

ancestral culpability” (p. 236). Her ability to bridge Scandinavian Studies and American Indian Studies in concert with her other disciplinary lenses makes this volume an invaluable contribution to respective scholarly communities and to the attentive public.

Hansen’s research has led me to question the silences in my own family’s narratives. Norwegian immigrants on my mother’s side also homesteaded on the Spirit Lake Reservation after World War I, but with no living voices to tell their stories, my curiosity about their situation has been exponentially fueled by Hansen’s narrative. As the waves of the record high waters of Devils Lake have eroded and altered the landscape of North Dakota in the past decades, so, too, can Hansen’s book serve as a powerful agent that begins to modify the cultural landscape of prairie residents’ current and remembered pasts.

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■ David M. Krueger. *Myths of the Rune Stone: Viking Martyrs and the Birthplace of America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. Pp. ix + 213.

David M. Krueger takes a new perspective on an old, and arguably tired, debate about the Kensington Rune Stone, one of Minnesota’s most curious cultural artifacts. Krueger’s fields of research as a scholar are religious history and theology. As opposed to the “myth-busters” style approach that questions the Kensington Stone’s linguistic, historical, and geographical legitimacy, Krueger instead explores what he terms “the cult of the Kensington Rune Stone”—the popular devotion to the stone and its mythic narratives (p. 7). *Myths of the Rune Stone* uses the Kensington Rune Stone as a way to explore Scandinavian American collective identity, religious history, and American founding myths. Krueger’s study relies on Robert Bellah’s work on American civil religion as well as Émile Durkheim’s work on forms of religious life to explain how popular belief in the Rune Stone is a form of American civil religion.

Myths of the Rune Stone is a chronological examination of various enduring Kensington Rune Stone myths, which show “how belief in the Kensington Rune Stone helped Minnesotans cope with a variety of social challenges in the twentieth century” (p. 10). Chapter I, “Westward from Vinland: An Immigrant Saga by Hjalmar Holand,” details the history of the Kensington Rune Stone and its gallery of characters. The chapter focuses most attention on Hjalmar Holand’s “rediscovery” and enthusiastic “crusade” for the recognition of the rune stone’s acceptance

(pp. 26, 29). Chapter 2, “Knutson’s Last Stand: Fabricating the First White Martyrs of the American West,” analyzes the significance the 1862 Dakota War had on the stone’s inscription and how this expanded its importance to a broader white population. This chapter details how the inscription’s claim that the Viking migrants were found “red with blood and dead” was commonly believed (or, in Holand’s words, “is so plain that it scarcely needs an explanation”) to be at the hands of native Indians, or “skrælings,” the term used in the Icelandic Vinland sagas of North American natives (p. 41). This belief bolstered the then-emergent argument for pre-Columbian American migration and origin myths as a way to confront external enemies. Chapter 3, “In Defense of Main Street: The Kensington Rune Stone as a Midwestern Plymouth Rock,” explores the regional and economic appeal of the Kensington Rune Stone. The marginalization of Main Street, as put forth in Sinclair Lewis’s 1920 novel, justified flamboyant marketing of the rune stone as an ancient American artifact. The chapter enumerates the monuments, pageants, plays, and traveling promotions—from Minneapolis to Washington, DC—that were dedicated to the Kensington Rune Stone. Kreuger’s chapter makes it clear that the promotion of the rune stone contributed to a positive reputation of rural, small-town Minnesotans as well as the local tourist economy. Chapter 4, “Our Lady of the Runestone and America’s Baptism with Catholic Blood,” details how the Catholic Church capitalized on the national publicity of the Kensington Rune Stone’s visit to the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, DC. As Scandinavians worshipped in the Roman Catholic Church in 1362, the alleged time of the inscription’s carving, “local Catholic leaders used the rune stone to claim Minnesota as a uniquely Catholic place and demonstrate that Catholics were true Americans” (p. 93). Chapter 5, “Immortal Rock: Cold War Religion, Centennials, and the Return of the Skrælings,” addresses the US Christian resurgence of the 1950s and the way this national trend appropriated the myth of the Kensington Rune Stone. For those of the era who claimed Christianity to be the original religion of the United States, the story of the Rune Stone provided fodder for, or “resurrected,” new imaginative narratives defending the Christian faith. This chapter also discusses how these new, enthusiastic narratives questioned the credibility of academia and depended on popular distrust of academic institutions. Kreuger’s conclusion also touches on contemporary Kensington Rune Stone enthusiasts, but explains that “they expend a great deal of energy speculating on who *might* have been in North America prior to Columbus rather than on the people who were known to be here” (p. 154). Overall, Kreuger concludes that the Kensington Rune Stone, despite being a fascinating and unifying Scandi-

navian American artifact, served ultimately to marginalize the indigenous peoples of northern Minnesota, the region's actual first inhabitants.

Myths of the Rune Stone is a revision of Krueger's PhD dissertation. Krueger, a Minnesota native from a farm not far from Alexandria and Kensington, takes a respectful tone toward both enthusiasts and deniers. His project focuses on the discourse surrounding identity creation, rather than on proving or disproving historical truths. Krueger writes in clear, engaging, and entertaining prose, which makes the book suitable for a popular readership, as well as for an academic one. *Myths of the Rune Stone* would fit well on a university syllabus, for example, in a heritage course on Scandinavian America or in a course on American religion. It could equally well make an engaging choice for a book club list or a reading group in a historical or fraternal society. One curiosity of particular interest to the readership of *Scandinavian Studies* is that Krueger's bibliography, despite being loaded with a creative variety of sources and archival material, lacks Scandinavian-language sources.

Krueger's project is quite timely, as the State of Minnesota is in the middle of a sort of rebranding crisis. Public figures—most notably Eric Dayton (son of Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton, as well as a member of the Dayton family, which founded the Target Corporation)—are seeking to repackage the state's identity by renaming its region: the antiquated "Midwest" will no longer do; in its place, the hipper "North" seeks to better portray all the region has to offer. For details on this trend, see Dayton's popular TED Talk, or search the Twitter hashtag #teamnorth (Steve Marsh, "What is North?," *Mpls St Paul*, November 19, 2015, <http://mspmag.com/Best-of-the-Twin-Cities/2015/What-is-North/>). The relevance here is that marketing Minnesota as being part of "The North" relies intimately on the region's ties to its Scandinavian roots; the term arguably equates the region with Scandinavia. Krueger's book illustrates how this rebranding, or call to Scandinavian authenticity, has a long history in Minnesota—and he uses the encryption on the Kensington Rune Stone to illustrate the phenomenon. Alert to land-taking myths and loci of civil religion, Krueger shows his readers how an artifact can successfully generate group pride, even while "proclamations of exceptionalism [about it are] wedded to assertions of victimhood"; such claims have provided a foundation for leaders to use the Kensington Rune Stone "to advance persecution narratives" that ignore "their own privileged status as white, Christian Americans" (p. 155). *Myths of the Rune Stone* illuminates a debate about collective identity that is ever relevant to today's Minnesota.

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