) is a memoir of a Norwegian resistance member who worked in southern Norway throughout the war. Norway and the BBC also produced films about the heavy water sabotage. These stories helped keep alive the national pride stirred by Norwegian resistance and also helped to counter the histories of Norwegians who cooperated with the Nazis.
group to flourish. The flexibility of the long-dead or anonymous exemplars allowed Sons of Norway to revise the Norwegian-American ethos to follow the demands of the times, meaning that members did not have to give up their allegiance to Norwegian identifications even as their lives in America changed and demanded different kinds of loyalty. The successful creation of a more-than-American identity that was compatible with both Norwegian and American identifications and which could be lived out in daily life and at larger and more public celebrations meant that Sons of Norway could work to maintain the Norwegian-American community in the United States even when pressure to assimilate and let go of other identities was high.

**Customizable Exemplars: Norwegian National Heroes, Workers, and Women**

Leif Erikson, the Vikings, and the Norwegian heroes of World War II are exemplars that Norwegian Americans from different circumstances can identify with and unite around. They provide a point of pride and historical support for Norwegian American claims of belonging both in American and in the international scene. The rather nebulous ethos provided by the general exemplars is made more specific in Sons of Norway literature by other exemplars who speak more directly to Norwegian Americans' interests, occupations, and social status. The exemplars used by Sons of Norway range across time, country, economic status, and gender, meaning that members can pick and choose from the copia presented to them in order to construct an individual lived ethos that still agrees with a Norwegian-American ethos applicable to the entire community. Most of the exemplars are well-known historical figures, national heroes, or outstanding men, but the histories also include the working class, women, and Norwegians facing
contemporary challenges. The famous and extraordinary exemplars serve as general models of Norwegian-American excellence while the more everyday exemplars presented by working men, women, and others provide opportunities for individual identification and imitation in daily life. Both the extraordinary and ordinary exemplars work together rhetorically to create an ethos that is specifically tied to Norwegian-American identifications but is flexible enough to accommodate diversity within the Norwegian-American community.

The 1939 and 1942 editions of Why Sons of Norway? contain a copia of exemplary role models which not only strengthen the idea that Norwegians and Norwegian Americans are worthy of admiration and imitation but also appeal to diverse audiences by showing them how they can attach their own daily lives and practices to a Norwegian-American ethos. Both pamphlets contain the same materials about great Norwegians and Norwegian Americans who have contributed to art, literature, music, science, exploration, and politics and sections about more everyday Norwegians and Norwegian Americans who are admirable if not well known. Each section about an area of accomplishments feature one or two photographs of men who are particularly well-known, but the text of each section contains a great number of names, including those of women. Although Why Sons of Norway? is biased toward Norwegian and Norwegian-American men who have done noteworthy things, the inclusion of women and working class people as imitable exemplars expands the rhetorical appeal of the pamphlet and enables readers to imagine their daily lives as a valid and important part of their Norwegian-American ethos.
Why Sons of Norway? provides readers with lesser-known and everyday exemplars to imitate. The pamphlet also uses much of its space providing great men to admire, imitate, or incorporate into a lived Norwegian-American ethos. At first it might seem strange that a pamphlet titled Why Sons of Norway? would focus so much attention on the achievements of Norwegians and Norwegian Americans; a pamphlet designed to entice new members into the organization would probably be expected to focus more on the benefits Sons of Norway provides its members. However, by writing about great men like Henrik Ibsen and Edvard Grieg, author Carl G.O. Hansen persuades readers to see their Norwegian identity as worthy of pride and as a valuable contribution to the world. Henrik Ibsen, for example (see fig. 3), is described as “universally recognized as the founder of the modern drama,” and Hansen goes on to claim that “Many authorities will say that no dramatist since Shakespeare has wielded such an influence on the intellectual life of the world” (4).
The national awakening in Norway after 1814 was very pronounced in literature. The leaders of the early part of the 19th century were Henrik Wergeland and J. S. C. Welhaven. There was something almost violent in the literary development, and the productions of many of the writers attracted the attention of the entire literary world. It is doubtful if any other country, within the memory of men now living, has produced as many writers attaining international fame as has Norway. Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) is universally recognized as the founder of the modern drama. Many authorities will say that no dramatist since Shakespeare has wielded such an influence on the intellectual life of the world. Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832-1910) attained fame with his wonderful peasant novels, some powerful dramas, but most of all with his fine lyrics. A list of contemporary Norwegian writers who have won for themselves honored places in world literature would be a long one. No less than three Norwegians have been awarded the much coveted Nobel prize for literature, Bjørnson, Knut Hamsun and Sigrid Undset. Ibsen and Bjørnson, who by now are looked upon as Norwegian classics, have been translated into most modern languages. Arthur

Figure 3: Henrik Ibsen as he appears in Why Sons of Norway? Courtesy of NAHA, Northfield, Minn.

Persuading readers to see Ibsen as on par with Shakespeare convinces the readers that they have good reason to be proud of their heritage and also encourages them to join an organization that will help preserve and further knowledge of exemplars like Ibsen. Similarly, Hansen writes that Edvard Grieg and other composers “have with their music interpreted to the world the very soul of the Norwegian people” and that “The influence of Edvard Grieg has been felt profoundly in many lands” (5). Since Hansen claims that Norwegian composers have shown the world the “very soul” of Norwegians and that Grieg has international importance, readers can think that listening to or playing works by Grieg helps illuminate a Norwegian identity and that this identity is valid and
recognizable beyond Norway's borders. Also, both Ibsen and Grieg represent Norwegian romantic nationalism and Norwegian patriotic feeling which gives them a strong pathetic appeal for readers. Finally, although readers probably do not expect to become internationally recognized playwrights and composers, they can attend plays and concerts featuring the work of Ibsen and Grieg or can read Ibsen's work or buy recordings or learn how to play music by Grieg themselves. These actions go along with the national pride that the pamphlet works to instill in potential and existing members of Sons of Norway, bringing an ethos begun in thought to life through action, making it a lived ethos.

*Why Sons of Norway?* makes it easy for readers to choose an ethos to focus on within the larger and more general Norwegian-American identity by dividing the accomplishments of Norwegians and Norwegian-Americans into categories. These divisions make it easy for readers to either read everything and feel admiration at the variety and breadth of the abilities represented or to read sections that are most interesting to them and learn about Norwegians and Norwegian Americans who share their passions and abilities. The exemplars in the sections detailing the achievements of Norwegians serve the dual rhetorical function of establishing Norway's value to the world and of giving readers the tools necessary to cultivate their own knowledge and appreciation of the people listed. In the section “Norwegian Literature,” the 1942 edition of the pamphlet says that “No less than three Norwegians have been awarded the much coveted Nobel prize for literature, [Bjørnstjerne] Bjørnson, Knut Hamsun and Sigrid Undset” (5). If that is not enough to persuade readers of Norwegian literature's worth, the pamphlet continues: “Many literary Americans have learned Norwegian, sometimes self-taught, for
the sake of reading the works of Norwegian writers in the original language, and fired with enthusiasm they have translated Norwegian works into English” (5). Mentioning the three Norwegians who have won the Nobel prize establishes the worth of Norwegian literature on an international scale, and the second claim narrows the focus to how Americans have appreciated Norwegian literature so much that they have taught themselves the language and then have translated the works in order to bring them to a wider audience. The pamphlet's information about translation also alerts readers that they can find the works of authors like Bjørnson and Undset in Norwegian and in English, meaning that Norwegian Americans do not necessarily need to know Norwegian in order to partake of Norwegian culture. Hansen follows up with a list of Norwegian authors whose work has been translated into English, effectively giving English-speaking Norwegian Americans a reading list. People interested in joining Sons of Norway could read this section and get a sense of the resources and information that Sons of Norway would provide them if they joined, and these potential members could read works written by the authors listed in order to get a better sense of Norwegian life. The sections on Norwegian culture in the Why Sons of Norway? pamphlets then not only give readers exemplars but also the means to incorporate the exemplars into their everyday lived ethos by reading literature, listening to music, viewing art, learning about explorers, and so on.

Although the sections in Why Sons of Norway? about Norwegian and Norwegian-American cultural exemplars are mostly concerned with high culture, both editions of the pamphlet also turn classes of workers into exemplars in order to reach as broad an audience as possible and to give working class Norwegian Americans ways to imagine
their daily lives as a reflection of their ethos. Sons of Norway continues the strategy of providing a wide variety of exemplars when it discusses the working class in *Why Sons of Norway?* by discussing a number of occupations and how Norwegians and Norwegian Americans have made them praiseworthy. The pamphlet section “Norwegians Making Places for Themselves” discusses how other Norwegians and Norwegian Americans have made North America a better place to live in, persuading members to consider their own occupations as a part of their Norwegian-American ethos. Although the common working person is the focus of this section, Carl G.O. Hansen still uses a great man as an admirable exemplar (see fig. 4).

50 Sons of Norway had working class roots, April R. Schultz notes in *Ethnicity on Parade* (26). The organization's appeal to the working and merchant classes sometimes put Sons of Norway in conflict with the Norwegian Lutheran church and its highly-educated clergy. Sverre Norborg quotes Carl G.O. Hansen as saying, “A certain aloofness on the part of some was due to something akin to snobbishness, an unwillingness to mingle with the common herd, and a notion that nothing much could be accomplished by an organization so consistently democratic. A great many within the Church also were inclined to look askance at Sons of Norway. Was it a 'secret' society? According to a deeply-rooted prejudice, it therefore must be an instrument of evil” (84).
He writes:

In the trade union movement Norwegians have played honorable parts. 'The Abraham Lincoln of the Sea' was the sobriquet given to Andrew Furuseth, for many years president of the International Seamen's Union, respected, admired, and loved for his untiring efforts on behalf of his fellow toilers of the sea. (11)

Furuseth as an exemplar bridges Norwegian and American identifications since he worked in a very Norwegian occupation but earned a very American nickname. Hansen's depiction of Furuseth also makes him an admirable example of a union leader. Given the economic circumstances of the United States and the progressive politics of the time,
Furuseth thus serves as a pattern for Norwegian Americans who are union members. The inclusion of an admirable individual in the section on Norwegian and Norwegian-American workers is important because it signals to readers that workers can be just as admirable as Norwegian cultural giants and can earn individual recognition for their work. Workers who are in occupations associated with a Norwegian ethos like sailing or logging can look to Furuseth as an example to imitate, and other workers can see union work as tied to a Norwegian-American ethos, making daily work and life a part of a lived Norwegian-American ethos.

*Why Sons of Norway?* details the accomplishments of farmers, tradesmen, fishermen, and businessmen by using generic exemplars and classes of people to persuade readers to incorporate their daily work into their lived Norwegian-American ethos. In the section “Norwegians Making Places for Themselves,” Carl G.O. Hansen states that early immigrant farmers, “Possessing courage, patience, and diligence, and being inured to hardship...became the ideal immigrants” (10). Like in the discussions of Leif Erikson and earlier Viking explorers in other Sons of Norway literature, the list of qualities elevates Norwegians and Norwegian Americans as exemplars worthy of admiration and imitation. Readers of this section can see these characteristics ascribed to their ancestors and believe that they, too, can be courageous, patient, and diligent. Readers who farm or engage in other kinds of physical labor can also point to ancestors who did so and see themselves as imitating those earlier generations, and the institutional recognition given to them by Sons of Norway would reaffirm their identifications and pride. The pamphlet says:
If by some stroke of magic all the houses constructed by Norwegian bricklayers and carpenters should topple, some of our cities would present the appearance of having been struck by a cyclone. Likewise if all custom-made clothing made by Norwegian tailors were torn off the back of their wearers, we would witness a grand parade of men arrayed as was the emperor of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale. (11)

The vivid description of the impact Norwegian immigrants have had on the United States and Canada encourages readers to visualize a world without their contributions and to conversely see Norwegian-American work in city buildings, clothing, and in other industries like fishing. If such a visualization imbues everyday occupations with a sense of Norwegian-American ethos, a Norwegian-American ethos can be found almost anywhere and in any practice. This section of the pamphlet thus persuades potential members and current members who read it to connect the everyday with a lived Norwegian-American ethos. This rhetorical move is important not only because Sons of Norway had a large number of working- and merchant- class members but also because it makes the argument that ethos does not only belong to heroes and nationally-known narratives. Working with ethos on a more everyday scale makes Norwegian-American identifications more accessible and liveable; Sons of Norway members who tie their daily work in construction to the exemplars discussed in Why Sons of Norway? have recourse to their Norwegian-American ethos every day and not just at celebrations or on holidays. When ethos permeates the everyday then it can be more powerful and enduring because it grows and changes with the people who claim that ethos, making sure that it does not lose meaning and relevance over time.

Women have a much more limited role as exemplars in Sons of Norway literature from 1918-1946, considered notable mostly for their marriages into great American
families or their role as mothers, but even so they are given ways to live out their Norwegian-American ethos in everyday life. These roles emphasize a conservative construction of a womanly Norwegian-American ethos even as the role models give women ways to imagine their everyday lives as important to the Norwegian-American community. Pamphlets and convention programs do not devote the same level of attention to admirable Norwegian and Norwegian-American women as they do to men, but Sons of Norway materials still aim to persuade women to see themselves as an important part of Norwegian America by including them in some of the key moments of Norwegian history in America and by presenting them with select examples of womanly achievement.

Sons of Norway literature directs women to view motherhood as part a Norwegian-American ethos. The program for the 1933 Leif Erikson Festival in Minneapolis, Minnesota, contains one mother exemplar. The section “Who Was Who in America in the Eleventh Century” that details Leif Erikson's character traits and physical prowess also describes Erikson's mother, Thorhild Jorundsdaughter. The pamphlet says that she “who in baptism changed her name to Tjodhild, was the wife of Erik Raudi and mother of Leif Erikson. She built the first church in the Western World.”[51] Jorundsdaughter, though she did not travel to North America like her son, is portrayed as a good woman who was religious and also instrumental in Erikson's voyage to America by virtue of bringing Erikson into the world. Her piety and motherhood persuade women readers of the festival program to see religion and family as an important part of

---

[51] The name change is presumably because “Thorhild” has the name of the Norse god Thor in it, an association apparently incompatible with Christianity.
Norwegian history. It is important that Jorundsdaughter is not simply a passive receiver of Christianity, but also a church builder because she provides Norwegian American women an exemplar who actively works to build family and church community, giving contemporary readers an active model to imitate. Women who read this could connect their own church involvement with Jorundsdaughter's work to bring Christianity to Greenland (perhaps ignoring that it was Catholicism) and could see their current supportive roles in the church as having a much longer and more prestigious history than they might have previously known. Living out a Norwegian-American ethos as a religious mother gains more meaning in the present by virtue of having such distinguished historical roots.

Sons of Norway also presented women with a Norwegian-American ethos based in marriage, creating a less publicly active set of exemplars that women could see themselves imitating. In the 1939 edition of the Why Sons of Norway? pamphlet, Norwegian American women play an important role in American history by virtue of marrying into important families. In a section titled “Norwegians of the Colonial Period,” Hansen writes that “Anneke Hendricks, born in Bergen, Norway, married Jan Arentzen van der Bilt, the first Vanderbilt in America. Many of the oldest New York families descend from the early Norwegian colonists in New Netherlands” (10). Hendricks and other Norwegian women of the colonial period work rhetorically to justify a Norwegian presence in America. As role models they have similarities to Leif Erikson but unlike Erikson they are not adventurers but mothers of children whose descendants went on to become prominent New York citizens. Women at this point in the pamphlet
are persuaded to view themselves not as active builders in America but as creators of future Norwegian Americans who might go on to become important on the national stage. Both the Leif Erikson Festival program and the description of women in “Norwegians of the Colonial Period” offer women the ethos of Norwegian/Norwegian-American motherhood, a limited identity, but one that also allows women who are mothers to attach a lived Norwegian-American ethos to their motherhood and religious activities.

Sons of Norway materials also make room for women exemplars with accomplishments in the arts and in sports. Both the 1939 and 1942 editions of *Why Sons of Norway?* discuss the work of Sigrid Undset, a Norwegian novelist who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1928. The 1942 edition reads, “No less than three Norwegians have been awarded the much coveted Nobel prize for literature, Bjørnson, Knut Hamsun, and Sigrid Undset” (5). Although she does not merit a picture in the pamphlet, Undset's recognition as a Norwegian author of international worth informs women readers that Norwegian women have made valuable contributions outside of traditional and more circumscribed roles. Undset is also included in a list of Norwegian authors whose works have been translated into English, letting readers know that they can read her in either Norwegian or English. The pamphlet does not describe Undset's work in as glowing terms as it does Ibsen's or Bjørnson's, but it provides a woman exemplar who has achieved international acclaim and whose work often focused on women and their experiences. Women who read the pamphlet could find works by Undset and read them,

52 Hansen compared Ibsen's contributions to literature as equal to Shakespeare's, and he describes Bjørnson as having “attained fame with his wonderful peasant novels, some powerful dramas, but most of all with his fine lyrics” (5).
53 See, for example, Undset's trilogy *Kristin Lavransdatter*. Published between 1920 and 1922, and
making a pleasurable activity a part of their Norwegian-American ethos, or they could see the writing they do themselves as a part of how they choose to live out their ethos as Norwegian Americans.

Norwegian and Norwegian-American women are also portrayed in Why Sons of Norway? as excelling in the fine arts and in acceptable sports for women, persuading Norwegian-American women to see cultural work and sport as arenas of lived ethos. Hansen writes in the 1942 edition of Why Sons of Norway? that the Metropolitan Opera in New York has benefitted from women singers of Norwegian descent:

The first one to enter [the opera] was Olive Fremstad. About 30 years ago she was one of the Metropolitan's greatest attractions. Of late years the Metropolitan has had two particularly brilliant Norwegian singers, Kaja Eide Norena and Kirsten Flagstad. (14)

Similarly, Hansen names Sonja Henie as “the world's premier fancy skater” and Molla Bjursted Mallory as a top women's tennis player (15). Although most Norwegian Americans could not aspire to be in the Metropolitan Opera or to be sports stars, portraying women as successful in these areas hopes to persuade women readers of the pamphlet to see opportunities to express their Norwegian-American identities in musical and physical pursuits. In contrast to the more passive ethos of Norwegian-American mother, the Norwegian-American author, musician, or athlete can take an active part in American culture and bring pride and acclaim to the Norwegian-American community.

translated into English more than once, these novels follow Kristin Lavransdatter from her childhood in medieval Norway to her death during the Black Plague. The novels' treatment of women's roles in society, marriage, and religion are nuanced and compelling.
through participation in activities that are not marked out solely for Norwegians.

These simple acts outlined in *Why Sons of Norway?* help push a Norwegian-American ethos into the everyday and make it a lived ethos that becomes a natural part of a person's identity. If work, motherhood, music, sports, and leisure reading can both build and express a Norwegian-American ethos, then a Norwegian-American ethos really is meant to be lived out in daily life and not just performed for special occasions. Sons of Norway works hard in its publications to persuade members to see this as true, and the institution also provided many opportunities for members and potential members to gather and enact an ethos that could then be practiced in everyday life. Another one of the ways in which Sons of Norway encouraged members to remember and honor the history of Norway's national exemplars was through music, and especially through singing the Norwegian national anthem which boldly proclaimed ties to Norway in the midst of suspicion about immigrants. The program for the Leif Erikson Festival held on October 11, 1933 in Minneapolis notes that the audience was invited to participate in the singing of two songs: “*Ja, vi elsker dette landet,*” the Norwegian national anthem, at the beginning of the program and “America” at the end. Beginning the festival with the audience singing the Norwegian national anthem immediately makes festival attendees participate in a performance of Norwegian history. The song, with its lyrics written by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson in the 1860s, served as a national anthem before Norway gained independence from Sweden and was a popular and powerful expression of Norwegian nationalist feeling. The first verse, as translated by Rasmus B. Anderson, says:

Yes, we love with fond devotion / Norway's mountain domes, / Rising storm-lashed, o'er the ocean, / With their thousand homes; / Love our
Beginning the festival by singing these words in Norwegian encourages attendees to think of Norway as a country deserving of devotion. Furthermore, the reference to “saga-nights” (saganatt in Norwegian) turns singers’ minds to the Viking past when the sagas were composed. Singing the Norwegian national anthem invites participants to sing about loyalty to a nation with a past that still appears in the present.55

Sons of Norway events almost always include the singing of “Ja, vi elsker,” making it a performative rhetorical strategy used to connect members to Norway, their history, and a lived Norwegian-American ethos. “Ja, vi elsker” appears almost always at the very beginning or the very end of programs.56 At the 1920 convention in Madison, Wisconsin, the song marked the close of the evening program, making it the last thing convention participants would hear and sing before the evening’s social dance (43). In contrast to the Leif Erikson Festival, which began the program with the Norwegian anthem, ending the program with it would leave convention participants with their ties to

54 Rasmus B. Anderson was an active and admired member of the Norwegian-American community. He was the first chair of the Scandinavian languages and literature program at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, taking the chair in 1875 (Knaplund). His translation of “Ja, vi elsker” omits one important piece: he speaks of “fathers,” but the verse in Norwegian speaks of “father and mother” (far og mor).
55 It is also interesting that at the 1933 Leif Erikson Festival that the audience was invited to sing the Norwegian national anthem but not the American. “The Star Spangled Banner” was made the official anthem of the United States in 1931, but the festival ends the program with the song “America” instead.
56 Sons of Norway meetings still often begin with the singing of the Norwegian national anthem as well as the American (and sometimes Canadian) anthem. The regular singing of another country’s national anthem is not just a festival practice, therefore, but one that is a part of lodge life.
57 The dance itself that followed would also allow participants to perform Norwegian identity since it involved not only popular dances like the fox-trot but also the Scandinavian waltz, a variation of the standard waltz (which was also on the program), a “Spring Dance” which is listed as “Norwegian,” and the polka, the Norwegian/Scandinavian version of which has distinct variations from the polka danced in Eastern Europe (43). Dancing was a social and informal way of practicing a Norwegian identity—participants would see others and be seen themselves taking part in a Norwegian dancing tradition and they could potentially learn dances to take away with them if they did not come to the convention knowing them already.
Norway and its rich history firmly in their minds. A June 30, 1940 Sons of Norway picnic held at Costello's Picnic Grounds in Minneapolis also included “Ja, vi elsker” and other songs meant to invite picnickers into a performance of Norwegian-American ethos. The program lists eight “Picnic Songs” with lyrics so that picnic attendees could follow or sing along. The first song listed is “Ja, vi elsker,” which follows the pattern in other programs of either beginning or ending with the Norwegian national anthem. Like the Leif Erikson Festival of 1933, the 1940 picnic does not include “The Star Spangled Banner” as an audience participation song and uses “America” instead. The subtle privileging of the Norwegian national anthem over that of the United States persuades members of the audience to see their performance of Norwegian identifications as primary. Members could choose to sing “Ja, vi elsker” and other Norwegian songs in their homes and to bring other simple practices to bear on their daily lives, making their Norwegian-American ethos a part of life.

The printed materials produced by Sons of Norway and the opportunities presented by the organization to live out a Norwegian-American ethos and to celebrate it during special occasions make a Norwegian-American ethos more practicable and flexible. Members of Sons of Norway can choose which parts of Norwegian and Norwegian-American culture to tie their ethos to, take part in practices that help them

58 Carl G.O. Hansen notes in his History only that the outing was “large,” that songs were sung by the Norwegian Glee Club, and that the Supreme President Hauke and the Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture R.A. Trovatten were present (357).

59 Another popular song is the Christmas carol “Jeg er så glad hver julekveld” (I am so glad each Christmas Eve), which is still printed in the hymnal of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Evangelical Lutheran Worship (2006). The first verse appears in both Norwegian and English, with subsequent verses in English only. The survival of a Norwegian form of a carol in a contemporary hymnal points to the power of song and language in practicing an ethos.
live out that ethos, and still attend lodge events and declare unity through practices like singing the Norwegian national anthem. The organization's elevation of not only internationally known but also everyday Norwegians and Norwegian Americans makes a Norwegian-American ethos more accessible and liveable for Sons of Norway members who want to maintain an identity but might not wish to see an Ibsen play or read Sigrid Undset's work. The variety of exemplars and associated practices ensures that Sons of Norway members will be able to find figures with which to identify and activities in which they can engage regularly or occasionally in order to cultivate their Norwegian-American ethos, making Sons of Norway's exemplar strategy particularly persuasive.

**Conclusion**

Sons of Norway's success in fostering a lived Norwegian-American ethos and community during the difficult years following World War I and through World War II points rhetoricians in interesting directions. When considering ethos and identity in the context of institutions, rhetoricians have tended to focus on narratives that provide a unified ethos, whereas the example of Sons of Norway shows how an institution can simultaneously seek to unify a group of people and still give members of that group the tools to craft and live out an individual ethos. Sons of Norway's use of exemplars makes it possible to persuade members and potential members that there is a unified Norwegian-American community that consists of individuals who have their own tastes and pursuits. Furthermore, even though the Sons of Norway histories do not ask members to directly imitate the actions of the likes of Leif Erikson or Edvard Grieg, these texts do provide readers with an idea of the qualities Norwegian Americans should cultivate in their own
lives: qualities like bravery, adventurousness, and loyalty. These traits are not subversive or revolutionary. However, because these characteristics are rooted in Norway and in Norwegians who have come to North America, these qualities situate readers as more than American and thus as living outside of the narrow identities proponents of Americanization promoted. The result is a lived ethos that helps members of Sons of Norway live in America but maintain identities that are not solely, or even primarily, rooted in the United States.

In order to fully understand how communities maintain and live out an ethos in the face of American culture and the push to assimilate, rhetoricians can benefit by turning to communities and institutions like Sons of Norway to understand the rhetorical strategies that allow group members to claim a more-than-American ethos. Norwegian Americans no longer face the pressure to assimilate that they did after World War I, and Norway is not a subject of controversy like it was during World War II, but the group still exists and members of institutions like Sons of Norway work to actively maintain and live a Norwegian-American ethos. For example, Sons of Norway lodges still hold regular meetings and celebrations of holidays like Syttende Mai, Norway's Constitution Day. Although looking through pictures of lodge events published in The Viking, Sons of Norway's monthly magazine, reveal that many lodge members are elderly, the organization is committed to engaging youth in learning about Norway and the Norwegian-American experience. Sons of Norway provides scholarships that enable young members to travel to Norway and also provides information about Norwegian language and culture camps that youth and families can attend ("Sons of Norway
Foundation,” “Sons of Norway—Norwegian Culture”). Organizations like Sons of Norway still have the power and community standing to help create a lived Norwegian-American ethos. This organization and others like it provide opportunities for rhetoricians to study how communities like the Norwegian-American community have recreated themselves across the time even as they have lost markers of difference. Ethos, as Sons of Norway constructed it between 1918 and 1946 was not just something that proclaimed belonging. This ethos reasserted the value of difference in daily life.
Chapter 3: Lived Ethos and Handcraft Traditions: Rhetorical Education at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum

Both Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum and the town of Decorah, Iowa in which it is located serve as spaces in which a lived Norwegian-American ethos can be taught, learned, and practiced. Decorah, with a historically Norwegian-Lutheran college, festivals, and businesses that are tied to the Norwegian-American community, provides a favorable environment for the cultivation of a Norwegian-American ethos. Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum fits into Decorah's Norwegian-American environment as an educational space that has traditional museum exhibits as well as educational programs for children and adults. Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum serves as a locus for rhetorical education because the handcraft classes it runs incorporate participants into a handcraft tradition.60 This tradition binds participants to the community and gives them a practice that they can carry into their everyday lives, enabling them to live out a Norwegian-American ethos that otherwise might only be practiced on important symbolic occasions. The rhetorical nature of handcrafts and their teaching has not been explored, and the work of two instructors, Kate Martinson and Harley Refsal, shows how instruction in a handcraft forms ethos and gives students a way to attach simple practices to that ethos.

60 I use the term “handcraft” instead of “handicraft” throughout because it is the term preferred by Kate Martinson and Harley Refsal. The Oxford English Dictionary also notes that “handcraft” is the earlier term and that “handicraft” evolved from it following the pattern set by “handiwork” (“handicraft, n.”).
For people outside the Norwegian-American community and who are not familiar with the region, Decorah seems an unlikely location of Norwegian-American ethos. The town is about three hours from the nearest major airport in the Twin Cities and it is over an hour from the nearest freeway. Decorah, in other words, is not the sort of town you just happen upon; you have to plan to go there. Despite its relatively remote location, Decorah is important enough to the Norwegian-American community that the King and Queen of Norway visit Decorah when they come to the United States. Their last visit was in 2011, when the Norwegian royal family went to both Luther College and Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum. Luther College, located in Decorah since 1862, does much to promote the town's reputation as a place to visit. A small, liberal arts school affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Luther College is Decorah's largest employer. The school brings over 2,500 students to the community, and events like Homecoming draw alumni back to visit. The college has strong ties to the Norwegian-American community: the school's mascot is the Norse, and it has a Scandinavian studies major and minor. Luther College was the first home of Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, which was founded in 1877. The museum now sits on Decorah's main street and supports many of the town's Norwegian-oriented festivals and also serves as an educational space (see fig 5).
Decorah has come to embody a Norwegian-American ethos and also does much to promote itself as a place for Norwegian Americans to visit, ensuring that its status as a Norwegian-American location continues. Nordic Fest is a large festival held every year during the last weekend of July and is one of Decorah's biggest attractions. Water Street, the main street of the town, closes to traffic and is lined with booths offering food like lefse (a Norwegian flatbread made with potatoes and flour), rømmegrøt (a sour cream porridge topped with butter and cinnamon sugar), and krumkake (a crisp waffle cookie often seasoned with cardamom). There is a parade, fireworks, a fashion show featuring bunader (regional folk costumes of Norway), and activities like axe throwing. The official Nordic Fest website mentions that since 1967 over 1.5 million people have come to Decorah for Nordic Fest (“Nordic Fest”). Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum
also brings in visitors, both to see the museum and to take part in the folk art classes offered. Vesterheim also hosts a Syttende Mai celebration on May 17 each year to mark the signing of the Norwegian Constitution in 1814.

With celebrations of a major Norwegian holiday, Nordic Fest, a Norwegian-American museum, and a historically Norwegian-Lutheran college, Decorah easily embraces a Norwegian-American ethos. Norwegian flags and wooden nisse (a mythological humanoid creature who is helpful and mischievous by turns) adorn businesses and houses. The high school's mascot is the Vikings, and a local bank also takes Viking as its name. Norwegian Americans are a significant presence in the town but not the majority; however, the Norwegian-American institutions and celebrations make a Norwegian-American identification desirable and profitable for the town at large.  

The town of Decorah serves as an ideal place for the rhetorical education of residents and visitors into general and more particular Norwegian-American identities. Events like Nordic Fest allow Norwegian Americans to gather together and celebrate a common Norwegian-American ethos centered on popular foods, portrayals of the Vikings, and celebrations of regional varieties of Norwegian folk dress. Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum (usually abbreviated as “Vesterheim”), while it also serves the Norwegian-American community as a whole, runs handcraft classes that give participants more individualized routes into the living of a Norwegian-American ethos.  

61 Decorah, Iowa is the county seat of Winneshiek County and in the 2000 census Winneshiek County is noted as having 33.9% of its population claiming Norwegian descent (Natvik). While this does not give a specific number for Decorah, the “30% Norwegian-American” is used occasionally to demonstrate that while Decorah is a very Norwegian-American town, its identity and population numbers do not match up perfectly.
By connecting a craft that can be practiced in an everyday context with a Norwegian-American ethos, these classes serve as a space where identity and community are created and lived out. The lived ethos created is more than a symbolic celebration of a Norwegian-American identity brought out for holidays and festivals and permeates daily life, transforming the practice of a handcraft into an expression of a deeply rooted and naturalized ethos. Two instructors at Vesterheim, professors Kate Martinson and Harley Refsal, exemplify the kind of pedagogy that persuades students to identify with a Norwegian-American ethos or to individualize already-existing identifications by learning and practicing a craft that is considered particularly Norwegian or more broadly Scandinavian.  

Handcraft classes like the ones taught by Refsal and Martinson are forms of rhetorical education because they persuade students to see handcrafts and folk art as something that connects the history, exemplary people, and practices of a group in a specific tradition. In other words, handcrafts are not just a hobby or a side project but something integral to identity and life as a Norwegian American. As opposed to a Norwegian-American ethos like the one crafted by Sons of Norway from World War I through World War II, which was built on the general admiration of Leif Erikson and the Norwegian people who are seen as brave, loyal, and progressive, a Norwegian-American ethos attached to handcraft practice is founded in the student-teacher relationship and the

---

62 Both Refsal and Martinson discuss their respective crafts as Norwegian and Scandinavian. Refsal is generally referring to Norway and Sweden when he uses “Scandinavia” since flat-plane carving is not common outside of those two countries. Throughout this chapter I also alternate between using Norway, Norwegian, Scandinavia, and Scandinavian. I do this in part because it is what Refsal and Martinson do, and also because Norwegian Americans will sometimes define themselves more broadly as Scandinavian Americans.
repeated practice of a piece of Norwegian culture. The personal relationship is vital to the success of the rhetorical education of handcraft instruction because it gives students a physically present, admirable, and imitable exemplar. Exemplary instructors not only provide a figure to imitate but also make students accountable for the craft; if students are going to imitate their teachers and be exemplary practitioners of handcraft, then they are responsible for behaving and crafting in a way that reflects well on the teacher and others who practice it. Furthermore, the nearness of the instructor, in contrast to the remoteness of exemplars like Erikson, gives the student firsthand experience of the transmission of tradition and concrete connections to the histories and stories of Norwegians and Norwegian Americans.

Three pedagogical techniques used by exemplary instructors like Martinson and Refsal illustrate how handcraft instruction persuades students to see handcrafts as a marker of ethos and to understand handcraft practice as living out a Norwegian-American ethos. First, providing histories of handcrafts like flat-plane carving and nålbinding helps to connect students to a wider community of practitioners and the broader Norwegian-American community. Even though students can practice alone, they can access this community through histories that are both communal and personal in order to contextualize or realize the importance of their practice and to see themselves as carriers of tradition. Second, the use of a copia of examples persuades students to see that their own handcraft practice is adaptable and that they are not limited to one kind of product or style. Students can imitate these examples or use the diversity before them as encouragement to find their own identity as a Norwegian-American handcrafter. Even
though a Norwegian-American ethos tied to handcraft still has a foundation in histories of
craft, students can create a more individual ethos through their choices of which
examples to imitate, ignore, or revise. The variety of examples and the living examples
that Martinson and Refsal provide also encourage students to approach handcraft with
humility, an integral part of a Norwegian-American ethos. Finally, an emphasis on
practice makes it clear to students that a Norwegian-American ethos based in handcrafts
is for everyday life and not only for special occasions and holidays. The repeated
practice of a handcraft is then a way to both simultaneously proclaim and build a
Norwegian-American ethos rooted in history; this lived ethos, however, finds meaning in
and adapts to the demands of the present.

Since handcrafts enable practitioners to live a Norwegian-American ethos in daily
life, the repeated practice of handcraft traditions incorporates them into the Norwegian-
American community and makes their ethos seem like a natural identity. The strong
incorporative tendency of handcrafts makes them a powerful means of bringing people
into a Norwegian-American ethos and community and making these people carriers of
tradition who see their handcraft practice as a way to keep the tradition moving. The
forward motion of handcrafts and the lived ethos that comes with them is key, because
otherwise the crafts would stagnate and the ethos that with them could no longer be lived.

**Handcrafts at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum**

The rhetorical education in handcrafts presented at Vesterheim Norwegian-
American Museum is part of the museum's larger commitment to preserving the past and
continuing what the museum terms “living traditions” in the present (“About Vesterheim
Museum”). Connecting the past to the present is a large part of Vesterheim's work, and this link helps the museum portray a Norwegian-American ethos as valuable and desirable in the present. Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum was originally a part of Luther College, which began collecting materials for a museum in 1877 (Knudson 3). The museum's first curator, Haldor Hanson, turned his attention to collecting and preserving Norwegian and Norwegian-American objects and written documents (Nelson, “Material Culture” 14). The museum grew and benefitted from the donations of Norwegian Americans who either wanted to clear out old objects from their homes or wanted to give the objects to an institution that could preserve and display them. In the years 1932-1933 the collection moved to a building in downtown Decorah that had been a hotel and the site of a Lutheran publishing company before becoming the museum (33). Vesterheim became a separate organization in the 1960s with its own board and sources of funding.

Today Vesterheim is one of the largest and oldest museums dedicated to the history and folk art of a single ethnic group (Welcome to Vesterheim). The museum consists of indoor exhibits and also an outdoor division with historic cabins, a mill, a school, and a stabbur (a distinctively Norwegian storage shed). Vesterheim also has an educational building (see fig. 6), visitor's center, museum store and craft supply as well as several other buildings, giving it a significant physical presence in Decorah.
Preserving objects no longer used by Norwegian Americans can make it seem like Vesterheim participates in the heritage business discussed by Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, bringing defunct sites and objects to life. That Vesterheim is interested in preserving objects from a past that Norwegian Americans do not directly live out today is true; however, the museum works to make the past's relevance in the present clear. In exhibits of folk art, Vesterheim mixes older carved objects with more recent ones, showing how past and present work are related. The folk art classes at Vesterheim also make visits to the collections in order to get a better understanding of the history of the traditions they are learning, making the museum's preservation work relate more closely to the work of tradition than that of heritage.

Vesterheim functions as a site of rhetorical education in lived ethos in its work to
educate young people and adults about Norwegian-American history, craft, and traditions. The adult education program began in the late 1960s when Vesterheim brought Sigmund Aarhus from Norway to teach rosemaling, and since then it has expanded to include many different kinds of folk art (Fossum-Martin interview). The adult education program runs year-round and classes can be one day or almost a week long. The classes are designed to appeal to those wishing to learn an art or practice that is culturally associated with Norway, although recently Vesterheim offered classes in Danish paper cutting and in Swedish Dalarna painting (*Classes 2012* 8, 17). The handcrafts taught in Vesterheim's adult education program complement the museum's goal of preserving objects and folk art since classes will sometimes tour the museum or the storage facilities to look at older and contemporary examples of the handcraft they are learning. By blurring the boundaries between “preservation” and “living tradition,” Vesterheim helps students see the connections between past and present and to give new life to the collections preserved in the museum.

Recent changes in the handcraft class policies have increased the reach of Vesterheim's education program and so have expanded the potential audience of the rhetorical education provided there. Even though the adult education program has been limited to people ages eighteen and up in the past, Vesterheim has begun encouraging younger people to take classes. Vesterheim has made it easier for families and younger people to take classes by offering discounts to youth who take a class in the company of an adult. The 2012 class catalog explains the policy: “Vesterheim also values the importance of nurturing inter-generational learning. Therefore, some of our courses are
open to students under the age of 18, provided they are accompanied by a fully enrolled adult in the same class” (*Classes 2012* 3). Youth get a 25% discount off of the full tuition, making the classes more affordable for people who want to bring a younger person into handcrafts. This policy change has made classes a place for families to learn a handcraft together which reinforces the rhetorical education in tradition by echoing the ways in which handcrafts were taught in the past to younger generations by the older. Darlene Fossum-Martin, Vesterheim’s Education Specialist, related an anecdote about a bowl-turning class that had three generations from one family taking it: a child, his mother, and his grandfather. Fossum-Martin also mentioned two other classes that father/son pairs took together. This anecdotal evidence suggests that Vesterheim's new policy is making it easier for families to learn and practice handcraft together, bringing handcraft education a little closer to how it was taught and learned in the past, when the older generation was responsible for teaching the younger. Even though these classes involve different generations learning together, the classes still create a space in which intergenerational learning and interaction happen around a handcraft. By encouraging more youth to participate in handcraft classes, Vesterheim works not only to encourage younger generations to continue craft traditions but also to foster familial traditions of education.

It is important to notice that although the classes at Vesterheim all offer students a chance to learn and practice a Norwegian or Scandinavian handcraft, certain handcrafts have more prestige, suggesting that some practices are more valued than others in the Norwegian-American community. The ranking of handcrafts becomes clear not only by
looking at course offerings but also by seeing how collections are displayed in the museum. Class offerings fall under the following categories: fiber arts, knifemaking, Norwegian food traditions, rosemaling and other painting techniques, sculpture, and woodworking. In 2012 Vesterheim offered 41 classes (see table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class type</th>
<th>Number of classes offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiber arts</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knifemaking</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food traditions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosemaling and painting</td>
<td>13 (9 classes in rosemaling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpture</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodworking</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Classes offered at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum in 2012.*

From the number of classes offered in each category, it is clear that painting (and in painting, rosemaling) and woodworking are popular. However, not only are these options popular, rosemaling and woodworking are also two of the more prestigious handcrafts practiced in Norwegian America. The National Exhibition of Folk Art in the

---

63 Rosemaling is a Norwegian style of decorative painting that includes more organic forms than geometrical patterns. Often done in oil or acrylics now, rosemaling requires a high degree of skill and patience to do well.

64 All class information from Vesterheim's *Classes 2012* booklet.

65 Even though there are 10 total fiber arts classes offered, I have not generally included them in the
Norwegian Tradition that Vesterheim holds each year helps to establish which handcrafts are most valued. The four categories in which an artist can submit are weaving, woodworking, rosemaling, and knifemaking (*Classes 2012*). The elevation of these handcrafts over others like knitting and hardangersøm (cutwork embroidery) is also born out in the museum's exhibits. Rosemaling and woodworking occupy much of the museum's second floor exhibits while textiles have a smaller exhibit on the third floor. The smallness of the textiles exhibit is especially interesting since textiles make up Vesterheim's largest collection. Granted, textiles appear throughout the museum as part of a bunad display on the first floor and also in context in recreations of house interiors. However, their location in these in-context exhibits also makes them easy to overlook or makes them seem like decorations for the more serious carved pieces.

The hierarchy of handcrafts in the museum can present challenges for instructors like Kate Martinson, who practices a relatively obscure fiber art called nålbinding, since students familiar with the museum might not recognize the craft as Norwegian at first. Harley Refsal, whose flat-plane style carving has gained international recognition, faces less of a challenge since category of most prestigious. In part this is because there are a wide variety of classes offered in fiber arts, ranging from knitting and nålbinding to hardangersøm and weaving. Of the fiber arts, weaving could be said to be the most prestigious since it has a place in the The National Exhibition of Folk Art in the Norwegian Tradition. Interestingly, both rosemaling and woodcarving were historically practiced by men, suggesting that gender divisions helped play a role in determining the relative worth of a kind of folk art. Rosemaling has become an art practiced largely by women, and women are now doing more woodcarving than they did in the past. Women also tend to dominate fiber arts classes (Martinson and Fossum-Martin interviews).

Bunader are Norwegian folk costumes. In the early twentieth century bunader became an increasingly popular way to display national and regional pride—the bunad modeled after folk outfits from the Hardanger region are also considered a sort of “national” bunad, with other bunader indicating what region the wearer is from based on their design, color scheme, and decoration. There is a bunad fashion show at each Nordic Fest, and since a woman's bunad can cost several thousand dollars (unless a person makes her own) these dresses are a sign of prestige and treated as heirlooms.
his work is better known, but even so, his carving's rough-hewn edges and rustic appearance can make it seem less complex and prestigious when compared to acanthus carving, which is ornate and much more formalized.

Even though a lack of status can make the teaching and practice of certain handcrafts difficult, Vesterheim recognizes that encouraging a culture of prestige can negatively affect the programs offered at the museum. The unintended side effects of Vesterheim establishing a gold medalist program illustrate how status can create problems. On a wall in one of the painting rooms in the educational building there hangs a board with the names of Vesterheim gold medalists in rosemaling. Darlene Fossum-Martin explained in an interview that Vesterheim started awarding ribbons to folk artists whose work was judged to be excellent in the National Exhibition of Folk Art in the Norwegian Tradition and that when artists won a certain number of ribbons they were called gold medalists. Awarding this title is a way to recognize excellent work in Norwegian folk art and also to establish certain standards of quality. Fossum-Martin acknowledges that this program has been a mixed blessing for Vesterheim. On the one hand, it made Vesterheim the center of Norwegian folk art education for many years and served as a proving ground for folk artists. On the other hand, it has helped to create a nationwide pool of instructors who have the imprimatur of Vesterheim to back them up, meaning that the museum cannot fill classes like it used to since students can get instruction closer to home. Therefore, even though handcrafts like nålbinding do not have the immediate recognition and instant ethos that more famous crafts like rosemaling and woodcarving do, these crafts can benefit the museum by drawing in participants who
would have trouble finding another place in which to learn the craft.

The handcraft classes offered at Vesterheim are shaped by the museum's desire to teach adults and more recently youth Norwegian and Scandinavian crafts and by the creation of a handcraft hierarchy that gives more prestige to intricate crafts like rosemaling and woodcarving. The museum provides fertile ground for instructors to persuade students to tie a Norwegian-American identity to crafts that speak to them and which carry Norwegian cultural practices forward. Kate Martinson and Harley Refsal are just two examples of Vesterheim instructors who use Vesterheim classes as rhetorical education to persuade students into a lived ethos that allows for creation and individualization through the practice of nålbinding and flat-plane carving.

**Exemplars of Lived Ethos, Exemplars of Craft**

If handcraft classes are going to lead participants into a lived ethos, then the instructor must first present her- or himself as worthy of admiration and imitation, living out the ethos that he or she wishes students to take on. Professors Harley Refsal and Kate Martinson, who are both in the art department at Luther College and instructors at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, serve as exemplary instructors in their work teaching flat-plane style carving or nålbinding. They convincingly live out an ethos both as practitioners and pedagogues in their present actions as well as in their personal accounts of how they became interested in and learned their respective crafts. Refsal first came to Luther College as a campus minister and only later began teaching Norwegian and woodcarving; Martinson has her MFA in book arts and first became interested in nålbinding in the 1970s. Martinson and Refsal's different paths and backgrounds make
them compelling exemplars because they demonstrate to students that there is no single way to begin a handcraft practice and that woodcarving and nålbinding do not need to be learned from childhood. Their involvement with the Norwegian-American community, Refsal having grown up Norwegian-American and Martinson having learned the identity, also shows to students how a handcraft practice can strengthen or create a Norwegian-American ethos that can be lived out in daily life.

Refsal and Martinson begin to build their ethos as instructors by presenting themselves as the carriers of traditions that are alive but in need of more attention. This rhetorical move gives them authority; by virtue of being some of the few teaching these handcrafts, Martinson and Refsal become experts who have the best interests of their traditions at heart. Refsal is a well-known carver and is credited with reviving flat-plane carving, a style practiced in Norway and Sweden, and Martinson has done much valuable work in reviving and researching nålbinding, a knotless netting technique. Both Refsal and Martinson have discussed the difficulties they faced learning and finding others who knew their craft. In his preface to Art & Technique of Scandinavian Style Woodcarving (2004), Refsal writes that he traveled to Norway with his family in 1988 and enrolled in a graduate folk art studies program, through which he hoped to learn more about the Scandinavian tradition of carving figures out of wood. He writes, “But I eventually learned that the tradition had become almost extinct, and I couldn't locate a single course being taught on the subject, either in Norway or Sweden” (1). Refsal said that when he was in Norway in the late 1980s he would ask around about people who carved only to receive answers like “Well, shoot, he died” or “No, he's 92” (qtd. in Schmeal 6). Refsal's
inability to find classes or carvers meant that he quickly became the person teaching both Norwegians and Americans how to carve in the flat-plane style, a style where the carver works with one knife and carves out flat planes of wood, leaving the finished figure with the marks of carving on it and forgoing any smoothing or sanding (Refsal Scandinavian 1). Refsal's story presents him as one of the only authorities on flat-plane style carving and persuades students to view him as the person to look to as an exemplar of the flat-plane tradition.

Similarly, Kate Martinson has discussed how nålbinding had lapsed into obscurity when she first learned about it in the mid 1970s, convincing students to view her work in reviving it as exemplary. In a presentation given to her nålbinding class in July 2012, Martinson said that Norway had identified nålbinding as an important skill to preserve, but that the preservation efforts mostly consisted of recording the craft in books, which she sees as ineffective. In an article written for The Weaver's Journal in 1987, Martinson writes that when she first started learning nålbinding in 1975 she “knew no one who could actually do the complex stitches” and that “until 1981” she “knew no one in this country who was acquainted with nålbinding as a living technique” (12). This, she writes, is one of the challenges facing nålbinding “since there are only a handful of

---

68 Flat-plane style carving stands in contrast to chip carving and acanthus carving, the other two major carving styles taught at Vesterheim. Chip carving creates incised geometrical patterns in wood using one or two knives. Acanthus carving is the most ornate of the woodcarving styles taught at Vesterheim and is based on intricate “leaf designs” that are carved in relief (Classes 2012 25). Flat-plane style is very rough and rustic in appearance compared to chip carving and acanthus carving, which is part of its allure.

69 Martinson's opinion that books are poor teachers of nålbinding is not just an attempt to get people to take her classes. Nålbinding differs significantly from crocheting and knitting, the two major yarn fiber arts, and learning the stitches can be a confusing process. Martinson showed various nålbinding instruction books to her July 2012 class, and the general consensus among participants was that the diagrams were difficult, if not impossible, to follow.
people in the U.S. and Canada who know anything in depth about the technique and its beauty and satisfactions” (15). In Norway Martinson has encountered a similar ignorance of nålbinding and its history. In the NAHA-Norway presentation she did with Harley Refsal, Martinson described a research trip she had taken to Norway and how at the Norsk Folkemuseum's open-air division she had been introduced to the woman who did nålbinding demonstrations for visitors. The demonstrator, however, did not know how to nålbinding and Martinson ended up teaching her the basics. Martinson's account of learning and teaching nålbinding, like Refsal's story of carving, persuades students to see her as an authority on the craft who is interested in its continuing practice and survival.

Aside from their authority as carriers of endangered traditions, Refsal and Martinson also have credentials as teachers that persuade students to see them as worthy of admiration and imitation in practice. Both Refsal and Martinson have taught in Norway, but they have also taken part in reinvigorating Norwegian handcrafts in the United States. Refsal and Martinson teach classes at Luther College which are popular with the student body and have also taught at folk schools and craft guilds in the United States. Their work has received varying levels of recognition. Refsal is internationally

---

70 One of this “handful” of people includes Lawrence (Larry) Schmitt, a Wisconsin native who learned about nålbinding from his parents, who made “toothbrush rugs” and have donated examples of these rugs to Vesterheim (Nelson 17-18). He teaches classes primarily at North House Folk School in Grand Marais, Minnesota and has also published books on nålbinding. Schmitt's story of learning nålbinding from his parents shows that the technique was not only a Norwegian one but had survived and come to the United States as well.

71 It is important to note that nålbinding never completely died out in Norway. Martinson spoke to her July 2012 nålbinding class about how nålbinding was still widely practiced in Norway up until the middle of the twentieth century, and so its revival is more of a return than a resuscitation.

72 Some of the folk schools and guilds include North House Folk School in Grand Marais, Minnesota, Milan Village Arts School in Milan, Minnesota, John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, North Carolina, the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the Minnesota Knitters' Guild, also located in Minneapolis. Both Refsal and Martinson have taught in Norway at the Rauland
renowned for his work and received the St. Olav Medal from King Harold V of Norway in 1996. The St. Olav Medal is awarded “to individuals who live outside of Norway, and have made a substantial contributions to strengthening ties between the country [of Norway] and the rest of the world” (Addington 4). Martinson has not received such accolades, but her commitment to teaching a little known and rarely-practiced craft and her role in revitalizing it in Norway and the U.S. make her an important teacher in the Norwegian and Norwegian-American handcraft communities. Martinson's interest in Scandinavian textiles has been recognized—her first travels to Norway and Sweden were as a Watson Fellow and she returned to Norway during the 2006-2007 academic year in order to study historical examples of nålbinding—and she has also been awarded the Higher Education Teacher of the Year in Iowa (Martinson “The Myth and the Artist” 43). Martinson has also had several pieces of nålbinding “accepted for permanent display in Decorah's Vesterheim Museum” (Beardsley, Brandt, Clopton and Koenig 8).

Refsal's and Martinson's credentials as practitioners and teachers of handcrafts make them persuasive instructors because students understand that they are working with respected and important teachers in the Norwegian-American and Norwegian handcraft communities. However, Martinson and Refsal's attitudes toward handcraft traditions and their commitment to passing on the meta-knowledge of tradition are what make them effective teachers of lived ethos. Although they cast their work in terms of culture and heritage, Refsal and Martinson's pedagogy can be understood rhetorically as deeply
concerned with ethos and how it is taught and lived. In their joint presentation at NAHA-Norway 2011, Martinson and Refsal discussed handcraft and folk art as a “non-language dependent journey” into “ethnic heritage.” They emphasized the importance of having practices and activities that do not require people to know Norwegian since knowledge of the language among Norwegian Americans has declined. Folk art and handcraft practices can help to fill that gap by serving as an entrance point into learning about the history of Norway, emigration to the United States, and Norwegian immigrant life, according to Refsal and Martinson. They contrast this immersion into handcraft and its history to a focus on technique, where the skills are learned but not their historical and cultural context. In an interview, Martinson compared the teaching that she and Refsal do with instruction in rosemaling: “There is the pure technique,” suggesting that rosemaling is generally more concerned with brushstrokes and shading than with the history of rosemaling in Norway and its revival in the United States. Technique can lead to an ethos based on the correct execution of a handcraft and on excellent products, but Martinson and Refsal's approach leads to an ethos based on students' connections with the histories of a group, that group's handcrafts, and the practice of handcrafts as a part of everyday life. Even though this ethos is not shared with every Norwegian American and is not easily generalizable, it gives students who learn flat-plane style carving or nålbinding ways to both imagine and practice themselves into a lived ethos that connects them with Norway, Norwegians, and Norwegian Americans.

Refsal and Martinson emphasize historical and cultural knowledge which leads the rhetorical education they engage in to not only reinforce and deepen identifications
among Norwegian Americans but also to create a Norwegian-American ethos where there might have been none before. Kate Martinson herself is an excellent example of this. She is very involved with Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum as an instructor and as a museum board member and has taught Norwegian fiber arts at Vesterheim, around the U.S., and in Norway, and yet she is not of Norwegian descent. She revealed this to the nålbinding class she taught at Vesterheim in July 2012 and this news was met with surprise. Martinson's deep knowledge of Norwegian fiber arts only partly explains why class participants were surprised. Martinson's presentation in the Vesterheim catalog of 2012 classes reinforces the idea that she is Norwegian; her instructor photograph shows her demonstrating nålbinding while wearing a Norwegian folk dress with a sølje, a Norwegian piece of silver jewelry decorated with small hanging spoons. By presenting Martinson in a way instantly recognizable to insiders as Norwegian, the Vesterheim catalog reinforces a Norwegian ethos that for Martinson is not based in blood. Martinson lives out this ethos convincingly, and her example helps explain the Norwegian-American community's continuing existence and strength. As Norwegian Americans married outsiders they could still maintain a Norwegian identity by teaching their spouse and children practices, which would not only continue the practices but also incorporate the non-Norwegian American spouse into a Norwegian-American ethos and into the larger community. The role that handcrafts can play in incorporating an outsider into the community shows how important the rhetorical

Martinson is one example of a non-Norwegian becoming identified with Norwegian America through practice, but my first knowledge of how practice can incorporate someone into a community comes from my mother (a non-Norwegian American) who was instrumental in teaching me about Norwegian-American food and holiday traditions and also about Norwegian-American immigrant history.
education to be had in handcraft classes can be; these classes can serve as spaces in which a lived ethos and connections to the Norwegian-American community are forged.

Harley Refsal also lives a Norwegian-American ethos, but unlike Martinson his ethos begins with his story of growing up as a Norwegian American. His Norwegian-American ethos persuades students to see handcraft practices like Refsal's flat-plane style carving as a way to express ethos. Refsal's books and pieces written about him always mention his background which directs readers to understand him as an exemplar of Norwegian-American culture. Biographies of Refsal usually describe how he grew up on the farm his Norwegian immigrant grandparents had in Minnesota and spoke Norwegian at home as a child. Refsal studied Norwegian when he went to Augsburg College in Minneapolis, Minnesota, a Norwegian-Lutheran school (Schmeal 2-5). It is important to note that Refsal's background does not contribute to any sense on his part that Norwegian Americans are the only ones who should carve in the flat-plane style. In an interview with the Luther College student newspaper *Chips* in 2005 he said: “It's enormously rewarding when a current or former student gets hooked [on carving], and it's great to hear months or years after they've taken a class that they continue to have their life enriched by some aspect of Scandinavian culture” (Addington 4). Refsal's pedagogy is designed to help persuade students into getting “hooked” on carving, and Refsal teaches Scandinavian woodcarving as something that can add value and worth to anyone's life. Refsal makes sure to present his own practice and teaching of handcrafts as a model for anyone interested; he does not expect students to have grown up whittling or speaking Norwegian like he did, nor does he present his own life as the ideal and other people's
paths to handcraft as inferior. Refsal thus serves as an admirable exemplar without an insistence that his is the only way.

Refsal's claim that he wants students to have their “[lives] enriched by some aspect of Scandinavian culture” helps get to the heart of what kind of lived ethos he and Kate Martinson encourage their students to construct. Based on their own histories with craft, Martinson and Refsal are compelling examples of how a handcraft can lead a person to live out a Norwegian-American ethos learning a handcraft, traveling to Norway, and connecting the practice of a tradition with the Norwegian-American community. Even if students do not explore the wider handcraft community or ever travel to Norway, they can still have their lives enriched by finding personal enjoyment in practicing the craft and can pass along the gift of the tradition to others in the form of finished pieces or instruction. This lived ethos does not form around any single set of beliefs but rather coalesces around a person's practice of the handcraft, the connections this person makes between their present-day practice and the past, and the work the person does to maintain a part of Norwegian/Scandinavian culture. Despite the individual nature of this ethos, it has its foundation tradition and history, which connects the practitioner to the broader community.

Martinson and Refsal's pedagogy creates a chance for students to discover a new practice that will enhance their lives and provide a door into an ethos based on history and tradition. In their role as guides who bring students into new practices and identifications with a Norwegian-American ethos, Harley Refsal and Kate Martinson must establish their own ethos as people have the best interests of their students at heart.
Their work to establish themselves as authorities only goes so far; Martinson's and Refsal's stories as exemplars of handcraft could be intimidating, and so they must identify with students and get students to identify with them in order to convince students that they can take up a handcraft practice and live out the associated ethos. They accomplish this by presenting their teaching as a gift to students using a teaching strategy Martinson defines as a “soft sell,” which focuses on encouragement and support instead of criticism and a demand for perfect technique.

Refsal and Martinson establish their goodwill first by presenting their teaching as a gift to students; this rhetorical move emphasizes that they are not the originators of the handcrafts who will profit by teaching but rather the stewards of their crafts who are passing them on. The move to stewardship from ownership is important because it takes the focus off of Martinson and Refsal and puts it on the handcraft traditions they practice. If students can view them as caretakers instead of owners then it is easier to envision stepping into a similar role because it does not involve being solely responsible for the future of the handcraft. Refsal and Martinson face some difficulty in presenting their instruction as a gift; taking a class at Vesterheim can be expensive since students pay well over $100 to take a weekend-long class at Vesterheim and students from out of town must also pay for accommodations and food. The price of the courses themselves and the added expenses of lodging and meals could lead students to view the handcraft instruction they receive as their due, as something owed to them given their investment.

74 The listed prices for Harley Refsal's classes in the Classes 2012 catalog from Vesterheim are $190 for Vesterheim members and $240 for non-members (22). Kate Martinson's class was listed as $254 for members and $306 for non-members (7), but the class ended up costing less because it was shortened by one day. In an interview, Darlene Fossum-Martin, Vesterheim's Education Specialist, noted that these class prices are competitive with other folks schools offering similar classes.
However, Martinson and Refsal take pains to explain the worth of the knowledge they are imparting to students so that their own motives for teaching are clear and so that students understand that they are not consumers but stewards as well.

Casting handcraft pedagogy as a gift to students helps keep handcrafts moving from person to person and avoids the one-to-one parity of commodity exchange. Lewis Hyde writes in *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (1979, 1983): “A market exchange has an equilibrium or stasis: you pay to balance the scale. But when you give a gift there is momentum, and the weight shifts from body to body” (9). Even though instructors and students could see the classes at Vesterheim as a commodity exchange, these classes do not appear so in practice. The classes instead look more like Hyde's description of how gifts connect people and always move from one to another, shifting responsibility from the shoulders of the giver to the receiver, who must then give in turn to keep the gift going and alive.75 Martinson and Refsal establish their status as gift givers by making their goodwill and disregard for profit clear, focusing instead on the worth of their handcrafts and the joy of teaching and learning.

Explaining that they are not as interested in profit as in cultivating and passing on handcrafts is one of the main ways that Martinson and Refsal establish their goodwill.

---

75 Hyde calls this the “labor of gratitude” (51). Hyde writes: “A gift that has the power to change us awakens a part of the soul. But we cannot receive the gift until we can meet it as an equal. We therefore submit ourselves to the labor of becoming like the gift. Giving a return gift is the final act in the labor of gratitude, and it is also, therefore, the true acceptance of the original gift” (51). This could describe the process students go through of developing their skills after the class and becoming confident on their own as practitioners of handcraft. Only when they have gained confidence in their own skills and knowledge can they then turn and teach someone else. However, handcraft students can quickly become gift givers by giving the products of their labor away to those around them. These gifts keep the physical results of handcraft alive by dispersing them throughout a community and creating gift bonds between giver and receiver, but it is the passing along of the practice that truly keeps the gift of handcrafts alive, and is therefore the piece I focus on in this chapter.
towards students and present instruction as a gift. In an interview, Kate Martinson explained to me that she was donating her salary from teaching the nålbinding class back to Vesterheim, saying “I'm not in it to make money...I don't care.” Martinson took this disregard for profit into the classroom, establishing her goodwill with the students by making it clear that she had no commercial interest in the course. On the second day of the class Martinson explained the various kinds of yarn and then took the class to a local yarn shop to look at different varieties of yarn and give students a chance to test their own knowledge. Before leaving the Vesterheim educational building, Martinson took care to explain to the class that no one was obligated to buy anything and that she did not have a deal with the yarn store in which she would bring the store business and get profits in return. Small assurances like these helped Kate Martinson present herself as only interested in her craft and in the class learning the craft, establishing her motives as benevolent and disinterested.

Similarly, Harley Refsal works to present himself as promoting Scandinavian woodcarving and as uninterested in making himself rich. In both *Woodcarving in the Scandinavian Style* (1992) and *Art & Technique of Scandinavian Style Woodcarving* (2004), Refsal ends his preface with these words: “After having taught courses throughout the United States as well as in Scandinavia, I can't decide which I enjoy more, carving figures myself or trying to help others develop their skill so that they can tell their own stories in wood” (8, 1). As he indicated in his 2005 interview with *Chips*, Refsal is more interested in the relationship between the teacher and the student and how mutually rewarding it can be than in international fame and recognition. Refsal is also sure to
make it clear that woodcarving need not be a hobby that costs the student much money, thus making sure that his gift to the student is not one that will cause hardship and trouble. Flat-plane carving, Refsal reminds students, only really requires one knife, and he gives tips on inexpensive ways to practice woodcarving before starting projects. In Whittling Little Folk (2011), Refsal tells readers that “it's not a bad idea to begin putting a knife to wood by tackling something small and manageable...Begin to whittle on a stick, or if you don't have access to a stick, peel a carrot, taking long, slow, thin slices” (56). The simple tools and materials needed to begin whittling—a knife and a stick (or carrot)—let a novice get to the work right away. Similarly, Martinson teaches nålbinding as a craft requiring very few materials to get started, just a tapestry needle or nål (a wider, wooden version of a tapestry needle) and woolen yarn (see fig. 7).

![Figure 7: A selection of nåler for nålbinding. Nåler range from about five to fifteen dollars in cost. Photograph by author.](image)

168
The simplicity of the setup for these crafts adds to the apparent goodwill of the instructors towards their students and also works to persuade students to see these crafts as a viable addition to Norwegian and Norwegian-American cultural practices that help them create and live their ethos. The focus on the handcraft, its worth, and its simple materials helps students to see handcraft instruction as a gift, and the physical motions of learning the craft help them see how the gift of handcraft moves, as Hyde says, “from body to body.”

To further the appeal of the gift of handcraft and to counter any tendency students might have to deify them as practitioners and teachers, Refsal and Martinson use what Martinson calls the “soft sell” in their teaching. Discussing the classes that she and Refsal co-teach at Luther College occasionally, Martinson said, “Harley and I set it up intentionally, you know, they didn't have to be with either of us all the time, and that sort of soft, convincing sell of what we do, so they almost to a one came out just really strong and very proud of what they had done.” The “soft, convincing sell” is based in part on a focus on simplicity but also on an encouraging attitude. Martinson spoke about how both she and Refsal see gentle encouragement as much more productive than an insistence on perfection and technique. She characterizes their teaching as based on affirmations like “You can do this” and “You can start with this” attitudes, in other words, that are meant to convince students that Norwegian/Scandinavian handcrafts are approachable, doable, and not hinging on perfection. Their ethos is not based on appearing perfect and demanding the same, but on taking up a handcraft in a way that feels doable in the class and outside of it as well.
Both Martinson and Refsal approach their teaching thoughtfully and with a view toward making students of all levels of ability feel welcome, bolstering their ethos as welcoming stewards of handcraft traditions. In her interview, Kate Martinson said that she and Harley Refsal practice the same pedagogy whether they are teaching together, separately, at Luther College, at Vesterheim, or elsewhere. She also talked about their choices being very intentional:

And I've thought as an educator that some time during the week or weekend or semester when I have students—if you talk around about enough things, you connect with them...So there's a lot of chatting, there's a lot of sort of openness, which I'm very proud of. I think it's an intentional way of getting people relaxed. So, you'll see some of that [during the nålbinding class], and it is very intentional.

The stress Martinson puts on making pedagogical decisions deliberately helps show the amount of thought that she and Refsal put into their pedagogy and how best to incorporate students into handcrafting. By presenting themselves as having their students' best interests in mind and as motivated not by money but by a sincere desire to pass on handcraft and folk art practices that they themselves find meaningful, Refsal and Martinson establish their own ethos with students as credible and welcoming stewards of Norwegian handcraft traditions. Their pedagogy supports their presentation of handcrafts as a gift; Refsal and Martinson do not present themselves as paid coaches who demand excellence but rather as people worthy of trust and friendship who lead students to discover new skills, talents, and knowledge. Their own ethos persuades students that the handcrafts Martinson and Refsal teach are culturally meaningful and potentially an important part of a student's own lived ethos as a Norwegian American. Martinson and Refsal accomplish this rhetorical work through presenting history, examples, and practice
as avenues to ethos within the realm of handcrafts.

**History, Examples, and Practice as Rhetorical Education**

The pedagogical strategies used by Kate Martinson and Harley Refsal create a lived ethos by bringing the past into the present, incorporating students into tradition, and using practice to naturalize an ethos. Students of handcraft are persuaded to take up the practice of craft in daily life, giving them a way to truly live out a Norwegian-American ethos. Both Harley Refsal and Kate Martinson use history to give students exemplars to look up to and emulate in a similar fashion to how Sons of Norway used both extraordinary and everyday exemplars to persuade members of the value of Norwegian Americans. The histories presented by Martinson and Refsal not only give students exemplars to imitate but also incorporate students into the handcrafts' tradition. Their use of tradition as a framework gives students a sense of responsibility for carrying the craft into the future. This component of the rhetorical education provided in handcraft classes persuades students to see the importance of their role in a handcraft tradition. Refsal always starts his books with histories of carving that go from Viking-Age Norway to Norwegian emigration to Norwegian Americans in the 20th century. Martinson has written some about the history of nålbinding in publications and also took time in her July 2012 Vesterheim class to relate anecdotes that presented students with examples of people nålbinding from the past. Refsal and Martinson also present their own personal stories and histories in order to persuade students to identify with them and to have model stories of learning to follow as they begin their own process of learning a handcraft. These stories give students a readily-available figure to emulate and also a chance to
understand the craft not just as a historical remnant but as an important part of the present
day and a tradition of the Norwegian and Norwegian-American community.

Martinson and Refsal's pedagogy is able to persuade students into taking up a
lived Norwegian-American ethos because they tie it to tradition and the knowledge that
comes with it. Their work resonates with Dorothy Noyes' definition of tradition as “the
transfer of responsibility for a valued practice or performance” (“Tradition” 233). In
their 2011 NAHA-Norway conference presentation, Refsal and Martinson claimed that
learning handcrafts is a way for people to access history and culture. They emphasize
what Noyes calls “metaknowledge” (248), the histories, stories, and other information
that comes along with the skills and objects involved in traditions. When Refsal and
Martinson talk about history, they are adding that meta-knowledge to the skills that
people need to learn to do the handcraft, and because their histories cover the stories of
others and stories about themselves, they make it clear that this meta-knowledge affects
them and is something they see as important to pass along with the craft. These histories
present students with anonymous and everyday exemplars to model their own ethos after
and to historicize their present-day practice of handcrafts. Martinson and Refsal also
present themselves as exemplars to students to give class participants a more immediate
model of behavior and belief. They are careful to portray themselves as humble stewards
of handcrafts to avoid appearing extraordinary and to show students how practitioners of
handcraft should put their practice before a desire to stand out from the community.

The pedagogical decision to include exemplary histories and personal stories
along with handcraft skills is a rhetorical one because it indicates to students that they are
not just in the class to learn how to carve or how to nålbinding; they are there to learn about the lives that shaped these handcrafts. The passing of meta-knowledge is a gift, and a gift that conveys responsibility. If the students just learned the skills it would be easy to see the handcraft as a commodity bought and paid for, but when the teacher refuses to shave off the meta-knowledge then students become responsible for everything that comes along with the craft and become stewards of the histories they hear. By becoming a part of the handcraft traditions taught by Martinson and Refsal, students build an ethos that draws from that tradition and its histories. In the case of the histories told about flat-plane style carving and nålbinding, the ethos students build comes from traditions of the common folk who are placed in opposition to the elite. Students identify with the common folk and learn through the examples set by Refsal and Martinson to continue the everyday practice of handcrafts humbly.

Harley Refsal uses history and its exemplars rhetorically to place his more recent flat-plane style of carving into a tradition that stretches over one thousand years, giving students a way to imagine their own work as a continuation of this long-used practice. In his books, Refsal always begins by tracing the history of Scandinavian woodcarving from the Viking Age to the present. This way of beginning is persuasive because it roots the

76 Norway in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had a large rural population and a relatively small elite class (Nelson “Folk Art” 37), which could help explain why a common people ethos would have traction in a handcraft class. Also, since flat-plane style carving and nålbinding did not require apprenticing or owning specialized tools they fit in well with a more populist ethos. The distinction between elite and common seems to play out in Vesterheim classes: the rosemalers are generally middle-aged or older women who have sets of paintbrushes and paints in cases while the nålbinding class held in July 2012 was about half women and half men and included working class, middle class, and upper class students who brought no materials of their own. The rosemalers who had a class that same weekend would often try to use the room the nålbinding class was held in for their own projects despite the nålbinding class' presence. These intrusions became a present-day illustration of how nålbinding was misunderstood or devalued in Norwegian and Swedish museums and also seemed to encourage the class to bond together against the rosemalers.
more modern practice of figure carving in the flat-plane style in a long and venerable 
tradition. In *Woodcarving in the Scandinavian Tradition* (1992) and *Art & Technique of 
Scandinavian Style Woodcarving* (2004), Refsal begins his history of 
Norwegian/Scandinavian carving with images of the carving found on the Oseberg and 
Gokstad ships now housed at the Viking Ship Museum in Oslo (*Woodcarving* 9-10, *Art 
& Technique* 4-5). The evocative images of the animal head carvings that adorned the 
Viking ships work persuasively because the images evoke a connection between the 
figures Refsal will show readers how to carve later in the book and because the carvings 
gives readers an imaginative connection to the romantic Viking past. Refsal takes 
advantage of the possibility for speculation in his discussion of the few small carved 
figures that have been found that date to the Viking age. He writes, “One can only 
speculate about the identity of the carver, or carvers, of these objects...perhaps just a 
'common person,' handy with a knife, created them” (*Art & Technique* 5). The inference 
and imaginings that Refsal invites here can persuasively encourage the reader and student 
of carving to draw a connection between the anonymous “common person” and him- or 
herself, another regular person with a knife.

Refsal uses the history of common people as a persuasive technique regularly to 
encourage readers to believe that they do not need to be extraordinary in order to be a

---

77 *Woodcarving in the Scandinavian Style* has been an influential and important work in the realm of 
Scandinavian woodcarving. In her profile of Harley Refsal in the book *Iowa Folk Artists*, Jacqueline 
Andre Schmeal notes that this book “is the principal carving book used in both Norway and Sweden” 
(6). *Art & Technique of Scandinavian Style Woodcarving* is a revised and updated version of 
*Woodcarving in the Scandinavian Style* and includes color photographs (*Woodcarving* only has black 
and white photos), more patterns for figures, and an extra set of step-by-step instructions for carving a 
figure (the first book only features one step-by-step example). The history of Scandinavian carving is 
nearly identical in each book, and so from this point forward I reference the newer *Art & Technique* 
because any changes or additions are presumably ones that Refsal wanted to make.
carver. In the introduction to *Art & Technique of Scandinavian Style Woodcarving*, Refsal writes that Scandinavian folk art and woodcarving “was basically the art used on utilitarian objects...that was created by people in the general population, who drew their inspiration from the designs they saw around them” (6). Refsal follows this discussion with an explanation of how intricate woodcarving was done mostly by guilds before the nineteenth century and that from the late seventeenth to late eighteenth centuries it was even illegal for farmers (the majority of Norway's population) to use “refined tools” (7-9). The history Refsal relates here is persuasive on a couple of different levels. First, it presents folk art as widely practiced by the people of Norway and not as confined to an elite few. Second, it casts the common folk as underdogs who made do with what they had, persuading the present-day reader to empathize with the farmers forbidden from owning refined tools and to imagine the act of woodcarving with simple tools as an anti-elite and everyday activity. If farmers could not own or use “refined tools” then they would have worked with what they had on hand to carve; beginning carvers might only have one knife, and Refsal's history can persuade them that this is not a liability but in fact something that connects them to the past. A carver can imagine her- or himself as part of a long tradition of regular people taking a single knife to wood to make something new. This take on the history of woodcarving in Scandinavia makes the handcraft more approachable for present day students even as it gives the act of carving a sense of exigence; students do not need to be skilled artists or receive years of training and the simple act of carving becomes a statement of allegiance to the common folk.

It is important to emphasize that the identification Refsal is persuading readers
into is with commoners and not with the elite; not only does this reinforce the idea that almost any person can learn something about woodcarving but it also creates a more populist ethos for students to attach themselves to. In *Whittling Little Folk* (2011), Refsal details who Scandinavian figure carvers were in the nineteenth century. Writing about the lumber camps that sprang up in Norway and Sweden in the 1830s, Refsal says, “those part-time farmers/part-time lumberjacks found it natural to sit and carve wooden figures: horses, roosters, people” (9). The folk art Refsal mentions here is very simple and done by working-class men who found ways to use scrap lumber to while away their evenings. Refsal is working to persuade readers to see carving small wooden figures as a work of the people and as a testament to the ingenuity of Scandinavians from the past.

By identifying with the common folk, the student of woodcarving cannot build an ethos around great and famous people like Leif Erikson or Edvard Grieg; instead, the student carver has a more anonymous, but much larger pool of exemplars to draw on as they shape their own ethos as a Norwegian carver.

Refsal does include some well-known Scandinavian flat-plane carvers in his books, however, in order to give students a sense of the possibilities of flat-plane carving and some specific stories they might be able to identify with. As with the exemplars presented by Sons of Norway, these carvers allow students to choose exemplars from the

---

78 An ethos based on identifying with the common people is not applicable across the board when discussing Norwegian and Norwegian-American handcrafts. Rosemalers and acanthus carvers practice crafts associated with trained individuals and so would have difficulty using their craft as a way into a more populist Norwegian-American ethos. The divide between elite and common handcrafts and the ethos that can or cannot attach to each shows how handcrafts cannot work to unify the entire Norwegian-American community. Rather, these crafts create small communities and a more specific ethos that can still claim ties to the larger community since the handcraft is a part of Norwegian or Norwegian-American culture.
copia provided, ensuring that even as students individualize an ethos they still identify with approved exemplars. In a chapter titled “Scandinavian Figure Carvers,” which appears in *Art & Technique of Scandinavian Style Woodcarving* and in the earlier *Woodcarving in the Scandinavian Style*, Refsal comes close to presenting readers with the sort of extraordinary exemplar that would be held up as a model of success and artistic genius. He begins the chapter with Axel Petersson Döderhultarn, a Swedish figure carver who lived from 1868-1925 and is one of the more famous flat-plane style carvers since he largely pioneered the style. Refsal begins his description with the claim that “Axel Petersson has been called a natural genius” (20). This statement makes it clear to readers that Petersson is out of the ordinary and exceptional, and Refsal's details about the success Petersson found in the early twentieth century, with exhibitions of his work in Sweden, France, Great Britain, Denmark, Italy, and the United States only bolstering the idea that Petersson was extraordinary (22-23). Refsal keeps Petersson from becoming too lofty of an exemplar, though, by explaining how Petersson's family felt that his woodcarving was “a worthless pastime” and by describing how he would still carve figures for local sales and that he would sell his works for approximately $2 (20, 24-25). These humbling details can persuade the reader that even though Petersson possessed “natural genius,” he was not particularly extraordinary in other parts of his life and did not leave his home district for international fame and fortune. The mix of genius and humility that Refsal presents persuades readers to admire Petersson but also to see him as

---

79 I refer to Axel Petersson Döderhultarn as “Petersson” because it was his birth surname. “Döderhultarn” was later given to him as a place-based nickname; he was born and lived in the parish of Döderhult in Sweden, from which “Döderhultarn” is derived (Refsal *Art & Technique* 20).
an imitable example of what a woodcarver is: they will probably never have their works exhibited internationally, but they can carve for their own pleasure, give their work to others for them to enjoy, and still be a part of their communities. The exemplars that Refsal puts before readers of his books are not grand explorers like Leif Erikson, but everyday people who often did not make a living from their work or were not able to until later in their lives. The history of the common man (and since most carvers until the present century were men I use that term deliberately) that Refsal tells prepares students to take a largely unsung but important place in continuing the tradition of Norwegian/Scandinavian woodcarving.

Kate Martinson's histories of nålbinding depend even more on persuading students to identify with an anonymous group of people from the past, giving students a sense that they are joining a large and common group of exemplars in their handcraft practice. Nålbinding, unlike woodcarving, was never really considered an art, and since pieces made using this knotless netting technique were mostly made for everyday use, finished pieces were not displayed or signed. Martinson uses history in her courses not to point out exemplary men and women of the past but to connect students to anonymous people of the past. On the first evening of the nålbinding class she taught at Vesterheim during the summer of 2012, Martinson told students a piece of nålbinding history: women and men (Martoinsn emphasized her point that nålbinding was not only practiced by women) would pin balls of yarn to their belts when they would take their livestock to pasture and work on nålbinding while watching over the animals. Like the carving farmer-lumberjacks Refsal writes about, the nålbinding Norwegians Martinson evoked
worked to persuade students that nålbinding was an everyday practice in Norway in the past. Like Refsal, Martinson works to connect students with an ethos of the common person and to see nålbinding as something for everyone who is interested in it and not as limited to a prestigious few.

Martinson presented historical uses of nålbinding as a substitute for the anonymous people who made the objects now collected in museums. On the second day of the class Martinson presented a slideshow and explained some of the history and historical uses of nålbinding. She told how Norwegians would nålbind milk strainers from cow tail hairs and boil them with juniper berries to clean them. Martinson also told the class about how fishermen in the Lofoten Islands would have woolen stockings made by nålbinding that were so dense that the stockings were waterproof. Martinson ended her historical survey of the fiber art with a retelling of the resurgence of nålbinding during World War II, when high-quality yarn was scarce and the people of occupied Norway needed to make woolen garments that would last. Nålbinding served these purposes better than knitting, and so it became a valuable practice during the war years. These simple, quick histories serve the persuasive purposes of establishing nålbinding's significance in Norwegian history and of giving students worthy forebears to emulate. Although students are unlikely to ever need to strain milk, wear fishermen's stockings, or make long-lasting garments due to a war, the values of using materials at hand, making garments good for everyday needs, and crafting objects meant to last are presented as worthy of imitation. These stories also give students a chance to use their imaginations to connect themselves with Norwegians of the past (who can be imagined as ancestors) and
to see learning nålbinding as a way to maintain that connection.

Martinson also used history in order to represent nålbinding as a misunderstood, ignored, and even exploited craft, which gives students a compelling reason to practice nålbinding so that it can survive as a piece of Norwegian culture and perhaps become a larger part of Norwegian-American culture. When she presented the history of nålbinding to her July 2012 class, Martinson said she was “teaching [the class] to explain nålbinding to others” and to be persuasive in the explanation. As a part of the slideshow on the second day of the class Martinson showed images of mittens, ski bindings, and shoe grips made by nålbinding that are in collections in Scandinavian museums. These pieces, she told the class, were often misidentified as knitting or other fiber techniques by museum professionals at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth because they did not know what nålbinding was. This theme in Martinson's presentation of nålbinding also appears in her article “The Myth and the Artist: Research in the Visual Arts,” published in the Luther College magazine Agora in 2007. Martinson writes that “nålbinding is such a rare and unknown technique that items constructed of it were rarely identified as such [in a museum database]. Instead there were vague references to items 'made of wool’” (44-45). The failure of institutions dedicated to Norwegian and Scandinavian history and culture to correctly identify nålbinding gives Martinson's telling of the craft's history an extra urgency; the history of misunderstanding can also serve to persuade students of the importance of taking up the craft and explaining it to others so

---

80 The consistent misidentification of nålbinding is interesting since it was fairly common until after World War II. Perhaps museum professionals did not recognize nålbinding because they had not grown up around it or because nålbinding was practiced by less socially privileged classes; either way, a lack of recognition in museums does not mean that nålbinding did not exist.
that nålbinding will survive and perhaps experience a renaissance.

Martinson also took care to explain how museums had in the past exploited Norwegians in seeking out nålbinding, adding an extra layer of urgency and importance to teaching and learning the craft. This rhetorical move also gives students an underdog to identify with, much like when Refsal writes about Norwegian farmers forbidden from owning refined tools. Before the slideshow on the second day of the July 2012 class at Vesterheim, Martinson told students a story about when she was traveling in Gudbrandsdalen in Norway. She told how she went into a shop and saw a beautiful example of a nålbinding milk strainer made of cow tail hair displayed on a wall and then asked if she could buy it. The owner of the store, before selling the strainer to Martinson, first asked repeatedly if she was Swedish, and would only sell it to Martinson after she had made it clear that she was not. The shop owner was so suspicious because years before Martinson's visit representatives of the Nordiska Museet (Sweden's main cultural history museum) had gone through the valley buying milk strainers for not much money. The next year the representatives returned and bought the milk bowls that went with the strainers, and refused to pay the farmers what the bowls were worth because the bowls no longer had the milk strainers to go with them. This trickery had engendered a long-lasting suspicion of anyone who came through the area and expressed an interest in the milk strainers that were left. This story, as Martinson told the class, was an illustration of how much value the museum placed on owning pieces of nålbinding and how little value the museum placed on treating the owners of these pieces fairly. This story of injustice, while not directly applicable to the practice of nålbinding today, added to Martinson's
depiction of the handcraft as an underdog. Students could put their growing
identifications with nålbinding history into a familiar context after hearing this story.
Norwegian Americans will often express a dislike for or distrust of Sweden, and popular
explanations for this involve Sweden's rule over Norway for most of the nineteenth
century as well as Sweden's neutrality during World War II. Students could add this
story of Swedish exploitation to an already-existing anti-Swedish identification or at least
understand why it could be meaningful for other Norwegian Americans.

The anonymous, everyday, and historical exemplars that Martinson and Refsal
teach students helps those learning handcrafts position themselves in a longstanding
tradition and understand that they are carrying forward this work in the present.
However, by turning themselves into exemplars of handcrafts and of humility about these
crafts, Refsal and Martinson give students models of how to live out a Norwegian-
American ethos connected to handcrafts in the present in a way that benefits themselves
and the Norwegian-American community. Both Refsal and Martinson use humility as a
persuasive strategy in order to assuage students' anxieties about their own abilities and to
reinforce the idea that handcrafts like carving and nålbinding are for everyday people and
not just highly skilled artists. Providing students with humble examples of handcraft tie a
handcraft-based ethos to a more general Norwegian-American one: humility. “Humility”
as a term only gets at part of the ethos Martinson and Refsal demonstrate; Janteloven is

---
81 Norwegian Americans are not alone in this grudge; Norway still has a rivalry with Sweden. In 2007 the
*New York Times* ran an article about the increase of Swedish migrant workers in Norway and quoted
Professor Thomas Hylland Eriksen: “When I was young, Swedes had whiter teeth, clearer skin, Abba
and Bjorn Borg. We had lots of fish, and not much more. Today, Swedes have been cut down to size,
and I would say that many Norwegians enjoy the fact that so many Swedes are here doing menial jobs”
(Ekman). On the whole the rivalry is cordial, but as Eriksen's account shows, it is very real.
more complex and accurate. You can translate Janteloven as “the laws of Jante,” which appeared in Aksel Sandemose's 1933 novel *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks* (*En flyktning krysser sitt spor* in Norwegian) and portrayed the negative side of an emphasis on equality and modesty. There are ten laws of Jante laid down in *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks*, and the first six read:

1. Thou shalt not believe that thou art something.
2. Thou shalt not believe that thou art as good as us.
3. Thou shalt not believe that thou art more than us.
4. Thou shalt not fancy thyself better than us.
5. Thou shalt not believe thou knowest more than us.
6. Thou shalt not believe thou art greater than us. (qtd. Avant and Knutsen 453)

The laws insist that the individual is not greater than the collective and deny autonomy. This viewpoint is portrayed as negative and provincial in Sandemose's work. The term, however, has spread throughout Scandinavia as a way to explain a culture built around equality and humility. Gayle R. Avant and Karen Patrick Knutsen explain in “Understanding Cultural Differences: Janteloven and Social Conformity in Norway” (1993) that Janteloven has been used to explain contemporary Norwegian society, in which people keep the streets clean and are courteous and generous when giving to social causes but also discourage standing out from the crowd since that threatens “overall equality” (452). Norwegian Americans recognize that Janteloven exists in some form in the United States even if many do not know the term. Garrison Keillor, host of the popular *A Prairie Home Companion*, explains Janteloven in a more positive sense and uses the fictional town of Lake Wobegon as an example:

In a small town such as Lake Wobegon, the social fabric of the community is so important that the members are careful to avoid
attracting too much attention that might turn into envy. Your life might depend on your neighbors and if you get a reputation as someone High and Mighty, people might not come to your aid as readily as they ought to, figuring that you’re much too capable to need their help.

His definition demonstrates how modesty about accomplishments helps small communities cohere and describes a way of life familiar to many Midwesterners. Both Refsal and Martinson perform the humility required by Janteloven in their classes. By making themselves into humble exemplars, Refsal and Martinson conform to a generally understood Norwegian-American ethos even as they encourage students to discover the possibilities of handcraft and take craft in new directions. This gives Norwegian-American students a familiar context for their handcraft practices and teaches students who may not understand Janteloven what is expected of them.

Refsal almost never brings up his own international success when writing about how he became a carver, crafting instead a narrative that focuses on his interest in the craft itself and his joy in practicing it. This rhetorical move encourages students to base their own handcraft ethos on their experience and enjoyment rather than on any recognition they might receive as a practitioner. In the preface to Art & Technique of Scandinavian Style Woodcarving, Refsal writes that he was first interested in

---

82 Norwegian-American bloggers have written about Janteloven, and blogger Chery Kinnick muses, “Is it any wonder they [my Norwegian ancestors] continued to hand down the old tried and true social mores amongst themselves? It probably did them some good in early pioneer communities, where neighbor depended on neighbor.” This view of community is expressed in the News from Lake Wobegon catchphrase: “Where all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average.” At first the phrase might seem to go against an egalitarian view, but since everyone in town shares these good characteristics, no one stands out. Garrison Keillor addressed people's tendency to misunderstand the tagline in a “Post to the Host” column about his show: “And the slogan about all the women and all the men and all the children is so obviously not about overestimation—when you say that all the children are above-average, you are saying that tests and grades and intellectual measurement are not, in the end, so important. If everybody is above average, then you have junked the idea of averages. That 'pervasive human tendency to overestimate one's achievements' is found in New York and Los Angeles...but it doesn't have anything to do with the Little Town That Time Forgot.”
Scandinavian carving when he traveled to Norway in 1965. He writes, “Since I had worked with wood and had also done some whittling as a boy, I became interested in the woodcarving traditions” and then adds that in 1968 “I began to carve figures of my own, using a pocketknife and a wood chisel that my father, a carpenter and farmer, had made from a worn-out file” (1). His narration does nothing to suggest an extraordinary talent or a knowledge that woodcarving would become central to his work later in life, but presents readers only with the idea that pursuing an interest with the materials available is a way to begin practicing a handcraft. Refsal has reinforced this idea in other interviews, where he uses humility to support the claim that he is interested in the craft, not in his own reputation. In a 2005 interview in the student newspaper Chips, Refsal said: “My goal was not to reinvigorate Norwegian figure carving. Rather, my goal was to try to carve a figure that looked more like a guy than a horse or a duck” (Addington 4). This humble statement and its use of gentle humor is an excellent example of how Refsal persuades students to see him as an imitable human and not as representing an unattainable height of achievement. Refsal is also open about how students have influenced him. His entire book Whittling Little Folk was inspired by one of his own students who brought in examples of very small carved figures approximately only three inches tall to a carving class Refsal was teaching at the John C. Campbell Folk School (14). The example of the teacher being taught by the student about a new twist on figure carving helps reduce any intimidation that readers and students might feel. Refsal's modest self-presentation also serves as an example for students who take up the craft. If Refsal, who has been decorated by the King of Norway and is recognized internationally,
is humble about his own work then his students ought to be humble as well. So even though students may make further innovations to flat-plane style carving and become well known for their work, to go against Refsal's humble example would damage their ethos.

Kate Martinson is also open and humble about her learning process, which persuades students both that they can master the craft of nålbinding and that humility is an important part of their ethos as a Norwegian-American handcrafter. In her interview, she talked about her own learning process and what it taught her:

I had to learn it three times before it finally stuck; part of my challenge was to learn how to teach it, because the way it had been taught in the past was over. Everybody did it, you lived with it, so it was just one of those skills like baking bread that you learned to do. So how do you take that and put it into a process that is a weekend or a week long?

Martinson repeated this confession of her difficulty in learning nålbinding to the class she taught at Vesterheim in July 2012. Students expressed astonishment and relief in the face of her humble admission that she had needed to learn three times before succeeding at nålbinding. Martinson connects her own difficulty learning nålbinding with her teaching decisions. One of her decisions was to talk with students about her struggles with the handcraft. Since nålbinding is not particularly like knitting or crocheting, even experienced crafters can find learning the handcraft challenging, and so Martinson took care to remind students that she had once been a beginner and to use gentle humor and encouragement when students were having trouble with the basic techniques, which helped persuade students to keep on trying even when the only result was tangled knots of yarn. Like Refsal, Martinson welcomed students bringing in examples of fiber arts to
class even when they were knitted, and discussed with students how certain techniques in
the examples brought in could or could not be reproduced with nålbinding. By
approaching nålbinding with humility and humor, Martinson set students at ease by
performing qualities of Janteloven and subtly reminded them that a Norwegian-
American ethos based in handcrafts calls for humility and the willingness to fail as they
learn and explore. 83

Both Martinson's and Refsal's humble and encouraging approach to handcrafts is
persuasive because while they still act as the teacher, they openly acknowledge their own
simple beginnings with the handcrafts and will also relate their own struggles and
challenges. Their openness to student contribution also helps persuade students to see
these two as approachable and imitable. While students of Refsal and Martinson might
never travel to Norway and do research on handcrafts there or make these craft part of
their living, they can identify themselves with the examples that the two instructors set:
to find a craft that interests them and then to learn it and get through the difficulties. As
exemplars they demonstrate how individuals can do important work in handcraft
traditions and make innovations but still remain faithful to some of the core
characteristics that are supposed to unite Norwegian Americans. Handcraft students can
therefore fit their new identifications in with their existing understanding of what it
means to be Norwegian American and still feel like they have room to develop their own
style within their handcraft.

83 Martinson mentioned in passing that as a native of New York she had to learn how Midwesterners and
Scandinavian Americans tend to avoid direct praise and criticism. Martinson's use of Janteloven can be
seen as a skill she developed later than Norwegian Americans who grew up with this cultural
understanding of communication and social relations.
Kate Martinson's and Harley Refsal's approach to teaching handcraft has a foundation in histories of their crafts and the representation of those histories as a tradition that students become a part of as they learn to carve or nålbinding and understand the meta-knowledge that comes with the skills. Martinson's approach to rhetorical education and history involves telling histories that enable students to understand the importance of nålbinding in Norwegian history and the reasons for its current obscure status. She provides students with historical, anonymous exemplars to identify with and also a compelling reason to continue the practice of the craft, since without new practitioners nålbinding will continue to be unknown or mistaken for something else. Refsal approaches history as a chance to tell the stories of common men and to encourage students to see themselves as the latest in a line of everyday people who take up carving and keep it vital. These two attitudes toward and uses of history are not competitive, and their mutual focus on the common folk persuades students to see both the worth that these traditions have had in past and how present-day carvers and nålbinders have the responsibility to carry these traditions on in the present. By using historical meta-knowledge to incorporate students into handcraft traditions, Martinson and Refsal persuade students to see their growing ethos as a handcrafters in a historical context and to attach that ethos to the common folk of Norway and Norwegian America. When these two instructors turn themselves into exemplars, it is not to claim that they are extraordinary but rather to show students how to live as a carrier of tradition with humility and dedication to the craft. When they turn to presenting students with examples of the craft and their own experience as practitioners, Martinson and Refsal
show students how a lived Norwegian-American ethos based in craft allows room for individual exploration and innovation, persuading students to see that humility does not mean they cannot experiment.

Both Martinson and Refsal provide a copia of examples for their students as a way to enable imitation and to persuade students of the range of the craft and the wide applicability of a Norwegian handcraft in modern life. Their persuasive work with examples supports the rhetorical presentation of history that Refsal and Martinson engage in; the examples they present are persuasive proofs of how old practices are relevant not only to Norwegian Americans but to contemporary life. When it comes to physical objects, mittens or carved caricatures of famous Norwegians are persuasive because the examples demonstrate some of the breadth of work that students can undertake after learning flat-plane carving or nålbinding and because the samples are demonstrably connected to carving and fiber arts practiced in the past.

The rhetorical education provided by examples gives students ways to imagine how they might make a handcraft their own and build a lived ethos based both in the handcraft and in their own decisions about how to use it. The examples that Martinson and Refsal provide show the breadth of work that can be done with these crafts. Harley Refsal's carvings, almost all of which are small human figures, could be seen as limiting, but he uses examples of his own work and of his predecessors' work to demonstrate the flexibility of figure carving and to persuade students and readers that their own experiences and daily life will present them with inspiration for their own work. In *Woodcarving in the Scandinavian Style*, Refsal reproduces photographs not only of his
but also of others' carvings. The images serve both to show different carvers' use of the flat-plane style of carving and to demonstrate the different styles that they achieved within the genre. The reader can see how Axel Petersson Döderhultarn's figures are more rounded and have smaller flat planes than Refsal's are or how each carver represented focuses his or her work on people and scenes that spring from life experiences. Presenting readers with a largely chronological copia of examples works persuasively because it shows that Refsal's own work fits into a line of previous masters of the craft and also because it shows readers the variety of work that can be done. Certainly, most of the pieces, like Petersson's “The Christening” (27) or Sjogren's “Peasantry Wedding” (33) are of scenes that contemporary carvers would not encounter since both feature men and women in old-fashioned and Old World clothing. However, carvers could imagine a contemporary baptism or wedding that they might render in wood, and so these more historical examples are not a persuasive liability.

Refsal does take care to show carvers the potential for representing contemporary scenes and people in flat-plane style carving, which bolsters the persuasive appeal of the craft for students looking for inspiration around them. In Art & Technique of Scandinavian Style Woodcarving, the 2004 update of Woodcarving in the Scandinavian Style, Refsal includes a pattern he calls “Online,” which when finished is a carving of a man typing on a laptop. His book Whittling Little Folk (2011) includes patterns for figures like “Police Officer” and “Josephine,” a portly woman in a bathing suit (70, 78). These figures are not found in the examples from other carvers that Refsal includes in his books, and so the examples do the important work of expanding students' ideas of what it
is possible to carve. Students can think about people they encounter every day and how to render them in wood: city-dwellers could carve people they see at the bus stop, outdoors enthusiasts could carve hunters or people canoeing. The flexibility of flat-plane style carving allows students to incorporate existing identifications and interests into their work as a practitioner of a Scandinavian handcraft, which ties a Norwegian-American ethos to the everyday.

Kate Martinson also uses examples to tie contemporary nålbinding to the history of the handcraft, to showcase the innovative ways that students can use the technique, and to get students to feel and examine finished pieces of nålbinding to understand the craft's immediacy and usefulness in everyday life. During the class she ran at Vesterheim in July 2012, Martinson brought in dozens of pieces that she had made, ranging from mittens with gauntlets that are styled after ones she had seen in museums to embroidered and artful tea cozies that she had made for an art show. Martinson invited students to feel, try on, and examine the pieces she had brought in, which gave students visual and tactile experiences with the examples, making it possible for students to feel how different kinds of wool would result in different finished fabrics and to get a feel for how nålbinding could work for making a scarf or a hand puppet. In her interview, Martinson discussed the importance of students getting their hands on materials and being able to see the process and product in person as well. When she talked about the importance of learning in person and not via videos or the internet, Martinson said:

it's a kinesthetic three-dimensionality which is not caught. It's like baking bread...or throwing a pot on a wheel. You need to look at it, you need to position your body differently, so there is a kinesthetic side of three-dimensionality that educational videos just don't get.
Martinson's use of examples in the classroom, examples that were passed around for students to touch, try on, and guess how they were made, fits with the educational philosophy she espoused in her interview. These examples were persuasive, certainly, in showing students the variety and beauty nålbinding is capable of, but the examples also aimed to persuade students of the importance of touch and feel and not just sight in learning. Martinson's question to the class about how a hat with stripes of two colors was made invited students to speculate and demonstrate the knowledge they had gained over the course of the class. Also, like Refsal's examples of historical and contemporary figures to carve, Martinson asked students to imagine the innovative ways they might use nålbinding and how they might make it fit with their own lives and needs (see fig. 8).

Refsal also discusses the importance of handling examples and not just looking at images. In Whittling Little Folk, he writes about how he discovered the joy of carving very small human figures when a student in one of his classes brought some examples in that had been carved in Sweden in the 1940s and 1950s: “We were enthralled: small, unassuming figures—unpainted—they appeared to have been carved with only a whittling knife. As we admired them and passed them around, studying each figure carefully, it was love at first sight. So simple, yet so rich with possibilities. So tactile. So inviting” (14-15). Refsal’s discussion gets at another important part of handcrafts’ persuasiveness: the fact that these objects are made to be touched and handled, and the pleasure of holding and feeling something made by hand is in and of itself a rhetorical invitation. These objects call to be touched, and to the student of handcrafting this can also become a call to make.
Martinson does not just tell students that nålbinding is useful today but shows them and makes them feel how the pieces she has made would be good for someone who has to shovel out a driveway in January or for someone who wants a sturdy bag to carry books in. Students are persuaded to see how nålbinding is a Norwegian practice that they can incorporate into their daily lives as Norwegian-Americans.

The concrete examples that Refsal and Martinson provide help persuade students that the handcrafts they are learning have clear ties to the past and that the crafts are flexible and valuable enough to practice in the present. The samples they show students educate them into the contemporary possibilities of flat-plane carving and nålbinding and encourage students to imagine how they can use these crafts to enrich their own lives.

Martinson and Refsal connect the work they do with historical and personal exemplars and concrete examples in their presentation of practice as the living out of a Norwegian-
American ethos based in handcrafts. The elevation of practice as the way to lived ethos demonstrates how handcrafts have the power to incorporate students into tradition and into the Norwegian-American community. The incorporative action of handcrafts also brings the community into the individual, strengthening ties between the two through a practice that can be largely private.

Martinson and Refsal's pedagogy ultimately leads to practice, which is what creates and reinforces a lived Norwegian-American ethos. In this context “practice” means the incorporation of a handcraft into everyday life in order to enrich a person's life and to carry on a handcraft tradition. Flat-plane carving and nålbinding are not only practiced around the holidays or taken out and displayed on symbolically significant occasions; these handcrafts are for any time and season, and thus can become a fully-incorporated part of a student's Norwegian-American ethos. Both Martinson and Refsal have theories of how the practice of a handcraft enriches life and talk about how that philosophy informs their teaching. Refsal has discussed the “theory of leisure” and how meaningful leisure activities improve daily life, and he uses his own story of picking up carving as a hobby to support this claim. Martinson is more interested in the social and societal dimensions of handcraft and talks about the practice of handcraft as a way to create community in what she sees as an increasingly disconnected society. Their pedagogy presents practice as a fulfilling and enjoyable activity that people can do alone or together. They also look at practice as a physical act involving repetition and simplicity, which persuades students of the value and enjoyment of using a handcraft to help form identity. The representation of handcraft as simple and easily integrated into
daily life also persuades students that taking on the responsibility of tradition will not burden them overmuch. The incorporation of a handcraft practice into a person's life, therefore, becomes a way to live out a Norwegian-American ethos based on the carrying on of tradition.

One of the ways Refsal persuades students to see the long-term practice of handcraft as desirable is by presenting it as a simple and fulfilling leisure activity. In a 1992 interview with the Luther College student newspaper Chips, Refsal said that “the theory of leisure” is “the framework around everything I do” (Kastman 9). The theory of leisure, as explained by Refsal, states that a fulfilling activity is “goal oriented, produces positive feedback, and requires a set of learned skills” (9). Since Refsal sees woodcarving as fulfilling these requirements, it is natural for him to present it to students as an enjoyable and fulfilling experience. For Refsal, handcraft as a practice is a way to find personal satisfaction and to take part in the resurgence and continuance of the craft. This might not seem to explain how handcraft leads to lived ethos at first, but Refsal's view of practice enriching life point to the ways in which craft also enriches and shapes identity. The person who takes up carving and makes it a significant part of their leisure time becomes identifiable both internally and externally as a carver; they live out this ethos by continuing to carve and their continued practice further builds their ethos. If their carving comes along with the meta-knowledge of flat-plane style's history and tradition, then this ethos becomes that of a Scandinavian-American or Norwegian-

85 In the interview, Refsal cites Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's book Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience (1990) as the inspiration for his theories about why handcrafts are important to many people.
American carver, and the practitioner can express this ethos through what they choose to carve or how they discuss their practice with others.

Refsal also discusses the concrete aspects of practice, which further illuminate how handcraft practice leads to lived ethos. In the foreword to *Whittling Little Folk*, he provides very simple instructions for the practice of woodcarving that say nothing about goals, positive feedback, or the learned skills he references when discussing the theory of leisure. He writes:

> Whittle. Teach someone else. Whittle some more. Teach a child; someone who is about 8-10 years old. Whittle some more. Alter one of the patterns in this book: Change a hat; leave enough wood on one side so he can carry a suitcase; leave her the same width, but stretch her out, Gumby-like, to 110%, shrink the body, or leave it the same size, but enlarge the head...Sketch, then create, your own pattern. (13)

These seemingly simple instructions could last carvers for years, taking students from their first practice carving on a carrot to creating their own patterns. Refsal's repetition of the injunction to “whittle” and “whittle some more” reinforces the idea that the student of carving must repeat the act of carving again and again to make it a regular practice and a part of the student's lived ethos. Refsal also encourages students to play with tradition in these instructions, giving them the freedom to explore even as he puts the responsibility to teach others on the readers' shoulders. Practice is therefore not just for personal enjoyment, as the theory of leisure might suggest, but also for the benefit of the tradition. Practice keeps tradition alive and moving from person to person, and these instructions make the path seem clear and simple. Lived ethos and practice are therefore intimately bound up with tradition in the Norwegian-American handcraft community. Even though this community is a subgroup of Norwegian Americans, it still contributes to the life of
the group and represents a way for the community to continue to exist in and enrich the life of the United States.

Similar to Refsal, with his injunction to “whittle” and “whittle some more,” Martinson uses repetition in her classes to ingrain the knowledge of nålbinding and make it possible for students to turn it into a lived practice. On the first night of the nålbinding class she taught at Vesterheim in July 2012, Martinson used repetition in two different ways: she made students watch her start and restart a piece of nålbinding several times, and then had students start and restart their own yarn chains over the course of the evening. Martinson did not teach how to go beyond the simple chain that starts each project. Martinson summed up this teaching when she said, “I'm going to start, and then I'm going to do it again and again and again.” When Martinson asked in her interview, “So how do you take that [old way of learning handcrafts] and put it into a process that is a weekend or a week long?” she then answered it in her teaching by focusing on repeating the basic actions of nålbinding and only adding new skills when the previous had been mastered. These new skills were then repeated, as when she taught students how to turn the first simple chain into a coil so that they could begin to make simple projects like pouches or mittens. Martinson also demonstrated to students how she had used repetition to explore the possibilities of nålbinding; when she was explaining the example projects she had brought in to the class, Martinson showed some of the tea cozies she had made when she began seriously exploring nålbinding, and she told us how she produced cozy after cozy to explore the effects that different yarns, color combinations, decorative touches, and fulling techniques produced. Like Refsal, who
encourages students to imitate but also to innovate, Martinson showed the class how a person could repetitively make one kind of object but use that repetition to develop and explore an individual ethos based in a handcraft.

Repeated action works as rhetorical education in this context because it makes the practice of nålbinding available to memory, which makes it easier for students to return to this practice again in the future. Since nålbinding consists of the same stitch repeated again and again once a project is started, this kind of repetitive education is possible. Refsal also encourages a similar sort of practice in *Whittling Little Folk* when he suggests that new carvers practice their technique on sticks or carrots to begin with, working on taking “long, slow, thin slices” until they have a “rhythm and technique” that feels comfortable (56). These simple actions and repetitions are not as overtly persuasive as other strategies that Refsal and Martinson employ like retelling history to persuade students to identify with people who did carving and nålbinding in the past, but repetitions serve the purpose of helping to integrate the action of the handcraft into students' lives and making these actions readily available.

The physical practice, however, is insufficient for a meaningful Norwegian-American ethos and for the passing on of tradition; in order to build an enduring ethos and keep traditions of carving and nålbinding going, students must integrate their knowledge of the handcraft with their practice and pass it along to others. When Harley Refsal calls readers to teach carving to others in *Whittling Little Folk*, he asks the reader to teach carving to “someone else” and also to “a child” (13). Practice, for Refsal, is not a selfish or solitary act, but one that will help “keep the fire burning” (13). Practice and
the passing on of practice is where Dorothy Noyes' work on tradition and Lewis Hyde's work on gifts coincide; the whittler Refsal writes about gives the gift of carving twice, first to another person and second to a child, thus passing on responsibility for this worthwhile practice. Hyde writes about the process of gift giving and receiving: “But we cannot receive the gift until we can meet it as an equal. We therefore submit ourselves to the labor of becoming like the gift. Giving a return gift is the final act in the labor of gratitude” (51). Refsal's injunctions to the reader to teach come after his commands to “Whittle” and “Whittle some more,” which echo Hyde's idea that passing a gift along can only happen when a person has become equal to what they received first. Refsal, however, speaks of giving many times and at different points in a person's life as a handcraft practitioner, arguing in effect that practice and giving grow and change together. The connection between ongoing practice and ongoing giving are important to understanding how the passing on of tradition becomes a part of a Norwegian-American ethos based on handcraft. Refsal's readers are persuaded to see the teaching of others as part of the practice and as something that naturally comes from woodcarving, which encourages them to see the role of teacher as part of their own ethos as a practitioner of handcrafts. By naturalizing this role, Refsal makes the burden of tradition seem lighter even as he makes it an integral part of Scandinavian carving tradition.

Kate Martinson also represents her pedagogy in terms that connects handcrafts with tradition and giving, calling students to take on an ethos that involves passing the knowledge and products of handcraft along. In her interview, Martinson said: “Harley and I are more about passing along the whole package;” meaning that the meta-
knowledge of the tradition, its practice, its materials, and its histories were also important
to know. Martinson explicitly told her Vesterheim nålbinding class that she was teaching
the students about nålbinding's history and cultural background so that they could explain
the practice to others and also become thinkers about the practice. Martinson does not
enjoin her students to teach nålbinding to others like Refsal tells carvers to teach, but she
sees handcraft and the people that practice it as a way to give to society. In her interview,
Martinson talked about how she sees the potential in handcrafts to create spaces where
people can work with their hands for the benefit of others. Martinson imagined ways in
which practitioners of handcraft could work together in order to give their work away:

So think about if you were in a city and you knew that this particular coffee
house was where knitters went, and...there was always a basket of hats for
infants or afghans, or square by square, whatever, that you could work
with...I mean, isn't that just a wonderful idea for social or service, helping
people and so on?

Martinson and Refsal have made this a reality in their classes taught at Luther, where
students learning to knit have made blankets for people in need (Martinson interview).
The gifts that Martinson imagines handcraft practitioners giving back to society are a way
to pass the initial gift of handcraft education on, and it is easy to imagine how a person
nålbinding in public might draw others into the craft as well. The initial gift of a warm
hat or mittens could lead to the passing on of nålbinding's tradition as well.86

Both Refsal and Martinson teach students to see keeping handcraft traditions alive
and moving as an important part of a lived Norwegian-American ethos based in handcraft

86 My own interest in nålbinding was piqued when I saw Martinson demonstrating it at an evening event
at the 2011 NAHA-Norway conference. It looked familiar and yet so different from the fiber arts I
already knew that I decided I would like to learn more. Martinson said in her interview that she has
always had more success filling nålbinding classes when she has been demonstrating the craft at
Vesterheim; when people see what she is doing they are more likely to sign up to take a class.
practice, but it is Refsal's story of discovering and revitalizing the flat-plane style of carving that persuades students of the price of not being good stewards of handcraft traditions. Harley Refsal teaches his readers and students to think about their place in flat-plane style carving's history, and uses his own personal history as a carver to make his call for carvers to practice and teach others more compelling. In his autobiographical prefaces to both *Woodcarving in the Scandinavian Style* and *Art & Technique of Scandinavian Style Woodcarving*, Refsal describes how he developed his own practice with carving. In *Woodcarving in the Scandinavian Style* he writes that when he began carving on his own in the U.S. with a pocketknife and chisel he was largely alone:

> Since I was unable to locate any carvers creating the style of figures I had seen in Scandinavia, I simply gleaned what information and inspiration I could from photos, articles, and sketches I had made. One of the articles I eventually ran across featured photos of some carving by Axel Petersson Döderhultarn, whose rough-hewn figures have made a lasting impression on me...I began using this style of carving to create objects and figures with which I was familiar, and I began trying to say more by saying less. (7-8)

According to Refsal, he was really only able to learn carving by imitating examples, not by learning from another person, which makes him largely self-taught. Readers can imagine how much work this was and how many mistakes and false starts were part of Refsal's practice at the beginning. The story about how Refsal discovered Petersson's work fits in with this self-taught narrative but also suggests that Petersson's own practice of woodcarving was incredibly influential on Refsal. Petersson seems to have served as a teacher of sorts even though he carved long before Refsal started. That Refsal did not have a living person to study with becomes part of his rhetorical appeal and helps establish why he sees it as so important that students of carving make it a part of their
practice to teach as well as carve. Refsal has the authority as the person who revitalized flat-plane style carving to call on others to take up its practice and teaching, because without him the community of carvers who practice this kind of carving might not exist.

By teaching students to think about the larger context of their individual practice of handcrafts and to understand the importance of tradition, Martinson and Refsal persuade them to see Norwegian handcrafts as having a valuable place in American culture and society. Students are encouraged to think about these handcrafts in terms of their location in individual lives, Norwegian-American handcrafts, and the United States. An expansive view of practice is persuasive because students are not simply pigeonholed as Norwegian American or as carvers or nålbinder. Instead, they are invited to take on the identities of student, teacher, designer, and helper. This helps give new relevance to a Norwegian-American ethos because it binds that ethos to an everyday practice that is a gift that can be passed to others through the products of practice or through the passing on of handcraft traditions.

**Conclusion**

Spaces like Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum and other locations that host handcraft classes like Luther College, North House Folk School, and the John C. Campbell Folk School deserve more attention as locations where rhetorical education and ethos formation take place. Likewise, instructors who seek to educate students into a thoughtful practice of handcraft deserve more study in the field of rhetoric. Kate Martinson and Harley Refsal are only two examples, if exemplary ones. Their rhetorical education in handcrafts acts to create or reinforce the lived ethos of students both as doers.
of Norwegian/Norwegian-American crafts and as Norwegian Americans. Although neither Refsal nor Martinson directly tell their students that carving in the flat-plane style or nålbinding mittens will make them Norwegian American, the emphasis they both place on teaching students the histories of these crafts and their cultural importance enable students to imaginatively place themselves in the succession of carvers and nålbinders and to understand their own present practice in terms of Norwegian and Scandinavian handcraft traditions. By presenting histories of their respective Norwegian handcrafts, Martinson and Refsal run the risk of persuading students to see flat-plane carving and nålbinding as belonging to the past and practiced only in the present to keep the traditions alive, but they counter this risk by presenting students with a wide array of examples of historical and contemporary work to show how handcrafts adapt with the times and have a place in the contemporary United States. By turning themselves into humble exemplars, Refsal and Martinson demonstrate the power of handcraft traditions to shape present day lives and they also model how students ought to approach handcrafts with humility and an emphasis on the tradition over the individual. The final piece of the rhetorical education in handcrafts that Refsal and Martinson provide lies in cementing the physical practice through repetition and connecting students' practice of handcraft into their everyday lives by demonstrating its importance and value to themselves and to society. This three-pronged approach to teaching handcrafts is deeply rooted in persuasion and can help rhetoricians explore new arenas where rhetoric has yet to be studied.

There are major challenges that the pedagogy espoused by Refsal and Martinson
faces: Martinson talked about the internet as potentially hurting in-person instruction since people interested in nålbinding might think that instructional videos that are free online are just as good as learning from someone proficient in nålbinding in person, and Darlene Fossum-Martin talked about how Vesterheim has been struggling with issues of how to fill classes and encourage younger people to take up Norwegian-American and Norwegian handcrafts. Refsal's popularity as an instructor and author seems to suggest that when a handcraft catches on it can still succeed in a new environment, but it remains to be seen whether the message of simplicity and “low tech, high touch” that Martinson and Refsal proclaim can take root and flourish in the long run (Refsal Whittling 18).

What is clearly discernible, however, is that institutions important to the Norwegian-American community like Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum see the teaching of handcraft and the work of instructors like Martinson and Refsal as a vital mission and that handcrafts can be meaningful to a lived Norwegian-American ethos.

Eventually the study of handcraft pedagogy as rhetorical education can take the field of rhetoric in new directions: to the study of how the physical act of creating an object works as persuasion, how acts and objects that cannot be easily reduced to and be read as texts function rhetorically, and how communities can form around what can be both a solitary and a social practice. The education and practices that take place at Vesterheim and in the work of instructors like Harley Refsal and Kate Martinson are just a tiny sample of the kinds of rhetorical education around handcrafts that are going on in the United States. Scholars can look to other institutions like North House Folk School and the John C. Campbell Folk School, to summer camps that involve education in
handcrafts, to informal community groups, and to the passing down of handcraft practices in families to both broaden and deepen our understanding of how rhetoric and acts of making physical objects create and influence ethos in communities and in society.
Chapter 4: Living History and Lived Ethos: Rhetorical Education at Old World Wisconsin

Old World Wisconsin is an open-air museum that sits in the Kettle Moraine State Forest near Eagle, Wisconsin. A little over half an hour away from Milwaukee and about an hour's drive from Madison, the museum is close to Wisconsin's two largest cities and yet it seems to embody the rural. The museum entrance is situated almost a mile off of Highway 67 on a two-lane state road with little traffic noise. The museum's situation in a state forest means that although there are patches of prairie, kettle ponds, and cultivated fields, trees block out signs of the outside world. On the grounds of Old World Wisconsin the only vehicles visitors see are trams that take passengers from site to site on the museum's five hundred and seventy-six acres (see fig. 9).

Figure 9: A walking and tram path winds through fields toward the Finnish area of Old World Wisconsin. Photograph by author.
Opening on June 30, 1976 as part of Wisconsin's plans to mark the United States' bicentennial, the museum consists of over sixty-five restored buildings representing groups that immigrated to Wisconsin in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The whole of Old World Wisconsin works as a site of rhetorical education and depends on the ethos of the museum founded on goodwill toward visitors and representing history faithfully. The broad aim of the museum is to quite literally bring the past into the present. The past becomes present in order to persuade visitors that history is valuable and that visitors can identify with people from the past in both belief and action. Old World Wisconsin encourages visitors to take up a more complex view of the past that acknowledges inequality and difference. The people's lives that are represented at the museum are exemplars, but more complex and less easily imitable exemplars than ones presented by Sons of Norway or in handcraft classes at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum.

Diving into the details of everyday life and portraying the difficulties that immigrants faced prevents visitors from having only nostalgic identifications with the past. The representation of difficult pasts encourages self-reflection and a reconsideration of idealized portrayals of the American Dream and immigrant life. The museum uses three major rhetorical strategies to educate visitors about the past and to encourage them to identify with the immigrant lives represented. First, the museum

87 The state saw the first season of the museum as a success. Richard A. Erney, the director of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, reported in 1977 that “Old World Wisconsin, which opened to the public with unprecedented crowds and public anticipation, welcomed 37,644 visitors during the short four-month season it operated in 1976. The attendance this spring has been encouraging, and the staff in both Madison and Eagle have worked exceptionally hard during this year to improve the interpretive program” (168).
persuades visitors to feel empathy for immigrants through imaginative exercises that give visitors pathos-based identifications with past people and experiences. Second, Old World Wisconsin is dedicated to recreating the sensory experience of nineteenth-century immigrant life. A focus on the senses incorporates visitors into the past and makes it more immediate than a purely imaginative approach does. Making the past more real gives visitors the ability to identify directly with experiences their ancestors may have had and makes the past more legible. Third, the museum invites visitors to take part in the work of the farms, homes, and businesses represented which aims to persuade visitors into identifications with the past by having them physically imitate historical people. The acts that visitors perform might be very foreign to their present-day lives and demonstrate how different nineteenth-century immigrant life was, but these acts still create identifications with the past. Old World Wisconsin also provides ways for visitors to take some of these sensory experiences and acts with them into their daily lives. This move allows visitors to continue the work of bringing of the past into the present beyond the boundaries of the museum.  

Both Gregory Clark and Michele Smith have written about how living history museums work to contain the lives represented within the museum. In Rhetorical Landscapes in America (2004), Gregory Clark writes: “Visitors at living museums do not identify themselves with the people who populate such exhibits as living images of a vanished past. Rather, the visitors identify with each other as they acknowledge together the distance that divides them all from the way of life they have come there to witness” (64). Similarly, Michelle Smith writes in “Containment Rhetoric and the Public Sphere: Imagining Amana, Inscribing America” (2010) that history as presented at the Amana Colonies in Iowa uses “containment rhetoric” to present a very different way of life as positive but untenable in the United States. This living portrayal of history involves “a degree of praise that is simultaneously undermined by a nostalgic attitude towards the community as inevitably failing to sustain itself” (131). Both Clark's and Smith's analysis suggests that living history museums educate audiences into an ethos that rejects what is portrayed in the museum even if qualities portrayed are positive. Amana Colonies are an interesting example of a living history museum. The seven villages are still communities, but the communal life portrayed at certain designated historic sites within the villages represent the past of the communities rather than their present-day reality. Clark's example of Shaker village tourism in the nineteenth century shares some of these features, but he compares his site to Plimoth Plantation and Old
For Norwegian-American visitors the education available at Old World Wisconsin can do much to foster and strengthen a lived Norwegian-American ethos. Norwegian-American visitors would be common at the museum because there are many Norwegian Americans in Wisconsin. The 2009-2011 American Community Survey estimated that 446,743 Norwegian Americans lived in Wisconsin out of a population of about 5.7 million (“S0201”). Even though this means that Norwegian Americans make up only about seven percent of the population, Old World Wisconsin is located close to Stoughton and other well-known Norwegian-American settlements which makes it easy for Norwegian Americans in the area to go to the museum. Even though Old World Wisconsin staff do not always know if visitors are Norwegian American the museum is still an important institution of Norwegian-American rhetorical education. That the museum is not directly born from the Norwegian-American community is important because it shows how a rhetorical education in lived Norwegian-American ethos can come from outside sources as long as it can be used by Norwegian Americans for the purpose of building an ethos.

The three strategies of imaginative empathy, the senses, and action that appear throughout the museum are present in the Norwegian area of Old World Wisconsin. Norwegian Americans can engage with the rhetorical education available at the Norwegian sites to build or deepen an ethos that takes a complex view of the Norwegian-American past and that provides ways to live as a Norwegian American in the present. The three sites in the Norwegian area of the museum represent diverse experiences. Old Sturbridge Village, which are more easily recognized as living history museums (63).
World Wisconsin has two Norwegian immigrant farms on its property: the Fossebrekke farm, which has been restored to its 1845 form, and the Kvaale farm, restored to 1865. Both farms were originally located in south-central Wisconsin before being moved to museum property. The Norwegian area also has the Raspberry School, a one-room schoolhouse originally located upstate near Lake Superior, which has been restored to 1906. Norwegian-American visitors can incorporate stories and experiences from each site into their lived ethos by creating new and more concrete identifications with the immigrant past that can work though imagination or action. Visitors might return to the museum and use the repeated action of going to Old World Wisconsin to continue building a Norwegian-American ethos or they might take up gardening or become interested in heirloom plants. Norwegian-American visitors might take away what they learned about lefse and incorporate it into their thinking about the food the next time they make or eat it or they might become interested in other Norwegian immigrant foods like \textit{flatbrot}.

Because Old World Wisconsin is a state institution and not a direct part of the Norwegian-American community, the ethos that Norwegian-American visitors take away with them depends on how (and if) the rhetorical education available at the museum resonates with identifications and interests that visitors can take with them and on the ability of the rhetorical education available at the museum to resonate with the education available at Norwegian-American institutions. Old World Wisconsin's strategies of bringing the past into the present, encouraging identification with historical people and practices, and invitation to action all relate to strategies used by Norwegian-American
institutions like Sons of Norway and Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, making the rhetorical education at Old World Wisconsin recognizable and capable of producing the same kinds of identifications.

However, it is important to realize that Norwegian-American visitors (and indeed all visitors) will not only encounter pasts that speak directly to them. Visitors likely travel to multiple areas in the museum and see histories that do not relate to their own ethnic or racial identifications. Unless visitors self-disclose to interpreters or bear obvious markers of difference, museum staff have no way of knowing if visitors are German American, Norwegian American, or Irish American. Old World Wisconsin emphasizes variety and comparison, encouraging visitors to question narrow and nostalgic understandings of the past and to identify with or be challenged by stories or lifeways that have little or nothing to do with their ancestry. Therefore the rhetorical education in a Norwegian-American ethos is just one of many possible educations available at Old World Wisconsin.

**Old World Wisconsin as an Institution of Rhetorical Education**

Old World Wisconsin is one of 11 historical sites overseen by the Wisconsin State Historical Society and is the “world's largest museum dedicated to the history of rural life” (“History of Old World Wisconsin”). The museum is supported in part by state funds and also by the Old World Wisconsin Foundation (OWWF), first formed in 1984 as the Friends of Old World Wisconsin and which has raised over six million dollars to support the educational and preservation needs of the museum (“Mission Statement and Purpose”). 89 The buildings at Old World Wisconsin are scattered across the museum

89 Like most public sites and state-operated museums, Old World Wisconsin has suffered from state
acreage and visitors either walk or take the museum tram from site to site. Working farms are grouped by ethnic affiliation and there is also a small village representing how Yankee and European immigrants lived together. The museum represents the rural lives of immigrants who came to Wisconsin from the 1840s through the early 1900s and is divided up into eight groupings: Yankee, Finnish, Danish, Norwegian, Polish, German, and African-American areas and the Crossroads Village. Interpreters perform some of the tasks and chores that the owners of the farms, homes, and businesses would have in the course of their daily lives, and visitors can watch, ask questions, and even take part in the work.

---

funding cuts in recent years. In the 2005-2007 Biennial Report, the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) reported that its budget for all historic sites except for the Circus World Museum was $4.4 million and that “state general purpose revenue accounted for 51.6%” of the historic site budget (11). The Wisconsin State Journal reported in May 2011 that in 2010 Old World Wisconsin had a budget of around $2 million and that it faced a state funding cut of 10% in 2011 (Adams). The same article notes that the Old World Wisconsin Foundation gave $232,000 to Old World Wisconsin in 2010 (Adams), 11.6% of Old World Wisconsin's budget for that year. From 2010 to 2011 the WHS and OWWF had a fraught negotiation of the OWWF's role in raising funds for Old World Wisconsin. In February of 2011 Ellen Langill, President of the Board of Curators of the WHS, sent a letter to Sandra Dionisopoulos, President of the OWWF, stating that the OWWF could no longer sell memberships that granted free admission to Old World Wisconsin, that the OWWF must coordinate all fundraising activities with the WHS, and that programming the OWWF wished to have at Old World Wisconsin must be coordinated by the WHS (Langill). The OWWF initially responded negatively to these demands (Dionisopoulos), but the dispute seems to have settled down and OWWF still organizes major events like the annual holiday dinner, birdwatching walks, and a 5K.

90 The original master plan also included Swedish, Eastern European, Welsh, Cornish, Irish, Belgian, Swiss, Dutch, and French areas. Some of these ethnic groups already have historic sites in Wisconsin, such as the Swiss in New Glarus and the Cornish in Mineral Point. When Old World Wisconsin was about to open in 1976, the Wisconsin Magazine of History ran a piece advertising the event: “The Finnish, German and Norwegian farmsteads will be largely complete; there will be the beginnings of the Yankee and Danish complexes; St. Peter's Church, the first Catholic cathedral in Wisconsin, will stand in the rural village site” (“Coming Soon: The Past”). In his director's report for 1976-1977, Richard A. Erney reports that “Seventeen historic buildings are open to the public, including the spectacular half-timber Koepsel House, authentically and beautifully furnished with major assistance from the Fort Atkinson Historical Society. The monumental Clausing octagonal barn is under construction as the third element in the visitor center; the Rankinen House in the Finnish area will open next month; and three other barns are under construction. Harmony Town Hall, the first unit in the Yankee area, was dedicated in public ceremonies which reminded those attending of its symbolic significance to American democracy” (169). Both of these reports reference sites still in operation at the museum, and no mention is made in later publications of the previously-planned sites that were never constructed.
The focus of Old World Wisconsin on teaching history through experience provides a unique space for the rhetorical education of visitors. The museum aims to persuade visitors to link the histories portrayed at the museum to their own existing ethos through the use of stories, imaginative engagement, and physical involvement. Old World Wisconsin literally brings the past into the present as a living history museum. The past is not meant only to be observed; visitors are invited to engage with the past physically and intellectually and to take the past with them when they leave. Old World Wisconsin crafts an ethos based on providing visitors with multiple ways to engage with the museum and on representing history accurately and in great detail. Rhetorically, the commitment to presenting a variety of ways to engage with the museum works to make visitors welcome and to give them a sense of having choices as they move through the sites. The focus on experiential learning and immersion in an environment is tempered with the portrayal of the museum as doing good history which reassures visitors that they are not just being entertained and persuades them to see Old World Wisconsin as an authentic representation of the past. The ethos of the museum encompasses historical fidelity mixed with a commitment to provide vivid and enjoyable experiences to visitors which makes it a powerful site of rhetorical education. As visitors see, smell, hear, touch, and taste what Old World Wisconsin has to offer they are incorporated into an experience of the past more persuasively than if they were simply looking at photographs and reading plaques describing the historical use of farm tools. The experiential rhetorical education at Old World Wisconsin guides visitors to put themselves into the past and thus to connect with it on the levels of emotion, intellect, and ethos.
The ethos of Old World Wisconsin depends first on its identity as a living history museum. Opening in the bicentennial year 1976, Old World Wisconsin was conceived as “a major bicentennial project in historic and environmental preservation” and was “intended to be a living acknowledgment of ‘the ethnic and cultural diversity of our citizenry and the contribution of this pluralism to America’” (J. Smith). By presenting Old World Wisconsin as about both preservation and ongoing acknowledgment, this vision of the museum has a stake in both the past and the present, stakes which the museum still takes seriously over 30 years later. The curators and staff at Old World Wisconsin negotiate the desire to represent the past accurately and the need to appeal to audiences in the present. The result is a museum that presents a rhetorical education that deals with the paradox of presenting a past that is foreign to most visitors by using multiple educational avenues to persuade visitors to see the past as important and as a resource for contemporary life. The rhetorical strategies that Old World Wisconsin can employ are constrained by the fact that it is a living history museum.

The museum's work is often described with the word “living,” which persuades visitors to see the buildings on the site and the practices carried out on the farms in the village as ongoing and vital instead of as dead and preserved. In Old World Wisconsin, America's Heartland: A Guide to Our Past, the site companion visitors can refer to as they travel the grounds, the Friends of Old World Wisconsin write that the museum is “a

91 James Morton Smith, the Director of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (now the Wisconsin Historical Society), quotes the Wisconsin American Revolution Bicentennial Committee at the end of this selection from his foreword to Old World Wisconsin: an outdoor, ethnic museum (1973). This booklet briefly explains the history of immigrants in Wisconsin, describes the master plan for Old World Wisconsin, and, in the words of Smith, “urges the widest possible support by individuals, groups, foundations, and governments—state, federal and foreign” (3).
living museum where interpreters, steeped in traditions of particular ethnic groups, carry out the tasks that made up the daily routine of brave souls who accepted the challenges of frontier life from the 1840s into the early years of the twentieth century” (Friends of Old World Wisconsin). When the Friends of Old World Wisconsin write that it is the interpreters who do the work of the “living museum,” the authors point to the importance that interpreters have in the museum. Old World Wisconsin only works persuasively as a living history museum because the interpreters serve as a bridge from the past to the present. Old World Wisconsin is not a living history museum in the sense that Plimoth Plantation is since it uses a mixture of interpretive strategies and does not rely only on first-person interpretation. Interpreters do not all pretend ignorance of modern technology and are not asked to always speak and behave as if they were living in the year the sites have been restored to. In the interpreters visitors recognize other present-day people who are behaving in accordance with past lifeways but do not see them as performers. These interpreters exist to explain and illuminate the past and not to fully inhabit it which leaves room for visitors to identify with the history portrayed on the site instead of only seeing it as different.

While the visible work of the living history museum is carried about by interpreters, what they are taught to do and what histories they know to transmit depends

92 In Destination Culture (1998), Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes about Plimoth Plantation as an example of the extreme end of living history museums. At Plimoth Plantation the historical clock is always set to 1627 and interpreters deny knowledge of anything past that year. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes: “Visitors try to tempt the historical reenactors to break frame. At Plimoth Plantation, the Pilgrims express consternation at the strange machines that visitors bring with them—their cameras and cellular phones—and respond with disbelief, attributions of magic or sorcery, or accusations of consorting with the devil. They struggle to stay in character all the time. Visitors watch to see if the Pilgrims will tear the fabric of time and emerge as 1998 persons, even if only for a flash” (199). The engagement that occurs at a dedicated first-person interpretive museum is clearly different from that at Old World Wisconsin, which emphasizes explanation and acknowledging the present.
upon the work of curators and senior interpreters. Old World Wisconsin has developed interpretive manuals to guide interpreters in their work and to lay out which parts of history to bring to life and which to simply explain. The manuals provide a number of topics that interpreters can discuss with visitors; in the Norwegian area, the number of topics per site ranges from thirteen at the Knud Fossebrekke farm to twenty-four at the Anders Kvaale farm. Each topic has an interpretive summary that covers historical background and how the topic at hand relates to the site and the people who lived there. The information covered in the topics consists mostly of what visitors would expect to find at a museum: data, dimensions of buildings, and descriptions of how various tools were used. Interpreters have multiple rhetorical strategies available to present the rural immigrant histories of Wisconsin as important to contemporary visitors. The interpretive manuals list “desired learner outcomes” as well as activities or questions that can help visitors understand the topic. The questions are designed to help visitors see that people had different beliefs in the nineteenth century and include “sample hooks,” which are questions that help interpreters get visitors interested in the site and the history it represents (Kroemer and Pfeifer ii-iii). These parts of the manuals demonstrate how interpreters persuade visitors to engage with topics that may not directly affect them in the present day. Interpreters take the place of traditional museum exhibits that have explanatory plaques or taped audio explanations. The interpreters are flexible and prepared to engage with different audiences and have a variety of institutionally-approved rhetorical strategies ready.

The flexibility the manuals give to interpreters reflects the broader ethos strategy
employed by Old World Wisconsin of using choice to persuade the audience of the museum's goodwill. Interpreters can show this goodwill by selecting certain things from the copia of information in the interpretive manuals to appeal to what visitors seem to find interesting about a site. The interpretive manuals acknowledge the importance of choice; in the Knud Fossebrekke manual, Kroemer and Pfeifer write: “Even though you probably will not have the time to cover all of the topics listed in this manual with each and every visitor, you will find that many of the topics are interrelated” (ii). The manuals, therefore, are not scripts for interpreters to recite verbatim to visitors but rather resources for interpretation and guides for how to get visitors beyond observation and into participation and open inquiry. Old World Wisconsin goes beyond the flexibility of topics and activities by providing a variety of interpretive styles with which visitors can interact or observe. For example, even though the museum employs much explanatory interpretation, it has also experimented with first-person interpreters. In a 2002 interview with Kori Oberle, Tom Kroemer, an interpreter at Old World Wisconsin since 1982, said that the newer first-person approach to interpretation “has been quite successful” and that the characters portrayed include “Wisconsin politician Robert La Follette, the village gossip, Maria Nielsen; Mary Anna Hoffman, a German immigrant living in a racially mixed community; and the dreaded tax assessor, James Parsons” (54). The two strategies of explanatory and first-person interpretation are hard to reconcile with one another, but since Old World Wisconsin aims to reach as wide an audience as possible through the use of different interpretive strategies it is easiest to understand these very

---

93 Kroemer collaborated on the interpretive manuals that guide museum staff in how to interact with visitors.
different approaches as part of an overarching strategy of varying visitor experiences rather than having a single, streamlined way of representing the past.

The variety of interpretive strategies persuades visitors that Old World Wisconsin feels goodwill for its audience by acknowledging that people will find different approaches to education effective. The museum further bolsters its ethos of goodwill by persuading visitors that they are an important part of the museum and that the museum, while interactive and engaging, is rooted firmly in good historical research. These two strategies help construct Old World Wisconsin's ethos as trustworthy and having goodwill for its audience. The concern with visitors and their opinions is on the one hand good business sense if the museum wants to stay open, but it also helps to inform the staff's approach to exhibit design and works to keep the rhetorical purpose of the museum in view. In his interview, the Director of Old World Wisconsin said that visitors play an important role in deciding what the museum will exhibit and how:

Interpretive exhibits and programs are first and foremost future visitor experiences and as such I tend to include the visitor in the planning process from the very beginning. This is first done by using visitor survey data and focus group conversations to determine what exhibit topics, themes and delivery methods resonate best among potential museum users. The topic of exhibits is often dictated by the interpretive themes of the museum.

The process described by the Director is not one solely dictated by the visitors' desires; he makes it clear that exhibit topics are conceived under the broader themes the museum represents, suggesting that visitor feedback impacts how the museum presents those themes and not the themes themselves. The Director also noted the importance of having the exhibit designer, a staff member from marketing, and curators in the planning
process, saying that “Too often, the exhibit or program is created by the content experts and then handed off to the marketing staff to figure out how to make people want to experience it. This should be a much more collaborative process.” The Director's interview reveals a desire to foster collaboration in order to make sure the “content experts” do not create unappealing, if historically sound, exhibits and also shows an understanding that the museum exists for its audience and that if the museum cannot speak to that audience in a meaningful way then education will not happen. If visitors feel that their feedback and opinions are valuable and taken into consideration—the act of handing out a survey to visitors tells them that they are important and gives them voice—then they are more likely to feel that the museum and its staff feel goodwill towards them, which improves Old World Wisconsin's ethos as a trustworthy institution of rhetorical education.

The other main rhetorical strategy Old World Wisconsin uses to bolster its ethos is an insistence that the museum portrays sites and lifeways accurately and based on thorough historical research. The focus on historical accuracy reassures visitors that even though they may find the museum entertaining they are still getting a correct and reliable education. The curators make it clear that their goal is to represent history at Old World Wisconsin both accurately and appealingly in order to successfully reach audiences and still maintain high standards of research. They emphasize that their decisions about which projects and collections to pursue depend on their ability to do good historical

94 I do not say this to imply that education is not interesting or that museums that do not use living history are not intellectually and imaginatively engaging. Instead I see Old World Wisconsin's emphasis on historical research as part of an argument that good research and detailed history are interesting and engaging. For audiences who are used to seeing education and entertainment as separate this argument also serves to help them see that the two are not necessarily divorced.
work and on the projects' possible appeal to visitors. The Curator of Research noted in his interview:

Old World Wisconsin’s comprehensive historical research filters constantly into the museum’s stories. Visitors will find evidence of it everywhere: it determines the year to which the historic structures are restored; it contributes to many of the furnishing decisions; it justifies the varieties of heirloom plants and historic breeds of livestock; it supports the styles, colors, and patterns of interpreter clothing; and perhaps most important, it humanizes the stories of many families who shaped Wisconsin.

The “comprehensive historical research” the Curator of Research refers to includes archival research at the Wisconsin Historical Society, county courthouses, churches, small local historical societies, and oral histories (Curator of Research). As the Curator of Research suggests, much of the work that goes into creating the sites at Old World Wisconsin is not immediately noticeable. However, interpreters can bring this hidden work to light when visitors express interest in the buildings or artifacts at the museum. During a visit to Old World Wisconsin with my family when I was a child we went to see the Thomas General Store in the Crossroads Village. As we examined the different goods available for purchase in the 1880s the interpreter told us about how during the previous season there had been a cracker barrel in the store, but that they had removed it because research had revealed that general stores did not have cracker barrels until much later. This simple and seemingly unimportant detail revealed the seriousness with which the museum approached recreating the environments historical Wisconsinites would encounter, supporting the museum's ethos as a dedicated educational institution.95

---

95 Richard Handler and Eric Gable have addressed how attention to mimetic detail can distract from larger issues that a museum wants to address in *The New History in an Old Museum* (1997). The chapter “Just
An ethos based on accurate and detailed historical research could come across as dry and overly fastidious; the museum could lose some of its liveliness if the focus rests too firmly on accuracy. The museum staff forestalls this outcome by portraying good historical research as ultimately humanizing and enlivening, ensuring that Old World Wisconsin maintains its human appeal. The Curator of Collections supported this view of research as humanizing in her interview, in which she stated:

A building’s year specific time period is decided based upon the richness of interpretive possibilities given the ethnic, social and economic narrative of the building’s occupants. Furnishings documenting the lifeways of the family, tools of the trade or public function of the structure are then provided. Furnishings include period appropriate hands-on objects from the education collection that may be used by staff and visitors to reenact documented activities or historical processes associated with the function of the structure and the lives of its residents.

The Curator of Collections makes an important point about the interpretive choices at Old World Wisconsin being driven by the histories of the people who inhabited the buildings. Unlike Plimoth Plantation, where the whole museum is restored to the year 1627, the sites at Old World Wisconsin are each restored to a different year. The stories of the people who lived in the houses and worked in the buildings at Old World Wisconsin “The Facts” details how museum educators and staff at Colonial Williamsburg take an objectivist stance on history and see “facts” as the underlying motivation for all changes at the museum. When Handler and Gable write about Colonial Williamsburg's decision to expand their representation of African-American lives at the museum they say that “the turn to African American history is presented as ideologically neutral—a function of the foundation's unchanging dedication to the facts” (79). “The facts” have been used to justify the lack of discussion at the museum about white men fathering children with slaves (since there is not much documentary evidence of specific instances) and also as ammunition in turf wars at the museum. A dedication to the facts can certainly be limiting, and the Curator of Collections acknowledges this when the curator discusses how interpretive possibilities and available research help determine which buildings to develop and which stories to tell. Even so, a commitment to the facts serves to convince visitors that the museum is well-researched and reliable.

For example, the Crossroads Village buildings are restored to approximately 1880, the three German farms to 1860, 1875, and 1880, the two Norwegian farms to 1845 and 1865, and the Finnish farms to 1897 and 1915. Visitors thus see what life was like for different people in Wisconsin from the 1840s to about 1915, getting a sense of the impact of historical events like the Civil War and industrial revolution on immigrant life.
Wisconsin become more important than having the museum reflect a standardized time period, allowing the compelling histories of each family to come to the fore. The immigrants' stories gain traction in the objects that they might have used to make butter or weave flax because, as the Curator of Collections points out, these objects represent the immigrants' lifeways and activities, activities which are still carried out on site. By portraying the meticulous research that goes into sites as humanizing and as enabling the telling of immigrants' stories, the Curators of Research and Collections argue that getting the historical details right is not an end in itself but rather a means to making the stories of the people who lived in Old World Wisconsin's houses more meaningful and accessible. If visitors can see, touch, smell, and hear what the inhabitants of the house or the students of the school probably saw, touched, smelled and heard, then they can better imagine the lives of the people from the past and understand them.

Old World Wisconsin's ethos as a trustworthy institution that feels goodwill toward its visitors allows it to then challenge visitors to complicate their existing ideas of the past and to tell stories that are uncomfortable or that do not fit into nostalgic portrayals of immigrant life as a realization of the American Dream. Although the museum has more work to do in order to fully represent the complex histories of inequality in nineteenth-century Wisconsin, it has begun to explore stories of race in the museum as a whole and explores economic inequality in the Norwegian area.

Complicating Ethos through History

Presenting histories of inequality and difference persuades visitors to Old World Wisconsin to complicate their previous understandings of the past and to incorporate
more complex views of the past into an ethos with historical roots. These histories help
visitors move beyond simple narratives of immigration as a realization of the American
Dream, and Norwegian-American visitors in particular can use the stories of economic
inequality represented in the Norwegian area as a way to craft a history-based ethos that
does not fall into the trap of nostalgia. The curators and staff of Old World Wisconsin
have been working over the years to better represent diversity and inequality in
Wisconsin's history and to thus increase the scope of the education offered at the
museum.97 The original master plan for Old World Wisconsin only included European
immigrants and settlers from the eastern United States and that remains largely the same
today, with the museum presenting more material about Germans, Scandinavians, and
Yankees than other groups, but the museum has gradually incorporated histories that
move beyond the mix of Europeans who settled there. The museum added an African
American area in 1998, which depicts life in the community of Pleasant Ridge, “one of
the first integrated rural communities in Wisconsin” (Thome and Thome 17).98 Old

97 The obvious omission I discuss in this section is the lack of portrayal of the lives of Native peoples who
lived in Wisconsin in the nineteenth century and who continue to live there. The museum also omits
histories like those of Belgian and Swedish settlers, who migrated in greater numbers to Wisconsin in
the nineteenth century than Finnish immigrants did. Budgetary constraints, the possibilities for
interpretation, and considerations about representing a variety of stories all play a role in deciding
which stories to tell. In the 1973 booklet Old World Wisconsin: an outdoor, ethnic museum, the State
Historical Society estimates that moving large buildings to the site will cost about $100,000, with
smaller buildings costing $25,000-30,000 (41). Also, given the limited acreage the museum has to
work with, Old World Wisconsin cannot simply represent every group that has lived in Wisconsin.
However, by until now omitting a discussion of Native peoples and their presence and removal from
most of the land in Wisconsin, the museum has failed to portray and wrestle with a key piece of
Wisconsin history.

98 The African American area, with only two buildings, is small compared to the rest of the museum sites
(although the Polish area, with just one house, is smaller), but evidence suggests that visitors find it a
compelling part of Old World Wisconsin. In a 2002 article for Archival Issues, Linda Barnickel writes
that she observed a first-person character interpreter tell the story of Isaac Shepard, a Pleasant Ridge
resident: “Isaac Shepard's story brought some members of the crowd to tears. A former slave, he made
the long journey from Virginia to Wisconsin in 1850. He outlived his wife and four of his children and
World Wisconsin has also long thought about how to include the histories and lives of Native peoples into the museum. In 1999, Kitsten Rohrs wrote in *Colonial Homes* that “Future plans include a Potawatomi Indian village, with wigwams made from bent twigs and bark covering based on period drawings. Until 1833, a Potawatomi Indian village of 300 to 500 people existed about 15 miles from the site of Old World Wisconsin.” More recent discussions of how to include Native peoples do not specify a Potawatomi village but still make the point that only telling the stories of immigrants to Wisconsin is insufficient. In a draft of a new Old World Wisconsin master plan from 2011, one of the key projects listed is: “Partner with a Native American nation to plan a means of telling Native American stories and to plan a 19th-century Native American component for the site” (*Master Plan*). By expanding the kinds of histories represented at Old World Wisconsin to include those of African Americans and Native peoples, the museum can better represent the breadth of Wisconsin's nineteenth and early twentieth century history, but inclusion also gives the museum an opportunity to tell the stories of colonization and displacement that underly Wisconsin's settlement by non-Native people. These parts of the museum do and will work rhetorically to disturb whitewashed versions of history that ignore violence and injustice in Wisconsin. Visitors who bring an ethos with historical roots with them to the museum can find they must complicate their own relationship with the past.

The educational and persuasive aspects of portraying the diversity of Wisconsin recently lost both his daughter and granddaughter in childbirth. He was a strong man and would be known as one of the earliest and most successful African-American pioneers of the small, integrated community of Pleasant Ridge in southwestern Wisconsin” (9). The power of Shepard's story from over 100 years ago to bring visitors to tears in the present suggests that even the smaller sites at Old World Wisconsin can still tell compelling stories.
history are still being explored and planned for at Old World Wisconsin, but the African-American area of the museum gives a sense of how the museum persuades visitors to consider lesser-known histories and difficult stories. The museum's African-American area seeks to portray a rural mixed-race community in the later nineteenth century and succeeds at representing a community that lived peacefully for the most part (see fig. 10).

Figure 10: The Pleasant Ridge Church at Old World Wisconsin. Photograph by author.

In the site companion *Old World Wisconsin, America's Heartland: A Guide to Our Past*, the interracial community of Pleasant Ridge is portrayed as a peaceful place full of cooperation between racial groups. An opening quote from Mildred Greene, a Pleasant Ridge resident, says: “Most everyone was a farmer, and so they relied on each
other for help. Blacks and whites would get together during the harvest...there was a closeness, a real binding quality” (17). Setting the tone as one of peace and cooperation, the article then goes on to detail the history of Pleasant Ridge and the African Americans who lived there. However, the site companion's discussion of Pleasant Ridge ends on a note of uncertainty. The final section on the African American area, titled “A Community Tested,” tells about how an African-American man named Samuel Gadlin was murdered by his white employer after the employer accused Gadlin of fathering his daughter's child. The site companion reassures readers that “The employer...tried to raise a lynch mob, but in testimony to the good race relations that existed at Pleasant Ridge, no one would join him” (18). However, the employer attacked and murdered Gadlin with an axe as he was being arrested, giving the story an unhappy and far from peaceful ending. The site companion does not connect this history with the history of American lynching and fears of interracial sexual relationships, but it does not sweep the tension of the history under the rug either.

The uncomfortable story of Samuel Gadlin's murder disrupts what could be an idyllic portrayal of racial diversity in Wisconsin and thus makes the rhetorical education available at Old World Wisconsin more complex than it might be otherwise. Visitors who read this story in the site companion or learn about it at the African American area do not have an easy takeaway or comforting lesson to learn. The representation of racial diversity at Old World Wisconsin, even in its very limited scope in the museum's present form, serves an important role in the rhetorical education of visitors. The past is not all about success and good feeling, the histories of Pleasant Ridge say; the past is also about
conflict, inequality, and injustice. The disruptive stories at Pleasant Ridge can help to make visitors more aware of the portrayal of inequality and other kinds of diversity elsewhere in the museum, the Norwegian area in particular, which portrays how economic inequality could impact farm life for immigrants.

The representation of difference in the Norwegian area of Old World Wisconsin can complicate the ethos that visitors bring with them even as the farms, school, and interpreters persuade Norwegian-American visitors to see themselves and their own family histories in the people and stories represented. This representation of the immigrant past in terms of inequality makes the Norwegian area of the museum a place where visitors, and Norwegian Americans in particular, can go to cultivate and complicate their own ethos. The stories of the two farms resonate generally with visitors who come from a state that still has a small family farm ethos that values rural life without romanticizing it or expecting wealth as a result. Norwegian-American visitors can identify more specifically with the stories of the families who lived on the farms and how these stories represent the Norwegian-American experience even as these histories complicate a rosy depiction of the immigrant past.

The two farms and school that make up the Norwegian area of Old World Wisconsin represent diverse experiences of the United States as well as economic and social inequality. Norwegian-American visitors to the museum learn that their community is more complex than idealized narratives of immigration say and thus trouble their historical identifications and learn about pieces of the past that cannot be easily turned into nostalgia. The two farms represent very different immigrant
experiences, with the Fossebrekke farm showing how immigrants who came to Wisconsin with little money fared and the Kvaale farm demonstrating how starting out with capital and having the luck to raise livestock in high demand could make life in the United States comfortable. Neither farm tells a rags to riches story that would fit in with the myth of America as the place where anyone could get rich just by trying; rather, the contrast between the two demonstrates how economic inequality persisted in the United States and how success for immigrant farmers usually meant economic stability and not wealth.

Old World Wisconsin represents the two Norwegian farms as a contrasting pair, making each an exemplar of a kind of life immigrants might have found and made for themselves in Wisconsin. By not telling just one story, the museum helps Norwegian-American visitors complicate their own ethos and understanding of Norwegian immigration. For visitors whose families came over with almost nothing, the Fossebrekke farm might speak most to them, but they will also have the opportunity to learn about how other Norwegians came to the United States and lived well from the start. For visitors whose ancestors were more like the Kvaales, they will learn more about the hardships that shaped other Norwegian immigrants' lives. Old World Wisconsin makes certain that visitors understand that they are supposed to compare the two farms, setting visitors up to engage in reflections that will work on their ethos. For example, in the museum's site companion the Norwegian area carries the subtitle “A study in contrasts” (34). Interpreters are also encouraged to get visitors to compare the Fossebrekke and Kvaale farms in the interpretive manuals for the sites. In the manual for
the Fossebrekke farm, one of the listed “desired learner outcomes” for the Fossebrekke exhibit is that “Visitors will be able to make comparison between the frontier cabin of Knud Fossebrekke and the larger, more refined folkform house of Anders Kvaale” (33). The museum, therefore, represents history not as a single story but as a collection of difference experiences that can illuminate the richness and complexity of the past.

The rhetorical education that Norwegian-American visitors receive at the Fossebrekke and Kvaale farms depends on their ability to consider and understand the reasons why the two farms are so different, and Old World Wisconsin pushes visitors to move beyond surface comparisons to these deeper issues. The museum site companion provides an economic lens through which visitors can view the two Norwegian farms:

Most immigrants came to Wisconsin with big dreams but very little money. The poorest settlers who were willing to work hard eked out a living and sometimes attained a barebones version of the American Dream. But coming to the new country with a little bit of money could make a very big difference in the way people lived. (34)

The Fossebrekke and Kvaale farms, therefore, represent the difference that coming to America with money could make in immigrants' lives, countering the idea that the American Dream was easily accessible as long as people had the will. By focusing on the impact of previous wealth on immigrants' lives in the United States in the Norwegian area, Old World Wisconsin encourages visitors (and Norwegian-American visitors in particular) to reflect on their own families' stories of settlement and of success or failure. Despite the differences in the histories of the Fossebrekke and Kvaale farms, Old World Wisconsin makes the sites imaginatively accessible to visitors by referencing and using commonplaces in stories of Norwegian emigration and settlement, giving visitors
familiar starting points before challenging them. The representation of the lives Fossebrekke and Kvaale led on their farms gives concrete ties to visitors' reflections and can give grounding to an ethos that is based in part in stories of emigration and building a new life in the United States.

The Knud Fossebrekke farm serves as an exemplar of the poor immigrant farm at Old World Wisconsin, persuading visitors to understand and sympathize with the hardship of poverty faced by many immigrants (see fig. 11).

*Figure 11: The Knud Fossebrekke house. Photograph by author.*

The interpretation of the farm references popular understandings of Norwegian immigrants and also makes very real the struggles of poor immigrants who came to rural Wisconsin in the middle of the nineteenth century. Fossebrekke's history would sound
familiar to Norwegian Americans who know some of the history of emigration from Norway to the United States, which allows them to draw on existing identifications even as they are challenged by the site. Fossebrekke came from a landed family in Norway, but because Norwegian land passed to first sons only, he came to the U.S. to buy his own farm. After working several years to save up money, he bought 40 acres, but did not choose prime farming land. The site companion explains Fossebrekke's choice: “Like most Norwegians, he did not recognize the prairie as prime, fertile farmland, and chose instead 40 acres near the woods” (34).\(^9\) The farm once owned by Knud Fossebrekke represents what hard work and no money could lead to:

[a] two-story cabin, made of rough-hewn logs with mortar and limestone chinking...The first floor had space for a kitchen, a bed, and a pen where young pigs would be safe from the elements and predators...A pole hung at the back of the cabin served as a pantry, a 'medicine cabinet' for drying and storing herbs, and a rack for pelts. (35)\(^10\)

---

\(^9\) It is common lore that Norwegians consistently passed over the best farmland and instead settled on and farmed land that looked more like that found back in Norway. There is historical evidence of these choices as well. In “Segregation of Norwegian Settlement in Wisconsin” (1954), Peter A. Munch writes that the Norwegian settlers at Coon Valley and Coon Prairie in Wisconsin also chose farm sites away from the prairies that were much more fertile: “The first Norwegian settlers in this area, as a general rule, settled in the valleys, avoiding the ridges and prairie land whenever they had a choice, although the latter offered the best farm land...[this settlement pattern] is believed to be particularly characteristic of the Norwegian settlers, reflecting an actual prejudice against ridges and prairie land. However this may be, it is certainly in accordance with the typical pattern for the location of farmsteads in Norway, where the economic as well as prestige value of the land generally decreases as the distance from the valley bottom increases” (116). In Norwegian-American popular culture, people usually joke that Norwegians did not know good land when they saw it because the farmland in Norway was so poor.

\(^10\) The trope of the tiny immigrant cabin is common in Norwegian-American circles. Vesterheim Norwegian American Museum in Decorah, Iowa has a small open-air division that displays the kinds of buildings built by Norwegian immigrants in the nineteenth century. One of the houses, the Egge-Koren house, is described thus on Vesterheim's website: “Erik Egge built this house in 1852 on his farm five miles southeast of Decorah. In July 1853, he married Helen Pedersdatter, a widow with two small children. From December 1853 to March 1854, the newlyweds, Rev. U. Vilhelm Koren and his wife Elisabeth, lived with the Egges. Elisabeth’s diary provides detailed insight into what it was like for four adults and two children to spend the winter in a one-room 14-by-16-foot log house. The Egges lived in this house until 1872, raising a family of six” (“Open Air Division”). Even smaller than the Fossebrekke house (which measures 16 1/2 by 17 feet), the Egge-Koren house is another example of Norwegian immigrants making do with very little space and living in uncomfortable conditions.
The poverty displayed at Fossebrekke's farm might be shocking to some visitors but also might fit in with stories they had heard about their own immigrant ancestors living in dugouts or tiny cabins when they first started their lives in America. The Fossebrekke farm presents Norwegian-American visitors with familiar stories of Norwegian emigration and farm life in the United States. These commonplaces in Fossebrekke's story could make visitors more comfortable and connected to the specific history of the farm. The familiarity of Fossebrekke's motives for coming to America and his settlement pattern can make it easier for Norwegian-American visitors to identify with the rest of his story even as it depicts the poverty and struggle of his and his family's life in Wisconsin. That Knud Fossebrekke never truly moved beyond life as a subsistence farmer is sobering to visitors who expect to learn stories of struggle and triumph. Norwegian-American visitors who have mostly encountered successful exemplars in learning about Norwegian-American history would have to take into account Fossebrekke's history and revise an ethos that looks to the past as one of success and accomplishment.

The Anders Kvaale farm, on the other hand, serves as an exemplar of middle-class rural existence, further disturbing an ethos based on the myth of the American Dream by representing how coming to the United States with money could lead to success. The size and comfort of the Kvaale farm stands in sharp contrast to the poverty evident at the Fossebrekke site (see fig. 12).
In the Old World Wisconsin site companion this disparity is made explicit:

Anders Kvaale enjoyed one big advantage over his fellow immigrant Fossebrekke: a handsome nest egg...Kvaale sold his farm in Norway and arrived in Wisconsin with $1,000, which enabled him to purchase 160 acres, hire craftsmen to build a proper house in the Norwegian style, erect a few outbuildings, and buy a complete inventory of livestock. (35)

The ability of the Kvaale family to immediately purchase farmland, build not only a house but also outbuildings, and to buy livestock sets it apart from Fossebrekke and his struggle. The Kvaales further prospered during the Civil War, when wool was in high demand due to the shortage of cotton in the north, allowing them the resources of time and money to live a more middle-class life (35). Although visitors might feel more empathy for Fossebrekke and his hard life, many would probably find it easier to imagine
themselves living life on the Kvaale farm. Despite its differences from the Fossebrekke farm, the Kvaale farm still provides some familiar references in the story of Norwegian immigration. The site companion portrays Kvaale's motives for moving as similar to Fossebrekke's, saying: “Norwegian landowners like Kvaale were frustrated at the dim prospects of expanding their farms and the certainty of being unable to secure a landed future for all of their children” (35). Kvaale is portrayed as making the move not only for his own benefit but for his family's as well, a familiar trope in stories of immigration to America. Since the Kvaale farm represents a lifestyle more closely tied to the current American desire to be of the middle class and still references common tropes of immigrant stories, it is a place where the museum can persuade visitors to see the connections between their own lives and the lives of immigrants in the nineteenth century.

While each of the farms in the Norwegian area of Old World Wisconsin can lead Norwegian-American visitors to identify with the stories told there and to see connections between their own families' stories and the lives represented at the museum, the contrast between the two farms is also important to ethos construction. First, the two farms serve to trouble the popular understanding of immigration as offering equal opportunities for success: visitors cannot escape the truth that Anders Kvaale's $1,000

101It is interesting that the Old World Wisconsin site companion gives a reason for Kvaale moving since the interpretive manual for the Anders Kvaale exhibit says there is no clear reason. The manual states: “The question as to why Anders Ellingsen Kvaale decided to immigrate has yet to be answered. He owned a modest farm, he appears to have had some economic substance, his family ties were old and established, he was a mature man of 44 with eight children. Was he motivated by religion, greater opportunity for his children, or perhaps, a romantic sense of adventure?” (Appendix X). Although there is no indication why the authors of the site companion chose to give Kvaale a clear reason for emigrating, it is interesting that they attributed to Kvaale a motivation so similar to Fossebrekke's.
made a large difference to his family and success in the United States and that Knud Fossebrekke's lack of capital made even the achievement of owning land another challenge to face. Here the contrast between the farms can trouble an ethos built on the myth that immigrants came, worked, and thrived and can encourage visitors to ask more questions about their own pasts and how they have been shaped by what they have and have not had access to. Fossebrekke and Kvaale are exemplars of a different order than the ones presented by Sons of Norway from 1918-1946 because even though they are everyday exemplars, their histories persuade visitors to rethink their perhaps nostalgic identifications with the past. Second, the contrast demonstrates to visitors that the Norwegian-American community of immigrants was not singular; individuals and entire groups had very different experiences even when they settled in the same state and so did not necessarily have a similar ethos. This could lead Norwegian-American visitors to reflect on how a common identity gets constructed out of dissimilar pieces.\(^{102}\) As visitors work to assimilate the information about the Fossebrekke and Kvaale farms into a cohesive idea about how Norwegians experienced immigration to the United States, so visitors also take place in the process that has led to the existence of a binding Norwegian-American ethos today. By making visitors confront difference and inequality

---

\(^{102}\)Old World Wisconsin is careful to cover the issue of difference within immigrant groups. In the Norwegian area, one of the ways in which the museum accomplishes this is by discussing how Norwegians were often judged by other Norwegians because of their regional identity. In all three of the interpretive manuals for the Norwegian area one of the main topics to cover is regionalization, described thus: “Patterns of land use, farm size, dialect, building construction, and social practices varied from region to region in Norway. Emigrants initially retained many of these regional distinctions after settling in the United States” (iv). Some Norwegian Americans still maintain and celebrate their regional distinction through participating in a Bygdelag, an association made up of people whose ancestors emigrated from the same region in Norway. A Bygdelag, as opposed to a Sons of Norway chapter generally only meets once a year since Norwegian Americans have largely scattered out from their ancestors' regionally-identified communities and so must travel to the Lag's location (“Fellesraad Home”).

235
among Norwegian immigrants, the Norwegian area of Old World Wisconsin helps to complicate a simple Norwegian-American ethos built on common myths of immigrant success even as it affirms common understandings of the Norwegian immigrant experience.

The Raspberry School might appear at first to have little to do with the rhetorical work the two Norwegian farms do to complicate an ethos invested in the past, but its history illuminates how the Norwegian-American community had conflicting ideas about how to maintain a group ethos and also settle into life in the United States. In museum literature and interpretive guides, the Raspberry School represents the push in Wisconsin after the Civil War to improve public schooling and also of Norwegian Americans' support of public schools as a path to Americanization (see fig. 13).

Figure 13: The Raspberry School. Photograph by author.
Like the Fossebrekke and Kvaale farms, the Raspberry School does not tell a story of extraordinary achievement; instead, the school illustrates the challenges faced by families who wanted to make education available for their children, the students who often had trouble getting to school, and the teachers who dealt with loneliness and the task of teaching students at different levels all in one classroom. Old World Wisconsin expects that some of its older visitors will remember going to one room schools as children, but for other visitors the schoolhouse can evoke memories of their own schooling and encourage them to reflect on the purpose and privilege of education. For Norwegian-American visitors, the Raspberry School can help them understand how public schools aided the process of Americanization and were a point of contention in the Norwegian-American community.

Norwegian-American visitors to the Raspberry School would get a glimpse of the American education that their Norwegian-American ancestors would have had in public schools. The Old World Wisconsin site companion and the Raspberry School's interpretive manual make it clear that Norwegian Americans rejected attempts by the Norwegian Lutheran Synod to set up parochial schools, instead supporting public schooling and church-run summer schools that taught religion and also Norwegian (Thome and Thome 37, Kroemer and Pfeifer 11-16). By gaining a greater understanding of how public schooling enabled immigrants' children to learn English while summer schools helped Norwegians to maintain their community and language, Norwegian-American visitors can comprehend the choices that immigrants made about how to
accommodate American culture without sacrificing the community's connections to Norway. The conflict between Norwegian Americans and the main church of which they were a part also reinforces the lesson from the two Norwegian farms that Norwegian immigrants and their descendants were not always a cohesive community and that histories of disagreement and difference are an important part of understanding and living out a Norwegian-American ethos.

Old World Wisconsin's portrayal of conflict and difference in the museum could be seen as working against a rhetorical education that persuades visitors to identify with the people's lives represented at the site. Sons of Norway's admirable and positive exemplars or the anonymous, collective exemplars presented by Kate Martinson and Harley Refsal provide their audiences with simple acts and beliefs to imitate; the Fossebrekke and Kvaale families and the Raspberry School do not. The histories of Norwegian immigration at Old World Wisconsin do persuade Norwegian-American visitors to consider a more complex way to relate to the past, adding depth and nuance to an ethos with historical roots. However, the rhetorical education at the museum is incomplete until visitors have also been persuaded to identify with the immigrants whose lives are interpreted, creating pathos-based, sense-based, and action-based identifications with the past that can influence a lived ethos in the present.

**Constructing a Norwegian-American Ethos at Old World Wisconsin**

Old World Wisconsin is committed to providing a variety of learning opportunities for visitors, but the museum consistently uses three broad rhetorical strategies in order to persuade visitors to identify with the past and incorporate elements
of that past into a present-day ethos. The combination of variety with some standard persuasive moves helps the museum cohere while still giving visitors a sense of choice as they visit different sites. The museum staff at Old World Wisconsin sees variety as an important piece of what the museum has to offer and the staff members continuously work on ways to diversify the experience of Old World Wisconsin in order to appeal to different learning styles. These decisions are rhetorical because the resulting strategies give visitors a sense of choosing their own path through the museum and controlling their own experience; getting visitors to have a sense of ownership over their visit can be a powerful way to incorporate them into the life and work of the museum. The Curator of Interpretation explained in an interview:

We are building new strategies to engage our visitors in a larger variety of ways, including actively seeking visitors to actually do tasks, providing more in-depth material through more traditional exhibit labels, creating environments that invoke more of the senses, such as taste and sound in addition to sight, smell and touch that we already do very well.

Old World Wisconsin's Director explained this varied approach as “laying out a Smorgasbord of learning opportunities where there is something on the table likely to appeal to the pickiest of eaters” (Director). Visitors to Old World Wisconsin encounter different presentational and representational strategies as they travel around the village and farm sites, choosing to observe or engage as they go. The choices that visitors make as they go throughout the museum, although still constrained by what the museum offers in the first place, give them a sense of control over their experience and can make the rhetorical education offered at Old World Wisconsin more effective by letting visitors decide how to interact in ways that they find meaningful or interesting. The museum
brings its different ways of teaching together by using three broad rhetorical strategies: persuading visitors to identify with historical exemplars through imaginative empathy, persuading visitors of the immediacy of the past by engaging the senses, and persuading visitors to look for the past in the present by getting them to take action in the museum.

The rhetorical strategies used by the museum as a whole are deployed in the Norwegian area and aim to persuade Norwegian-American visitors that a Norwegian-American ethos can be firmly rooted in the past and still find meaningful expression in the present. By learning about two different immigrant families and their experiences after moving to Wisconsin as well as about the tradition of public schooling in Norwegian immigrant communities, visitors who think of themselves as Norwegian American can add to their imaginative storehouses of stories to identify with and also get a sense of the material culture that shaped the lives of their ancestors. The Norwegian area draws on the strategies used elsewhere in the museum and uses imaginative identification with the past, engagement of the senses, and active participation to engage visitors in the exhibits. The interpretive manuals for the exhibits suggest a variety of activities for interpreters to use in teaching the histories of the Fossebrekke farm, Kvaale farm, and Raspberry School. The activities do not just use one rhetorical strategy each. There is overlap; for example, in the Kvaale exhibit one of the suggested activities involves passing around a bundle of prairie grass and a bundle of timothy hay, asking visitors to compare the two, and then telling them that originally Norwegian immigrants had their livestock graze on the prairie grass that grew naturally but eventually switched to planting timothy hay and clover together to provide a more nourishing diet for their
animals (Kroemer and Pfeifer “The Anders Kvaale Exhibit” 65-66). This activity involves imagination (visitors can use their imaginations to understand why Norwegian immigrants first depended on prairie grass) and also the senses and action (visitors handle the two different bundles of grass and can compare them using multiple senses). Even though the different rhetorical strategies overlap, activities tend to emphasize certain strategies. Taken together, imaginative empathy, the senses, and action persuade Norwegian-American visitors of the value of history in present-day identity and give them ways to continue the identity work begun in the museum in their daily lives.

*Imaginative Empathy as Paths to Ethos*

Old World Wisconsin uses empathy and activities that help to create it in order to persuade visitors to identify with the immigrant lives represented in the museum and in the Norwegian area. The museum as a whole encourages visitors to use their imaginations to connect themselves with the histories told at the sites, and in the Norwegian area Norwegian-American visitors can build identifications with the immigrant stories, which can connect them metonymically to their own family's history. Persuasive strategies based in empathy work to connect Norwegian-American visitors more closely to stories that are divorced from their daily experience and create these connections through pathos, making the histories personal and resonant. Visitors can incorporate these stories and their feelings of empathy into their Norwegian-American ethos even though they did not experience these events firsthand. Old World Wisconsin does not completely control how visitors will take up and use the histories they encounter and experience even though the museum selects which stories to tell. Visitors therefore
have some control over how they turn the histories at the museum into ethos-building material even as Old World Wisconsin uses appeals to pathos and imagination to shape their understanding of the past.

A former Old World Wisconsin curator's fictional work about the museum demonstrates the power of imagination to connect with the past and how the museum uses it to draw visitors more fully into identifications with and interest in history. Kathleen Ernst worked at Old World Wisconsin for twelve years starting in 1982 and has now published three mysteries featuring Chloe Ellefson, a fictional curator who solves mysteries involving the past and who is also Norwegian American (Ernst “Author's Note”). Ernst's first book in the series, Old World Murder, centers around an unusual Norwegian ale bowl that has gone missing from the collections and the death of Mrs. Lundquist, the woman who donated the bowl to Old World Wisconsin and then requested to have it returned to her. Chloe Ellefson, the heroine of the series, is the new curator of collections at Old World Wisconsin and solves the mystery of the ale bowl and the death of Mrs. Lundquist with help from a local policeman. Aside from the appeal of a mystery with a museum curator as detective, the novel touches on the importance that objects from the past can have in the present; Mrs. Lundquist is revealed to have made the request because she wanted to keep the bowl out of the hands of her grandniece who is of Norwegian and African American descent (Ernst, Old World, ch. 28). While the dead woman's motivation is ugly and based in racism, Ernst uses it to portray the importance the past plays in people's present lives and how it can motivate both good and bad actions. Chloe Ellefson understands history, tradition, and historical objects, but more
importantly she has empathetic connections to the past that allows her to understand why
people might be driven to theft and violence over something like an ale bowl.

Chloe Ellefson's imaginative and empathetic ties to history make her a good
figure for Old World Wisconsin to use to connect with visitors. In August 2012 Old
World Wisconsin had a “History and Mystery Tour,” a day-long behind-the-scenes tour
of the museum led by Kathleen Ernst and the Curator of Research with a reception and
book-signing at the end of the day (“History and Mystery Tour”). This event would
appeal to readers who enjoyed the Chloe Ellefson mysteries, wanted to learn more about
the real location of Old World Wisconsin, and wished to place events in the books in
actual spaces. Old World Murder connects readers imaginatively with the museum, and
by visiting the museum visitors can make that imaginative tie more concrete while
creating new ties with the spaces and stories they encounter at Old World Wisconsin.
Ernst's fictional work is a bridge to the reality of working at and maintaining sites like
Old World Wisconsin, and her willingness to partner with the museum for promotional
events like special tours and book signings suggests her awareness of the importance of
making stories, whether historical or fictional, real and present to audiences who
encounter them in the present day.

The imagination-based rhetorical education available at Old World Wisconsin
through stories both fictional and historical is an important piece of the museum's
persuasive appeal. Visitors can incorporate what they encounter into an ethos based on
rural identifications and an understanding of Wisconsin's complex and sometimes
difficult past. The museum as a whole provides visitors with ways to foster a generally
rural Wisconsin ethos, but the Norwegian area uses the imaginative work of the museum to enable the construction of a Norwegian-American ethos that incorporates vivid histories of economic inequality and the realities of rural life. 103 Feelings of empathy that stem from imagination are an important part of Old World Wisconsin's rhetorical education. Imagination teaches visitors that they can access the past even if it is distant and foreign to them and that they can feel empathy for the long-dead people represented at the museum sites. The feelings of empathy are also instructive because this emotion teaches visitors how to feel about the past; furthermore, these feelings connect visitors to the past through pathos, taking an intellectual understanding of history and incorporating it more fully into visitors' understanding.

At the Knud Fossebrekke exhibit visitors are often asked to feel empathy for immigrants like Fossebrekke and the conditions they faced coming to the United States and in their early years of settlement. This imaginative route into empathy works to connect visitors more closely with experiences that might be very foreign and to ground a lived ethos in pathetic connections to the past. In the interpretive manuals for the Fossebrekke exhibit the fourth topic interpreters are encouraged to cover is titled “The Journey to America” and one of the desired learner outcomes is that “After hearing some of the stories of emigrant travel, visitors will be able to empathize with the long ordeal faced by the emigrants during their journey to America” (Kroemer and Pfeifer 12, 15). Norwegian-American visitors to the museum today might know stories of emigration, but

103 There are eleven mentions of empathy in the sections listing desired learner outcomes in the three manuals for the Norwegian area. Each desired learner outcome has at least one suggested activity that goes along with it, although some have more than one.
they would be unlikely to have firsthand experience with crossing the Atlantic Ocean in a boat crowded with other people, little sanitation, and with monotonous rations. In order to help visitors better understand this experience, the interpretive manual suggests that interpreters:

Use guided imagery to help visitors visualize the wretched conditions the emigrants endured during their voyage to America. Ask the visitors to close their eyes and imagine they are in the cramped, dark cargo hold of an old sailing vessel. Read an excerpt from an America Letter...that gives a rather poignant description of the long and arduous voyage. (15)

Through an exercise in imagination, visitors are asked to put themselves in the position of the immigrants who came over the ocean and are expected to come away with empathy. The manual informs interpreters that they can bring this topic up by asking visitors about the most uncomfortable or worst trip they have ever taken and then use visitors' answers to segue into the visualization and reading from the immigrant letter (15-16). Although visitors to the museum cannot truly comprehend the difficulties of sailing to America in the nineteenth century, this exercise seeks to persuade them that they can at least grasp part of the hardship through their own imaginative work, drawing them closer to the experiences of ancestors who may have made a similar crossing.

While the action of getting visitors to compare their own negative travel experiences with what immigrants endured can create empathy by forging a connection between the present day and the past, the America letter included in the interpretive manual also works to foster feelings of empathy in the hearers. One part of the letter reads:

104The term “America letters” is used to describe letters that were written from the United States back to Norway.
At our departure we were promised a sufficient amount of fresh water but we got so little that we had to be satisfied with making a small cup of tea in the morning and cooking a little porridge late in the day. As for getting water to quench our thirst, that was out of the question...our daily fare was the small cup of tea I have mentioned and a biscuit in the morning and porridge for dinner. For supper we had nothing. (Appendix G)

The description of how little the letter's author had to eat and drink while making an Atlantic crossing that lasted about one and a half months persuasively portrays the horrible conditions on board immigrant ships. Combined with the imaginative exercise of visualizing life on board a ship, this account gives visitors details to add to their imaginings and also adds the authority of a first-person observer to the entire activity. Visitors will probably never experience something like this, but through this activity they can come a little closer to understanding the trials their ancestors may have faced coming to America and develop an emotional connection to the history of Norwegian-American emigration. Norwegian-American visitors may not have any papers or stories of their family's journey to the United States, and so the stories told here can stand in for those that have been lost. Visitors can take these stories and incorporate the emotions the histories stir up into a lived Norwegian-American ethos, connecting present-day beliefs and activities with a newly-vibrant past.

The interpretive manual for the Raspberry School also gives interpreters ways to create more vivid identifications with the past by having visitors to use their imaginations to empathize with the teachers and students of small schools in nineteenths and early twentieth century Wisconsin. Like the exercise at the Fossebrekke farm, imagination works at the Raspberry School by leading Norwegian-American visitors to better understand the educational challenges that their ancestors may have faced, giving them
emotional ties to history. One of the listed desired learner outcomes is that “Visitors will appreciate that students in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries faced many hardships, such as walking over a mile to get to school in sub-zero temperatures; attending schoolhouses that were dark, cold, and overcrowded; and sometimes having to do without school supplies” (50). The manual provides some passages from interviews with students who faced some of these hardships, describing how “Facing the cutting wind, wallowing through drifts, battling like some intrepid animal, we often arrived at the door moaning with pain yet unsubdued, our ears frosted, our toes numb in our boots” (49). Similarly, the manual explains that visitors should empathize with teachers, who were “underpaid, overworked, lacked proper training, were forced to work in the mass confusion of an ungraded classroom, served as both educators and janitors for their school, and often endured long periods of isolation and loneliness” (40). The interpretive manual provides one description of a poorly-equipped schoolhouse from 1848: “I would like to have you peek in and see how I flourish. Naked log walls, stove sitting in one corner dismantled entirely, five or six benches made of stubs, flat side up and a table cross-legged constitutes the whole furniture of this precious academy” (39). Although the Raspberry School manual does not ask interpreters to do guided imagery exercises with visitors, the first-person accounts available and the manual's stated goal of getting visitors to empathize with and understand the hardships that students and teachers faced and the inclusion of first-person account suggests that similar empathy strategies are in play. Norwegian-American visitors can look at the Raspberry School as an example of the kind of school their own ancestors might have attended, and the stories they hear
about the students and teachers who attended and taught at these kinds of schools can give them yet another imaginative and empathetic connection with the past and their own ethos as the descendant of Norwegian immigrants.

Similarly, the interpretive manual for the Anders Kvaale farm also urges interpreters to engage visitors’ empathy when they are at that site, persuading visitors to forge connections between their own ethos and the lives of nineteenth century Wisconsin immigrants. However, the Kvaale farm's interpretive manual encourages interpreters to get visitors to connect past experiences with present ones, giving Norwegian-American visitors a way to connect their present-day ethos with immigrants both historical and contemporary. The Anders Kvaale interpretive manual lists one of the desired learner outcomes as: “Through guided imagery, visitors will empathize with the plight of the majority [of] immigrants in trying to overcome the language barriers of their new country” (Kroemer and Pfeifer 21). Instead of giving visitors directions to imagine a historical scene, the guided imagery used for this topic in the Kvaale exhibit says:

Imagine that you are in a bus station in a foreign country. You cannot speak the native language...You suddenly discover that someone has taken your luggage by mistake. You try to communicate this to the employees at the station but are not able to find anyone who speaks English. What would you do? How else might you communicate your predicament to them? (22)

The exercise is designed to create empathy for Norwegian immigrants by getting visitors to feel the discomfort and fear some immigrants must have felt when they arrived in the United States. Interpreters can then discuss the difficulties Norwegian immigrants faced with learning English and the bewilderment newcomers might feel when confronted with crowds of people speaking other languages.
Unlike the example of empathy from the Fossebrekke exhibit activity, this is a situation that visitors could encounter one day, and so the empathy they develop for the Norwegian emigrant is more easily applied to contemporary situations. Visitors can reflect on how immigrants experience the United States today and realize that groups of immigrants have real reasons to try to maintain their language. These reflections may not add more knowledge to an existing Norwegian-American ethos, but can still show visitors the connections between Norwegian immigrants and immigrant groups today, making a Norwegian-American ethos less insular and more open to empathy with others. By pointing out the similarities between different immigrant groups and the possibility that visitors could encounter similar difficulties encourages Norwegian-American visitors to see their own group's history as connected to others' history as well, showing how a lived Norwegian-American ethos has past and present connections outside the community.

The strategy of imaginative empathy, as it is deployed in the Norwegian area of Old World Wisconsin, works to create strong, pathos-based connections between present-day visitors and the experiences of people who lived in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For Norwegian-American visitors these ties can be incorporated into their lived ethos and provide stories for them to return to when considering their identities and how they are linked to the past. By using empathy as the pathetic appeal instead of sympathy, the Old World Wisconsin interpretive manuals portray these educational strategies as creating a close bond of fellow-feeling instead of a more distant emotion. Empathy also forestalls nostalgia; the imaginative exercises used by
interpreters in the Norwegian area focus mostly on negative or difficult experiences and
do not invite romanticization but rather identification. Visitors, therefore, are expected to
come away from these exhibits with new and solid ties to the stories of the past, ties
which they can then use to reflect upon and add to their ethos. Unlike the stories told by
Sons of Norway about Norwegian-American history, these stories are not necessarily
about grand and admirable exemplars; these pasts instead give everyday examples of
how Norwegians lived in and adapted to America. Visitors may never have had the
opportunity to form pathos-based connections with the Norwegian-American past, and so
this strategy of rhetorical education can be powerful and persuasive.

Engaging the Senses as Rhetorical Education

Pathetic connections to the past are important because visitors take feelings with
them as they leave Old World Wisconsin and understand their own ties to the past in a
new way, but imagination still envisions the past as distant and gone. By turning to the
physical senses, Old World Wisconsin almost literally brings the past into the present and
makes it more immediate and convincing than imagination could, persuading visitors into
identifications with the past based on empirical experience. A rhetorical education in the
sights, sounds, scents, textures, and tastes of the nineteenth century persuades visitors of
the immediacy and reality of the past, bringing it beyond feeling and understanding into
direct experience. Visitors can encounter new or familiar sensory experiences and use
them to either build a better understanding of the past or to see ways in which the present
and the past are connected through the senses. The sensory experiences of Old World
Wisconsin do not offer simple ethos-building tools to visitors, but by bringing the past to
life in multiple and vivid ways these parts of the museum's rhetorical education help an ethos with historical roots by making that history more present and by giving people who have that ethos concrete connections to the past.

The incorporation of sensory experiences into the work of Old World Wisconsin creates a convincing and detailed portrait of the past and of the material lives of the people who inhabited the museums' houses, farms, and businesses. The attention to detail enables and encourages storytelling; at the Charles Schulz farm in the German area, visitors see a large loom in one of the rooms (see fig. 14).

Figure 14: The spinning wheel and loom for making linen at the Schulz farm. Photograph by author.
When asked, interpreters can describe and demonstrate weaving linen, explain how immigrants often would weave their own cloth, and describe or demonstrate the process of turning harvested flax into fibers and spinning the fibers into thread. Revealing the use of household objects and the various kinds of labor needed to produce cloth is education, but it is also persuasive because it encourages visitors to step outside of their current identities as people living in a twenty-first century consumer culture and to imagine a life in which basic human needs like cloth for clothing and household use were met through a multi-season process. This rhetorical education encourages visitors to see difference. Very few, if any, visitors would have any experience with scutching or heckling flax. However, the rhetorical education here also gives visitors a concrete space in which to imagine links with the past despite difference and contemporary ignorance of past lifeways. The rich material culture on display at Old World Wisconsin serves as a stage of sorts for interpreters to present the past to visitors, who might choose to participate in the practice of historical life at the museum or who might simply listen and imagine. The stories on their own would not be so richly realized, and the spaces without the interpretation and carrying out of daily work would not mean more than a playacting at the past for observation.

Old World Wisconsin also uses direct experience and the senses to draw visitors in to the Norwegian immigrant ethos represented in the Norwegian area. As opposed to the more pathos-oriented rhetoric of the imagination, sense-dependent visitor experiences depend on visitors cultivating their understanding to better know what life was like in the
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for Norwegian immigrants and their families.\textsuperscript{105} The three interpretive manuals for the sites in the Norwegian area portray the senses as a path to knowledge, and presumably a deeper knowledge than can be obtained from reading or listening to a recitation of historical information. The engagement of the senses makes the education provided in the Norwegian area persuasive because it adds experience to understanding; visitors not only gain knowledge of the people who lived and worked on the sites and what their lives were like but also have sensory experiences that create concrete connections with elements of the past.

On the Fossebrekke farm visitors have multiple opportunities to engage their senses and to use these sensory experiences to bolster a lived Norwegian-American ethos by incorporating them into a complex understanding of the past. In the interpretive manual for the Knud Fossebrekke exhibit interpreters learn the historical information but also how to make it lively for their audience. The “Suggested Activities, Objects, Stories, and Questions” section of the “Early Immigrant Dwellings” topic goes into detail about how interpreters can make the plain information about the Fossebrekke house vivid and persuasive. The first suggestion is that interpreters “invite the visitors into the Fossebrekke house” (33). When even a small group steps into the house it is immediately clear how cramped the house is, especially since a good portion of the first-

\textsuperscript{105}There are over 25 recommendations in the three manuals for how interpreters can get visitors to involve their senses of sight, hearing, and touch. Smell is only mentioned once and taste not at all, but these two senses certainly make up an important part of a visitor's experience. Occasionally visitors are invited to taste foods cooked in the homes. For example, for 2012's “The Spirit of Christmas Past” special event on December 1-2 and 8-9, visitors were invited to sample medovicky (honey cookies) at the Sisel Shoe Shop and borren brack (a bread with raisins in it) at the Hafford House (“The Spirit of Christmas Past”). Smells are hard to avoid at Old World Wisconsin—as visitors go about the museum they smell gardens, crops, livestock, manure, smoke from fires, etc. 253
story floor is fenced off as a pigpen for young pigs the Fossebrekke's wanted to protect from the weather and predators. Visitors immediately confront the reality that immigrants had to make do with less than ideal living situations. Interpreters, however, are encouraged to present the cabin as a step up in the world for Fossebrekke since the house he had lived in before was an earthen dugout. This can persuade visitors that any discomfort they feel in the small quarters of the house is nothing in comparison to how it would feel to live in a hole dug into the side of a hill where dirt would get into everything and insects, mice, and even snakes would come in from the floor, walls, and ceiling. Interpreters are not told to just emphasize the positives of the house over a dugout; one of the suggested activities encourages interpreters to share with visitors that “Family tradition states that Fossebrekke may have provided temporary shelter to seventeen fellow immigrants through an entire winter” and then to “Ask the visitors to imagine being crowded into this house with seventeen other people for an extended period of time” (33). This very simple and brief activity persuades visitors to believe two contrasting points: first, that the Fossebrekke house is not as uncomfortable and small as it seems when compared to Fossebrekke's first dwelling, and second, that the Fossebrekke house would have been a very difficult and unsanitary place to live, especially so if you had to share it with sixteen other people. Here the interpretive manual demonstrates how persuasive the interpreters can be when they move beyond imparting information and instead focus on inspiring feeling and reflection through

106Stories of snakes coming into dugouts in the fall or spring are a popular way of illustrating the difficulties of pioneer and immigrant life in the United States. The Women of the West Museum describes how people living in sod houses or dugouts would cover the walls with cloth or whitewash to try to keep dirt from getting onto furniture and into cooking utensils and food and how pests would frequently make unexpected appearances in the house (“Daily Life”).
experience. By combining imagination with direct experience, interpreters can get visitors to use both feeling and understanding to identify with the past even as they learn stories that are troubling or difficult.

Many of the sense-based activities in the interpretive manual for the Fossebrekke farm center on getting visitors to understand how poorer immigrants farmed and lived and how it impacted their well-being, giving visitors concrete links to past experiences and making it clear that Fossebrekke's life should not inspire nostalgia. Some of the desired learner outcomes from the interpretive manual include: “visitors will also see some of the other crops that were commonly grown on the early farms, such as corn and pumpkins,” and “By observing the livestock on the Fossebrekke exhibit visitors will realize that the early settlers kept few animals on their farms. Those they did have, such as pigs, a cow, ducks, geese, and sheep, were primarily for home consumption,” and “By seeing (and touching) the hides hanging in the cabin, the visitors will understand that the immigrants also trapped to acquire pelts for clothing and to sell” (29). The first two learner outcomes and the activities depend solely on observation. Visitors can see corn and pumpkins growing and also the Ossabaw pigs kept on the farm. However, the act of seeing is not sufficient for understanding; interpreters must explain that Norwegian immigrants grew corn and pumpkins as animal feed and that the Ossabaw pigs are a less refined breed of pig and close to feral. Once visitors know this, however, they can see

---

107 Visitors' ability to see these things depends on the season and also on the needs of the livestock. During a visit to Old World Wisconsin in the summer of 2009, I learned that the pigs had been removed from the Fossebrekke exhibit because of the swine flu outbreak. The pigs were not moved to a farm because they posed a danger to humans but because humans could pass the flu to the pigs; since Ossabaws and many other breeds of animals at Old World Wisconsin are rare, the museum is very serious about keeping the animals safe and healthy, at least until slaughtering time.
the garden crops in a new light and consider why Norwegian immigrants would not view
pumpkins and corn as food for people or observe the behavior of the Ossabaw pigs more
closely and compare them with other pigs they have seen at Old World Wisconsin and
elsewhere. When visitors are invited by interpreters to touch the pelts hanging in the
Fossebrekke house they not only see but feel how pelts had different qualities depending
on the animal the furs came from and can then consider the work that would go into
trapping, killing, and dressing the animals for their pelts.

Unlike the activities designed to inspire empathy in visitors, these experiential
lessons may not stir up strong emotions. Even so, these activities can be effective at
fostering lived ethos among Norwegian-American visitors who can see these acts of
observing and touching as giving them a more concrete connection to the histories of
Norwegian emigration and settlement. Visitors can also learn about details of the daily
lives of their ancestors that they may have never considered in the past. The activities at
the Fossebrekke farm, therefore, give a new level of detail and life to historical accounts
of immigrant lifeways that visitors can return to when they consider the immigrant past
that informs their present ethos.

The Kvaale farm also presents opportunities for visitors to incorporate sensory
experiences into their sense of identity, with the manual calling on sight, hearing, touch,
and smell to help visitors understand middle-class farm life and provide a different set of
experiences to associate with the Norwegian-American past. Since the Kvaales raised
sheep and profited from them during the Civil War, quite a few of the sensory
experiences on the farm revolve around sheep. Visitors can see the sheep themselves and
learn about shearing, washing, dyeing, and spinning wool. Twice in the Kvaale interpretive manual interpreters are given the option of having visitors handle the wool from two breeds of sheep to understand how the wool differs (see fig. 15).¹⁰⁸

In the stations titled “Clothing and Wool Processing” and “Wool Production,” interpreters are told that a desired learner outcome is that “Visitors will see the differences between Cotswold and Merino wool by handling samples of each” (29, 68).

¹⁰⁸Kate Martinson led her July 2012 nålbinding class in a similar activity when she passed around yarns made from different sheep so that students could understand how sheep breeds from different countries produced different kinds and qualities of wool. The overlap in sense-based activities suggests how important they are in rhetorical education designed to incorporate students into an ethos based on older ways of knowing and practicing.
Visitors, unless they are accomplished knitters or crocheters, would likely not have considered the differences in wool between breeds of sheep, and so this activity would help them understand why breeds of sheep were raised to produce different kinds of wool. For visitors who understand fiber arts, these sensory activities demonstrate how their present-day knowledge has historical roots. In the “Clothing and Wool Processing” station interpreters are also told that they can “Pass around a wool sock. Have the visitors put their hand in it to determine its warmth. Ask, 'How would it feel to wear these on your feet in the cold winter months? How about in the summer?'” (30) This activity allows interpreters to introduce information about how Norwegian immigrants often made their own clothes and would spin their own yarn and knit or weave cloth from it. Norwegian-American visitors can reflect on the amount of labor it took to produce clothing and also on the crafts their ancestors practiced. Some visitors might be able to tie their own interest in fiber arts to what they see and feel at the Kvaale farm, while others might simply use these experiences to enrich their understanding of how Norwegian immigrants lived and what they did in their daily lives. In contrast to the sensory work done at the Fossebrekke farm, the Kvaale farm does not challenge visitors to empirically understand rural poverty, but it does provide sensory information that might be more familiar to present-day visitors who can then identify with those sense experiences.

The Raspberry School furthers the work of the Kvaale house by providing sensory experiences that visitors will be able to compare with their own memories or current experiences of education. Interpreters can teach short classes, ring the school
bell, and have visitors look around the schoolroom and point out differences between it and the classrooms they have been in. One of the desired learner outcomes from the Raspberry School interpretive manual reads: “Visitors will see examples of some of the most common textbooks used during the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries. By examining a copy of the *McGuffy's First Eclectic Reader*, visitors will become familiar with the contents of one of the most popular textbooks of this period” (64). When visitors see, handle, and explore the contents of a reader that was incredibly popular in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they gain a better understanding of how textbooks have changed or remained the same. Being able to actually see and touch the textbooks rather than just hearing about them from the interpreter can also work persuasively because it gives visitors the sense of discovering something for themselves. The *First Eclectic Reader* would be familiar enough in its methods that most visitors who can read would be able to understand how it worked. The interpretive manual summarizes:

> The *McGuffy's First Eclectic Reader* used both the phonic and the word method of teaching children how to read...For example: the combination of d, o, and g formed the word “dog.” T, h, and e formed the word “the.” R, a, and n formed the word “ran.” The lesson then combined these words to form the sentence “The dog ran.” The lesson also included an illustration of a dog running as an aid to help the students understand the meaning of the words. (62)

The interpretive manual has to explain this, but visitors could see and understand it on their own or with a little prompting from the interpreter, illustrating Old World Wisconsin's reliance on the idea that seeing (or using other senses) can lead to understanding without too much explanation. Certainly interpreters still add important
contextual information about the popularity of the textbooks and how the texts promoted Protestant morality through the stories included in the readers, but visitors take on responsibility for their learning by taking the readers into their own hands and drawing their own comparisons and conclusions.

Sensory experiences permeate Old World Wisconsin and visitors encounter them without any prompting from interpretive staff. However, staff are trained to guide visitors through certain sense-based activities that increase visitors' understanding of the past and that connect them to historical life and experience concretely. For Norwegian-American visitors, sensory experiences not only make the past more vivid but also provide space for comparative work. They can put their own knowledge of Norwegian-American life together with the new sensory information they take in at the museum and see how it compares. A visitor who knits can see and feel how homespun yarn at the Kvaale farm matches their own yarn preferences or understand more fully how an enjoyable hobby was part of the Kvaales' livelihood. The sight of decorative objects like chip-carved boxes or a painted immigrant chest might be familiar or could teach visitors unfamiliar with these objects to recognize them as Norwegian in the future. Sensory experiences effectively bridge the gap between the past and the present at Old World Wisconsin to draw people more firmly into identifications with the past and to make ways that the past still exists in the present more recognizable and powerful.

Action as Rhetorical Education

The final piece in Old World Wisconsin's approach to rhetorical education is the use of the past to inform present-day actions. The museum does not simply convince
visitors that Wisconsin's immigrant history is important but also persuades visitors to see the past as a resource for their lives in the present. Action draws on imagination and sensory experience to incorporate the past more fully into visitors' present-day ethos by having them imitate the work done by nineteenth-century immigrants and their descendants. For Norwegian-American visitors, the actions they perform in the Norwegian area can demonstrate how present-day practices have historical roots or can introduce them to new practices that they can possibly take up in their everyday lives or add to a more complex understanding of Norwegian-American history.

As a whole, Old World Wisconsin is constantly experimenting with ways to get visitors involved physically in the work that goes on at the various museum sites. One of the more recent strategies has been to involve visitors in the day-to-day work on the farms, an overt way of getting visitors to invest their intellectual, emotional, and physical energies in the educational opportunities available at the museum. In an interview, the Curator of Interpretation explained that one of her guiding principles is the proverb “If you tell me, I forget, if you show me, I remember, if you let me do it, I understand.” The relatively new “Life on the Farm” program, which invites visitors to help with various chores and tasks, is an excellent example of how the museum is using the philosophy of “if you let me do it, I understand” in order to give visitors wider choice for how to experience the museum.109 In the summer of 2013 Old World Wisconsin is offering several “Rousing with the Roosters Breakfast” events during which visitors will perform

---

109The 2011 draft of the Old World Wisconsin master plan for 2010 – 2022 outlines additional plans for increasing visitor engagement, including a program similar to “Life on the Farm” titled “An Entrepreneurial Spirit” that will be put in place at the Crossroads Village and an expansion of the “Animal Encounters” program to increase the level of interactions visitors have with the historic breeds of animals that work on and live at the farms (Master Plan).
morning chores on the Schottler farm and then prepare and enjoy breakfast in the farmhouse (“Events Calendar”). The immersive experience provided by these special events serves as another persuasive way to incorporate visitors into the life of the museum and to give them a chance to do and understand instead of to see and know.

These activities incorporate visitors into the past and the past into visitors, but the activities may not show visitors how to take the past with them as action. Old World Wisconsin does work to give visitors ways to take museum experiences with them; in recent years interest in heirloom varieties of plants has increased and the museum has represented the gardening techniques and heirloom plants at the museum as directly applicable to gardeners today. In 2011 Marcia Carmichael, the historical gardener for the museum, published *Putting Down Roots*, a book that discusses nineteenth-century gardening techniques and recipes from different immigrant communities in Wisconsin. In an interview Carmichael said that her book is important for both history and the present day:

Gardens provided sustenance as well as beauty for early Wisconsin settlers. Food, medicine, insect repellents, dyes for coloring, sweet fragrances – so many of life's essentials depended on harvests from the garden. With the current interest in treating the environment gently, gardening organically, and eating locally grown food, many people are looking back to the gardening practices of previous generations. (“Author Interview”)

Carmichael's book, as she presents it, is not only a historical examination of how different immigrant groups gardened in Wisconsin, but a potential blueprint for how people today can grow their own food in a more environmentally friendly way. The staff at Old World Wisconsin can talk about gardening techniques and heirloom plant varieties
that are grown at the museum and also about the heirloom breeds of livestock that are kept on the farms. The Wisconsin Historical Society wrote about heirloom gardens at state historic sites in 2007, saying: “Many of Old World Wisconsin's heirloom plants are also offered for sale to visitors at the Old World Farmers and Crafts Market, open daily during the summer and fall at the Visitor Center Mall” (“Highlights Archives”). Additionaly, visitors can buy heirloom seeds and books about gardening in the museum gift shop (see fig. 16).

![Figure 16: Heirloom seeds for sale in the Old World Wisconsin gift shop. Photograph by author.](image)

110Interestingly, one of the major sources for heirloom plants and seeds is Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah, Iowa. Carmichael suggests that people interested in heirloom gardening buy their seeds from Seed Savers in a 2011 interview with *M Magazine* (“Praise for Putting Down Roots”). Decorah's significance not just as a Norwegian-American destination but also as a site for heirloom seed preservation and distribution makes it interesting as a place where multiple projects focusing on tradition and its continuation are taking place.
By making the plants grown at Old World Wisconsin available to visitors, the museum not only works to get visitors interested in the history of gardening and heirloom plants but also makes it possible for visitors to start the practice almost immediately—all visitors have to do is buy a plant or seeds on their way home. These gardens, Marcia Carmichael's book about them, and the sale of heirloom plants and seeds can be persuasive by demonstrating the possibilities of gardening and making it possible in the present. The rhetorical education in gardening available at Old World Wisconsin is one instance of how visitors can act out what they learn at the museum in their lived ethos.

Action is the most powerful form of rhetorical education at Old World Wisconsin and for Norwegian Americans visiting the Norwegian area because the physical acts performed by visitors give them a simultaneous pathetic and kinesthetic connection with the past. Physical motion matters for building ethos because as Dorothy Noyes writes in *Fire in the Plaça*, “all similar motion provokes similar emotion” (212). If Norwegian-American visitors perform actions similar to the ones they did at Old World Wisconsin in their own daily lives they evoke their experience of the past again and renew the ties to the past created at the museum. The Norwegian area presents multiple opportunities for visitors to take action and perform their way into an ethos tied to history.

Norwegian-American visitors have the chance to learn about the foodways of their ancestors and to perform actions that they can take with them back into their everyday lives, adding to a lived Norwegian-American ethos. On the Fossebrekke farm

---

111The interpretive manuals for the three Norwegian area sites present 16 opportunities for visitors to take action. The farm activities mostly involve physical labor while the chances for action at the school involve visitors role playing more than doing chores.
visitors have the option of helping to make flatbrod (flatbread) or performing some of the typical chores on the farm (see fig. 17).

![Figure 17: Flatbrod and the utensils needed to make it at the Fossebrekke house. Photograph by author.](image)

These activities are presented as educational but are also tied to objectives that suggest that developing empathy and emotional connections with immigrants are also major goals of the activity. In the case of flatbrod, the interpretive manual states: “Visitors will learn how flatbrod is made, and understand that the pioneer immigrants were able to incorporate some Norwegian dishes into their diets” (43). Although the desired learner outcome can seem dry, it comes alongside the lesson that visitors are learning about how
Norwegians had to abandon many of their traditional foodways because of the unavailability of food like dried cod; interpreters can inform visitors that immigrants had to eat pork and potatoes much of the time (41). The “sample hook” provided by the manual for interpreters to use to get visitors interested is, “How would you like eating nothing but pork and potatoes three times a day?” (43). This question, which encourages visitors to imagine eating a monotonous and not very nutritious diet, engages visitors' empathy, which then lends more pathetic power to the acts of learning how to make flatbrod. Visitors can see that flatbrod would be a change from the regular pork and potatoes and understand that getting to eat a familiar food from Norway would be a comforting and pleasant change. Norwegian-American visitors might not go home and decide to learn how to make flatbrod, but by observing and helping in the process of making it they will gain an emotional and physical connection to an everyday act that their ancestors probably performed. If the visitors do try their hand at flatbrod when they return to their lives, the act will evoke the feelings and meaning the visitors first encountered at the museum and also help them to live out a Norwegian-American ethos rooted in the past.

The Kvaale farm also presents opportunities for visitors to take action with food, but the food at the Kvaale exhibit will likely be familiar to Norwegian-American visitors and thus presents an easier path to connecting history and lived practice. On the Kvaale farm visitors might have the opportunity to participate in the making of lefse, a flatbread made with potatoes and flour (Kroemer and Pfeifer “The Anders Kvaale Exhibit” 48). Lefse is a popular food in the Norwegian-American community today and often people
who do not identify as Norwegian American have eaten or at least know about lefse when they live in areas with larger Norwegian-American populations. A lefse making demonstration in which visitors could participate would thus provide a familiar activity in a different setting. If visitors had never rolled out lefse dough before into rounds they would discover that it is more difficult than it seems at first, and visitors familiar with the task would discover what it was like with nineteenth-century kitchen implements. The persuasion at work at the Kvaale farm with the rolling out of lefse is different than the rhetorical education provided by the rolling out of flatbrod at the Fossebrekke farm. Since lefse is a seasonally popular Norwegian food (and available year-round in places like Decorah, Iowa or the Twin Cities), Norwegian-American visitors have a chance to perform a familiar action in a foreign setting. Visitors familiar with lefse who participate in this activity, therefore, can see and do the familiar in an unfamiliar setting, persuading them that making lefse is more than a family tradition or a holiday treat: it is an activity that connects people in the present to the immigrants of a hundred or more years ago, who made lefse because it was a food from home. The ethos building in the lefse-making activity is more personal and speaks to existing emotional and sensory identifications with a Norwegian-American identity. By putting this activity into a historical context, Norwegian-American visitors gain a new perspective on a common

112Norwegian Americans’ love of lefse and other foods like lutefisk (dried cod that has been reconstituted in a lye bath, rinsed repeatedly to get the lye out, and then cooked and served with butter) is often puzzling to present-day Norwegians. While in the United States lefse and lutefisk have become markers of Norwegian-American identity (lutefisk in particular since its preparation and appearance are off-putting to many), in Norway these two foods are seen as more old-fashioned. In an article for Smithsonian, Erica Janik writes: “Despite its long history in Scandinavia, though, lutefisk has fallen out of favor now that few people need to preserve food to last all winter. In fact, the Norwegian national dish isn’t lutefisk or even fish-based; it’s farikal, a lamb and cabbage casserole.” The divide between Norwegian-American and Norwegian ideas of traditional cuisine is a good example of how a Norwegian-American ethos is just that—Norwegian-American and not Norwegian.
practice and can better appreciate why Norwegian immigrants were invested in maintaining foodways from Norway. At the Kvaale house, a lived Norwegian-American ethos that includes lefse-making and eating gains historical meaning and depth, perhaps not teaching a new action but still creating new identifications with the past.

Not all of the activities on the Norwegian farms at Old World Wisconsin have the potential to directly influence practices of Norwegian-American visitors, but they still work to build ethos by elucidating the lives that visitors' ancestors may have lived and creating a more complex representation of the past. The two farms in the Norwegian area present opportunities for Norwegian-American visitors to perform tasks that encourage them to think about the ways in which gender and age shaped the lives of their ancestors, complicating a monolithic understanding of the Norwegian-American experience and encouraging reflection about how age and gender still influence labor. In the Fossebrekke area one of the topics covered in the interpretive manual is titled “Women's Work Roles on the Pioneer Farm” (52). The two linked desired learner outcomes are: “Visitors will appreciate the amount of hard work immigrant women were required to do” and “Visitors will observe and participate in some domestic chores of a frontier farmstead” (54). By watching and participating in chores like laundry, washing floors, or even knitting, visitors can better understand the amount of work that immigrant women did around the house; furthermore, interpreters can discuss with visitors the gendered division of labor on Norwegian immigrant farms with men working in the fields and women taking care of the home and of the livestock (54-55). Similarly, on the Kvaale farm visitors learn that children were an important source of labor on immigrant farms
and that chores for children were divided by gender as well. The interpretive manual for the Anders Kvaale farm lists these desired learner outcomes:

2. By participating in some of the chores that immigrant children were required to perform on the farm, the museum's younger visitors will understand that the lives of their nineteenth century counterparts were filled with hard work.
3. Visitors will realize that most of the children's chores were gender specific. (54)

Many of the chores suggested for children are the same that adults might be invited to participate in as well: girls could card wool, roll out lefse or churn butter while boys could flail wheat, work the fanning mill or carry firewood (54). The activities on both the Fossebrekke and Kvaale farms give visitors a brief experience of the hard work that young and old, men and women performed and can create a sense of empathy even as visitors realize how different their lives are today. Women and girls who visit the museum have probably not had to churn butter and men and boys have probably never flailed wheat, but these chores help make real both the labor that went into farming in the nineteenth century and the gendered division of work. This work is persuasive because it creates an imaginative tie with the past and connects the visitors' imaginative work with physical labor, binding the identification to an action that visitors can return to either using their memory or by performing a similar task in the future.

The ethos construction that goes on in the activities visitors take part in at Old World Wisconsin differs from the ethos work that happens in handcraft classes at Vesterheim Norwegian American Museum because visitors to Old World Wisconsin are not necessarily encouraged to take up these activities back in their daily lives. Here the identity work is based more on giving Norwegian-American visitors a concrete
understanding of the kinds of lives their ancestors led than on giving these visitors a set of skills to take into their everyday lives. However, even though visitors are unlikely to flail their own wheat or churn their own butter, the experience of doing these activities certainly can influence visitors once they return to their daily lives. At the Kvaale farm exhibit, interpreters are encouraged to ask visitors questions like “What types of chores do children do today?” and “What types of chores were you assigned when you were a child?” (54). These questions get visitors to reflect on work and home life today but the questions also set visitors up to reflect upon the work they did at Old World Wisconsin when they return to their everyday activities, allowing them to compare what it was like to churn butter to mopping floors or going grocery shopping. By making the differences between nineteenth and twenty-first century living clear, the activities at Old World Wisconsin emphasize the foreignness of Norwegian-American immigrants lives. Even so, the activities still create an empathetic and physical connection to the past and can give Norwegian-American visitors a better sense of how their ancestors lived and can bring life to family and community histories, invigorating an ethos that might otherwise be seen as inconsequential in the present day. These activities can also lead to a lived ethos that incorporates actions learned at the museum into daily life. A Norwegian-American visitor might become interested in knitting or in spinning their own yarn after visiting the Kvaale house, or a family might become interested in flatbrod as an alternative to lefse. Even the simple act of returning to Old World Wisconsin to revisit the Norwegian area and learn new and different things about the people who lived on and worked the farms and who attended the school works as an act of lived ethos. The
rhetorical education available at Old World Wisconsin that uses action to incorporate visitors into the past and the past into visitors ensures that the museum will have a lasting impact on visitors' thinking about the past and how they consider their present-day actions in terms of history.

Conclusion

Old World Wisconsin uses visitors' identifications with the past in order to complicate monolithic interpretations of immigration to America, opting instead to represent the everyday and often difficult stories of immigrant groups. The museum could still do more to represent the history of Native peoples in Wisconsin, but its dedication to telling multiple stories about rural Wisconsin life make it a rich and complex site. The very diversity of the rhetorical education available at Old World Wisconsin makes it difficult to predict what visitors will take away and incorporate into their own ethos. The activities that engage visitors' empathy, senses, and that use physical action, however, guide visitors to connect a present-day, lived ethos with a complex and vivid understanding of the past. The use of empathy and the senses as rhetorical strategies at Old World Wisconsin help create ethos by enabling visitors to identify with the past in a more immediate way. These identifications help ground a lived ethos in a vision of the past that embraces complexity and difference. The opportunities to act provided by the museum further engage visitors in a vivid portrayal of the past and also invite visitors to imagine how they can use actions from the past in their present-day lives. Visitors can take up practices introduced at Old World Wisconsin in order to maintain identifications with the past and to enhance their
contemporary lives. By providing visitors chances to take the work of the museum into their everyday lives, Old World Wisconsin tries to persuade them to see the past as a resource for the present and to understand present-day actions and identifications in the context of history. Even though Old World Wisconsin does not teach a singular ethos, the opportunities the museum presents to create or further a lived ethos that identifies with certain groups, beliefs, and actions makes it a rich site of rhetorical education.

Future studies of regional and living history museums might work to better understand the effects these spaces and experiences have on visitors, analyzing how visitors understand and incorporate their visits into their identity or how they reflect on their experiences of these museums. Studies such as these would allow scholars of rhetoric to explore issues of how education transfers from institutions into daily life and also what motivates visitors to seek these experiences out in the first place. Learning who decides to visit museums like Old World Wisconsin can help rhetoricians understand the power dynamics underlying the motivation to learn about immigrant history and encourage further thought about how rhetorical education is important to generational interaction and not just institutions and audiences. For example, many school groups visit Old World Wisconsin, meaning that school administrators and teachers have decided that it is a valuable educational institution and that students have little choice in their decisions to go. Likewise, parents who decide to take the family to the museum for a weekend visit may make the decision on behalf of the entire family, or one parent might convince the other that visiting Old World Wisconsin is worthwhile.

Furthermore, future rhetorical work can study the acts of teaching and learning as
these occur at Old World Wisconsin and similar sites. Old World Wisconsin's curatorial and interpretive staff can only prepare so much for interactions that depend in part on what visitors bring with them to the museum in the form of questions and knowledge. The museum's vision of rhetorical education certainly illuminates important persuasive strategies and how these strategies prepare staff to persuade visitors into identifying with the past and taking those identifications with them when they leave the museum. However, studies of how these strategies are used in real time can further expand and complicate our understanding of how lived ethos is taught in a museum context.
Afterword: Reflections on Living and Teaching Ethos

The previous chapters have explored lived ethos in institutions that come from or appeal to the Norwegian-American community. Even though these chapters have not dealt with the more personal and familial dimensions of lived ethos, my own experiences of growing up and being taught how to be Norwegian American by my parents underlie the entire project. My parents introduced me to Sons of Norway, to handcraft classes at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, and took me to Old World Wisconsin despite my sometimes strong objections. If I complained too much (my sister was much less given to opposition) or asked why we all had to go to Little Norway or Old World Wisconsin again, they would say, “It's important to know your history.” This is what they taught me: history was not just history but my history, our history. The history I learned affected me and shaped my sense of self.

Of course, as a child I did not think about these issues in terms of ethos; I just knew that my mother was Polish and German but that she often acted like a Norwegian American and that she colluded with my Norwegian-American father to take me and my sister on “heritage trips” to learn about the Norwegian-American past. As a graduate student, I kept up my Norwegian-American identifications but did not think about them much in scholarly terms. I continued to practice hardangersøm, but I had yet to see the connection between my actions and my growing interest in ethos as a rhetorical concept.
However, leaving the upper Midwest for graduate school in Ohio revealed how thoroughly a Norwegian-American ethos permeated my life. My last name, hard enough for Wisconsinites to spell, proved nearly impossible for many students and faculty until I discovered the trick of explaining its etymology in order to make “Strandjord” easier to grasp. I baked Norwegian almond cakes, brought them to campus on Syttende Mai, and explained that Syttende Mai is Norwegian Constitution Day to people as they took slices of cake to eat. I introduced my friends to the important exclamation “uff da” and found it impossible to stop using the expression even when it confused the people around me. The attachment I felt to my Norwegian-American ethos seemed strange to the people I met; they usually saw my interests and language habits as quaint. As the time to decide on a dissertation project drew nearer, the more I began to wonder just why my Norwegian-American ethos mattered so much to me and why I deliberately incorporated Norwegian-American practices into my life. Eventually these questions coalesced around the linked ideas of ethos and rhetorical education and focused on the following:

How is ethos taught as a way of life?
What textual and non-textual practices create and pass on ethos?
How do non-majority communities maintain an ethos?
How do communities engage with the past in order to act in the present?

113“Strand” means “beach,” and “jord” means “earth” or “soil.” The farm the Strandjords came from in Norway was on a river, and “Strandjord” was the farm name. In nineteenth century Norway people could have up to two surnames. The first would be the father's first name with -son or -datter added at the end to indicate whether the person was a son or daughter of the father, and the second would be the farm name if the family owned land. The Strandjords who came over to the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century chose to keep Strandjord over Haagenson, apparently because “Strandjord” seemed more American to them.

114“Uff da” is an all-purpose exclamation, usually used to express sympathy, dismay, or tiredness. For example, if a person tells me that her car is broken, her cat is sick, and that someone spilled coffee on her this morning, I might reply, “Uff da!” before going on to sympathize. However, it is also appropriate to say “uff da” if you are feeling stiff and getting up from the couch is a little harder than usual. “Uff da” is a common phrase in the upper Midwest and understood outside the Norwegian-American community.
These questions led me back to the institutions I had visited as a child, and now I experienced these sites anew from a rhetorical and scholarly point of view. The case studies of Sons of Norway, Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, and Old World Wisconsin and the rhetoric and folklore theory that informed my analytical framework affirmed the importance of everyday acts and practices in the formation of an ethos meant to be lived out in daily life.

Each case study brings a different perspective on lived ethos and the rhetorical education that instills it because each institution exists in a different rhetorical context. Sons of Norway was and still is an organization that engages in public action and celebration. In the World War I and World War II era, the organization also took part in political work to establish the value of the Norwegian-American community and to defend Norwegians and Norwegian Americans against anti-immigrant suspicion. Sons of Norway entered the political arena by openly advocating for Norwegian Americans' presence in the United States and by defending the character of Norway in World War II. As an institution that provided financial aid, insurance, opportunities for fellowship, and education in Norwegian and Norwegian-American culture and life to its members, Sons of Norway worked to strengthen the Norwegian-American community in different arenas and in many different physical locations. The national (and international) scope of the organization meant that Sons of Norway had to work to appeal to people living in a variety of places and circumstances and to be flexible enough to change those appeals as circumstances changed.

From the end of World War II to the present there has been a major shift in the
rhetorical situation facing the Norwegian-American community. The community no longer needs to justify existing in the United States, and so Norwegian Americans are free to focus on the pleasures of living out a Norwegian-American ethos. True, a fear of losing culture and knowledge haunts the community. However, in contrast to the more precarious years following WWI, Norwegian Americans are free to focus on how they want their community to exist without fear of attacks from the outside. Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum serves the Norwegian-American community and others who are interested in ethnic history and handcrafts. The museum staff have dual purposes of preserving materials from the Norwegian-American past and present and of continuing handcraft traditions. Some of these traditions are seen as in danger of disappearing, while the success of other crafts have created challenges by virtue of becoming so widespread that Vesterheim no longer serves as the center of dissemination. Although still very real, the exigence of the education at the museum is based in the portrayal of Norwegian-American identifications and enjoyable rather than as necessary. Obligation still exists in that people who practice handcrafts are taught that without their participation these handcrafts will die out, but it is specific traditions that are at stake rather than an entire community.

As an institution, Old World Wisconsin does not come from or only serve the Norwegian-American community, appealing instead to Wisconsinites and tourists who are interested in the diverse immigrant past. As an institution created for the United States bicentennial and funded in large part by the state, the museum exists to serve a broad population and is subject to the Wisconsin Historical society and other government
entitites. Norwegian Americans have places in the museum that speak directly to them and depict a history both familiar and foreign. All visitors, however, encounter a variety of pasts at the museum and are encouraged to realize the diversity of experiences and lifeways that immigrants brought with them to the state. Old World Wisconsin takes histories that might only be known to specific communities and puts these pasts together in one location. Collecting diverse immigrant histories in one location makes visitors' experience of the museum more intense and allows for much comparative work as visitors move from area to area within the museum. Visitors encounter multiple stories of the pasts, many different sensory experiences, and representations of different time periods. The museum staff envision their work as doing history, and they work to balance rigorous research with appeal to visitors. The staff of Old World Wisconsin are not as anxious about loss of culture as the staff at Vesterheim are since they do not work with one specific group. However, the staff are concerned about maintaining the importance of history and convincing visitors of the value of the museum and the histories it represents, since its existence as a site depends on support from the public as well as the support of the government.

Despite the differences between the three institutions that form the focus of the case studies, common themes among the case studies demonstrate how lived ethos is taught in similar ways across time and in different locations. First, all three institutions make use of exemplars in teaching present day members and potential members of a community how to think and act in accordance with the community's values. From the admirable Norwegians and Norwegian Americans used by Sons of Norway to the
anonymous common folk held up by Kate Martinson and Harley Refsal to the contrasting exemplars in the Norwegian area of Old World Wisconsin, exemplars anchor the larger histories of a group and provide a way into the past that invites identification. The very range of people who can be used as exemplars suggests that exemplars do not necessarily limit the options present-day members of a group have when they look to the past to create an ethos in the present. However, it is important to remember that if the exemplars stray too far from how the community is defined then the exemplars can no longer serve to bring people into the community ethos by providing an example for admiration and imitation. Understanding exemplars and how communities use them to create an ethos that members live out is important not only because this understanding helps us see what a community values and welcomes but also because it shows what communities reject, even if only implicitly.

Second, Sons of Norway, the handcraft classes at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, and Old World Wisconsin all endorse the idea that history is important for deciding how to live in the present. This argument could seem clichéd (who has not heard that history matters?), but since each site presents local, smaller histories alongside the larger histories of nations and people, the argument is more nuanced. Rather than presenting overarching histories that present a single narrative, all three institutions tell histories that affirm difference and the everyday. True, Sons of Norway does tell larger-scale histories involving Leif Erikson's voyages to America and World War II, but even these come from a Norwegian and Norwegian-American perspective and provide a counter-narrative to standard histories of the United States
which rarely, if ever, include mentions of Norwegians and Norwegian Americans. Local and community-centered histories are important to lived ethos because these versions of the past provide a way for a community to proclaim its own value (having a history is one way to gain authority, and being denied history can remove it) and to give present-day members and potential members a way to understand their own lives in terms of the past. When my parents told me “It's important to know your own history,” they meant that I needed to know more than the standard history taught in school because that was only one version of the past. Community-focused histories allow groups to separate themselves out from the dominant culture and to argue that present-day identifications and actions are valid because of their roots in the past.

The importance of taking action in creating and cultivating a lived ethos is the final connecting thread that runs through Sons of Norway, Vesterheim, and Old World Wisconsin. Action and practice are the visible signs of a lived ethos. Whether the action involves retelling histories, gathering to sing Norwegian songs, nålbinding mittens, or visiting the Knud Fossebrekke house once again, it both expresses and creates ethos. The practices encouraged and taught by the three institutions I studied can all be pursued in everyday life as long as the materials for the practices are available. Sons of Norway is the most accessible institution since it has lodges across the United States, in several Canadian provinces, and in Norway. Members can also access information about Norway, Norwegian-American life in the United States, and ways to live out a Norwegian-American ethos through the organization's website. Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum and Old World Wisconsin are most accessible to people living in the
upper Midwest. However, after taking a handcraft class at Vesterheim or learning about heirloom gardening at Old World Wisconsin, people can take practices up in their daily lives even if the institution is far away. What sets lived ethos as a rhetorical practice apart is the emphasis on the everyday. The move into the everyday allows members and potential members of a community to naturalize their ethos and to strengthen community ties that might waver or wane if the ethos was brought out only for special occasions.

When a lived ethos is put into practice on a regular basis it sustains itself between the times when people come together in groups to celebrate and reaffirm their belonging to a community. I do not want to suggest that special occasions, celebrations, and holidays have no place in lived ethos. These events draw people who share a lived ethos together and allow them to affirm and strengthen their shared identifications. As I considered a project about rhetorical education and ethos in the Norwegian-American community, I was prompted equally by special occasion and everyday practices that I have taken part in. I remembered learning to make lefse from my mother: how I envied her ability to turn out circular lefse rounds that were paper thin while my own efforts produced torn, misshapen, and uneven rounds, and how she always told me “it's about how it tastes, not how it looks” when I was ready to give up. I remembered teaching myself hardangersøm and designing my first piece while writing this project (see fig. 18). Continuing my Norwegian-American practices while researching and writing this project became a way to connect my scholarly and everyday ethos.
The ways in which lived ethos weaves through scholarly analysis and everyday life gives this concept the potential to teach rhetoric in a way that goes beyond speeches, written texts, and visual compositions. The linked frameworks of exemplars, history, and practice can teach students how to look for rhetoric in new places. Undergraduates are often concerned about finding their place in the world and are making decisions about how they want to live their lives, and so the concept of lived ethos has the potential to be personally significant as well as analytically powerful. In the spring of 2012, I taught an introduction to rhetoric course in which I began the term by having the students keep a rhetoric diary for twenty-four hours. The students tried to write down each instance of
rhetoric they encountered over the course of a day, a task which many found impossible as they began to see more and more persuasion around them. Many noted advertisements they saw, presidential campaign materials, or conversations they had with roommates about why it was the roommate's turn to do the dishes. One especially open-minded student noted that his cat meowed in a very rhetorical manner in the morning when the cat thought it was time for breakfast. This opening exercise for the class encouraged the students to see rhetoric in the everyday, and as the term progressed they widened the scope of what they considered rhetoric and grew savvier about seeing it in non-textual locations. Another student discussed in her final project the rhetoric of choosing a seat in a classroom and how it could affect a student's self-conception as well as the instructor's perception of the student. She showed an awareness of how placing the self in a space in a certain way can affect ethos.

Even though my students developed increasingly complex and nuanced understandings of rhetoric over that spring term, if I taught the rhetoric diary again I would focus the assignment on ethos. Students would do the diary twice (once at the beginning of the term and once at the end) so that they could compare their initial observations and later ones, and both times they would record how they worked to express and create their ethos over the course of one day. They could use the exemplars/history/practice framework to guide their entries, and the following questions could help them think about ethos as they got started:

1) Who do I imitate as I go throughout my day?
2) When I act in a specific way, is it because I am trying to be like someone I admire?
3) What thoughts about my own past or the past of a group/organization/
nation that I belong to? How have these thoughts affected my actions, thoughts, and speech?
4) What things have I done today that I do on a regular basis? Why do I do them regularly, and why are these practices important to me? What other people also do these things on a regular basis? Do I identify with other people who also do these things on a regular basis?
5) What have I done today that is unusual? Why did I do it? Is what I did something other people do on a regular basis? Do I see myself as being like these people or as being different?

Having students reflect on their daily lives and how rhetoric permeates the everyday is important because they become more attuned to how ethos is constructed not only in obviously rhetorical moments—job interviews, speeches, etc.—but also in small and everyday ways, like choosing a seat in class. Teaching students to be aware of lived ethos can help them see how their actions affiliate them with certain communities and how the histories and exemplars they hold to inform their sense of self. Rhetoric as a subject has great potential to create awareness and to cultivate agency, and lived ethos supports this work by helping students see how they can practice their way into certain identities. Lived ethos also supports the work of the rhetoric classroom by illuminating how ethos and community are constructed through the use of exemplars, history, and practice. Students can use lived ethos not only to cultivate their own identities but also as a way to understand how communities (whether their own or not) create and sustain an identity that unites members.

In scholarship and the classroom, lived ethos can be a way to understand the self and the communities surrounding the self. Lived ethos invites scholars and students alike to consider how everyday rhetorical acts shape the world around us and lead to complex identifications that cannot be reduced to a single label like “American.” The move to a
more complicated understanding of ethos as it is lived in daily life supports an understanding of individuals and communities as complicated, shifting, and most importantly, mutually sustaining. Lived ethos enables a rich understanding of identity and rhetorical strategies that use the past to shape the present and opens doors for analysis, reflection, and pedagogy.

Figure 19: The author works on her nålbinding. Photograph courtesy of Katherine DeLuca.
Bibliography


Fossum-Martin, Darlene. Personal interview. 20 July 2012.


- - -. Personal interview. 20 July 2012.


