Narratives of Immigration and Language Loss: Lessons from the German American Midwest

By Maris R. Thompson

(Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2018. Pp. xviii, 141. Appendices, references, index. Clothbound, $95.00; paperbound, $38.99.)

Scholars interested in how German Americans experienced anti-German hostility in the United States during the world wars will find that Maris R. Thompson's deeply researched book, *Narratives of Immigration and Language Loss: Lessons from the German American Midwest*, persuasively argues for using narrative to analyze the early twentieth-century history of German Americans, who in 1914 constituted the largest non-English speaking immigrant group in the United States. Drawing on theories of linguistic anthropology, methods of narrative analysis, and ethnographic studies, Thompson demonstrates how narratives about anti-German sentiment shed light on central elements of the Americanization process: the discrimination and language loss that disrupted this ethnic group's communities and silenced oral transmission of their experiences to subsequent generations.

After making a strong case for using personal narratives to reconstruct immigrant history, Thompson discusses the historical context of German immigration to the Midwest, anti-German sentiment during the two world wars, and German-language schooling. She then explains her definition of "origin stories": accounts of a family's emigration to the United States (p. 37). Thompson next introduces readers to unique insights revealed in her corpus of forty-five interviews, conducted with second- through fourth-generation German Americans in German-origin communities in southwestern Illinois (Clinton and Washington Counties). Transcriptions and analyses of select narratives appear in the next chapter, highlighting, for example, a letter from a village clerk to the chairman of the auxiliary committee (1918), asking how to respond to German Americans who display treasonous behavior. Thompson shares her transcription conventions and a complete list of her interview questions in two appendices.

Thompson cites familiar examples to provide historical context, noting the more than ten thousand German-language newspapers still being published in 1914 and Robert Prager's lynching in Illinois in 1918, to name just two. But the author's detailed and insightful analyses of interviews add unique, previously silent first-person voices that vitalize this history.

Chapter five presents another original finding: Thompson observes that the lexical, interactional, and textual strategies that German-origin participants used to describe their Americanization experiences also surfaced in their discussion of Latino immigrants to the

two counties. As Thompson suggests, these strategies reveal the participants' at times contradictory ideological attitudes toward Latino immigrants with respect to assimilation. These findings are relevant today: they can help us contextualize how we view contemporary white communities whose members display hostility to new immigrants. The author also considers whether the participants' narratives reflect shared structural and linguistic conventions that create a sense of belonging to the German-origin community. Narratives of origin, Thompson argues, give us "an opportunity to see identity construction up close," that is, to see how individuals position and define themselves as members of a particular social group (p. 11).

As this book demonstrates, personal narratives can enhance our understanding of the German language loss that occurred when members of this community stopped speaking German at home, in schools, and in their community. Some were forced to do so by national Americanization campaigns and language-restriction laws, while others decided that speaking English was the most expedient choice.

Readers may want to read more transcriptions and instructive analyses of the fascinating personal narratives Thompson collected or ask whether the extensive references to secondary literature in earlier chapters would disrupt the flow of Thompson's scholarly narrative less if they were moved to footnotes. For future work on this topic, the recent centennial of the First World War produced scholarship that could offer fresh insights into the forced assimilation of German Americans.

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Pickin' Cotton on the Way to Church: The Life and Work of Father Boniface Hardin, OSB

By Nancy Van Note Chism

(Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2019. Pp. i, 175. Illustrations, index. $24.95.)

Pickin' Cotton on the Way to Church is a story of the life and work of Father Boniface Hardin (1933–2012), a Benedictine priest committed to a life of service and witness at a time when Black Catholic clerics were extremely rare. Based largely on oral interviews with Hardin and around forty other people who knew him, it is also a story of the community he served, for his life was inextricably intertwined with the people he loved in Indianapolis. And