

as rhetoric unconnected to the concrete proposals Populists advocated, Kazin tends to psychologize this rhetoric, thus making it appear at times pathological.

Kazin often gives the impression that populism's shift from left to right resulted from inherent tendencies of populist language. When Kazin connects Father Coughlin's attacks on the "money power" to an earlier rhetorical tradition, for example, he implies that Coughlin's eventual embrace of anti-Semitism involved no more than the logical outworking of populist discourse.

Kazin's approach becomes problematic in other ways, too. In a society with broad electoral participation, almost all political movements attempt to appeal to "the people," and it is therefore possible to detect some kind of populist discourse almost anywhere. In finding populist language in the CIO and in the 1960s student movement, however, Kazin winds up with a highly elastic definition of populism that seemingly could be applied to almost any political movement. The result is that the concept of populism sometimes loses analytical precision.

Kazin's approach yields numerous rich insights about the strengths, limitations, ironies, and contradictions of populist language. However, the class composition of particular populist movements, the proposals such movements advocated, and the broader institutional and political contexts in which such movements emerged, flourished, and declined all deserve fuller attention. At a time when populism's current manifestations seem deeply troubling, *The Populist Persuasion* is essential reading for everyone concerned about American politics.

Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan, by Nancy MacLean. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. xviii, 292 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$30.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT NEYMEYER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

In the mid-1920s, the Ku Klux Klan attracted millions of Americans to the fiery cross. The Klan achieved an immense amount of political and social influence despite a tarnished and violent history. Historians have interpreted the origins and significance of the movement in different ways. Scholars in the 1960s saw it as an aberration, a brief eruption of marginal social and economic groups that had no serious consequence. More recently, however, historians have portrayed it as an important populist reaction to the negative aspects of modernity. Its adherents were middle-class people who used the Klan to address real social concerns, rather than extremists trying to redress the racial, religious, and ethnic imbalances in society.

Nancy MacLean takes issue with both these interpretations in a book that certainly will expand the discussion of the meaning and impact of conservative movements in the United States. Drawing on the records of a klavern in Athens, Georgia, the author contends that the Klan represented a rebellion of lower middle-class white males who sought to preserve their precarious status against the rising forces of radical unionism, racial and ethnic minorities, and women demanding equality. This reactionary populism was also anti-elitist, as Klan members believed that the disruption in their lives was being orchestrated by political and economic leaders seeking to improve their own situations. Using tactics ranging from intimidation to lynching, Klan members fought to preserve what they understood to be "pure Americanism" against the threat from "alien forces."

Rather than placing the movement within the context of American exceptionalism, however, MacLean views the Klan in the context of international fascism. Like its European counterpart, it blended anti-elitism with anti-communism; it rejected the heritage of Enlightenment reason in favor of symbolism, ritualism, and emotion. Finally, it subordinated democratic traditions to rule by a minority legitimized by nationalism. As in Germany, it targeted Jews who it believed undermined national culture, radical unionists who advocated bolshevism, and assertive women who threatened "traditional" family values. Some targets were uniquely American, such as African Americans opposed to Jim Crow and Roman Catholics who persisted in "treasonous loyalty" to the Pope. Although the Klan did not represent all fascist traits, MacLean argues that there were enough to make the comparison meaningful.

Given the similarities, why was the Klan less successful than its European cousins? The author concludes that its failure was due to the anti-Klan actions of responsible leaders and the resistance to the Klan on the part of those the Klan would oppress most: workers, women, and African Americans. Their defiance, in the face of middle-class complacency, weakened the Klan until it lost momentum. In a final comment, MacLean speculates about the recent revival of the threat of the 1920s.

Given its strictest reading, MacLean's book contends that millions of Klan members were not socially concerned advocates but counter-revolutionary zealots who would destroy democratic institutions and subordinate the will of the majority to the value system of the few. The validity of the interpretation will be sharply questioned. Did a monolithic Klan elite speak for all its members, or was the Klan so decentralized and concerned with local issues that no real unified ideology emerged? For example, Iowa klaverns had only limited allegiance to

and contact with national headquarters. Can the records of a single Georgia klavern represent all Klan units in the nation? Did the Klan fail due to organized resistance or did it disintegrate from within? In Iowa the factors leading to the Klan's demise varied from county to county. Further, how did the elite and the middle class respond to the ideas of the Klan? In Iowa the Klan received both middle-class support and opposition, but there was little in the way of union or gender protest. There was, however, organized African American opposition.

Further research will provide more complete responses to these questions as well as analyze the MacLean thesis. The answers will be critical in our understanding and characterization of conservative social movements.

Forging New Freedoms: Nativism, Education, and the Constitution, 1919–1927, by William G. Ross. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. x, 277 pp. Illustrations, notes, indexes. \$40.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY LAWRENCE O. CHRISTENSEN, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI–ROLLA

William Ross traces the influence of three United States Supreme Court decisions on the United States Constitution. All three cases involved state laws that sought to limit the use of foreign languages in private schools. The state of Oregon went so far as to outlaw private schools by making attendance at public schools compulsory. In all three decisions, the Court ruled against the states. These decisions, according to Ross, inaugurated "a new era of judicial activism, extending to the present day, in which the Supreme Court has jealously and often zealously protected civil liberties from intrusion by state legislatures" (6). Ross contends that in these decisions, the Court expanded the scope of the Fourteenth Amendment to include civil liberties and began a path of interpretation that resulted in the incorporation of the Bill of Rights into state law.

The author sets the stage for these dramatic events by briefly tracing expressions of nativism that resulted in curtailing instruction in foreign languages, mostly German, before World War I. He then discusses the war's impact on nativism, pointing out that in Minnesota and Wisconsin, the large number of Germans protected them from anti-German laws, but Nebraska and Iowa's "German community was large enough to attract the attention and fears of nativists but not large enough to protect itself easily from nativistic assaults" (42). Iowa became the only state to ban the use of the German language during the war.

Interestingly, nativism increased after the war. During 1919 alone nineteen states passed laws that restricted the teaching of foreign languages. By the end of that year, when wartime measures are added,

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