

Anti-intellectualism in American Media: Magazines and Higher Education. By Dane S. Clausson. New York: Peter Lang, 2003. 280 pp. ISBN 0820457213.

For several years scholars, journalists, and political commentators from the world over have been grappling with the political culture surrounding George W. Bush's presidency. Dane S. Clausson's latest book, *Anti-intellectualism in American Media: Magazines and Higher Education*, suggests itself as a dissident voice within this political climate. At a time when society questions whether or not concerned citizens are "properly" informed or educated, it is appropriate that many, including Clausson himself, should look to the anti-intellectual bias in American media for answers. This book argues that popular print media participates in a Gramscian hegemonic structure that is buttressed in turn by an educational system that discourages intellectual pursuits. Clausson suggests that increased vocationalism and career-oriented curricula have been portrayed by the media as a movement toward democratization and egalitarianism with the implicit task of rendering universities accountable to the "real world"—and that these discourses conceal an underlying current of anti-intellectualism.

The book explores the complicity of five popular magazines—*Life*, *Reader's Digest*, *Time*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *Nation's Business*—in the dissemination of anti-intellectualism between the years 1944 and 1998. The intent is two pronged: to answer whether national magazine coverage of higher education (student life, students, and curricula) has contributed to or reflected American anti-intellectualism and whether the popular print media is capable of resisting this trend. Divided in seven chapters, this book ambitiously attempts to chart the historical changes that have occurred since 1944 as regards higher education in America, to provide a detailed critical summary of the literature written about anti-intellectualism, to compare and contrast theoretical and methodological approaches for analyzing media and their potential in the analysis of anti-intellectualism, and, lastly, to compile and describe the textual evidence supporting Daniel Rigney's three kinds of anti-intellectualism: religious anti-rationalism, the contempt expressed toward reason and rationalism; populist anti-elitism, the contempt of "progressive politics" and the "patrician class"; and unreflective instrumentalism, the contempt of knowledge for knowledge's sake (pp. 20-21).

I question, though, Clausson's decision to organize his evidence according to Brian Rigney's three-pronged definition of American anti-intellectualism, for it seems to have incited him to analyze the years between 1944 and 1998 as a coherent historical period deserving a synchronic approach. This method has certain advantages. For one, it allowed Clausson to imply that Rigney's forms of anti-intellectualism were consistent and secured throughout this entire period. It also validates Rigney's theory in a contemporary setting. Thirdly, it qualifies anti-intellectualism as a deeply ingrained cultural trait within the United States. Nevertheless, this method ignores historical variables that would inform how the popular print media contributed to intellectual history and whether certain forms of anti-intellectualism were more prominent at certain periods in time and what reasons account for their variation. In fact, historical issues could easily have been raised without discarding Rigney's theory. Of the hundreds of articles cited in the last three chapters, there were less than 10 articles dating from the 1990s, 1980s, or the 1940s, respectively. The greater volume of cited evidence is concentrated between 1950 and 1970.

It is not unreasonable to expect a diachronic analysis, as it would be entirely consistent with the book's introduction, wherein the author delineates the history of higher education since the 1940s. In this section, the author notes the significance of contextualizing media coverage historically and delineates important landmarks that have contributed to the increase of instrumentalism and the professionalization of the intellectual throughout U.S. history. Ironically, more than any other section of the book, the introduction concretely sit-

uates the historical variables that are only later implied throughout the work, the most important milestone being the passing of the G.I. Bill of Rights by the United States Congress in 1944 that opened up college doors to returning veterans and marked the beginning of a mass attendance at the institution. It is the history of higher education detailed in this section that validates the author's selection of the time period. Despite significant cultural changes that have occurred since 1944, Clausson prefers to downplay noteworthy changes to accommodate a synchronic approach. As already mentioned, the voluminous textual evidence from the 1950s and 1960s risks impressing upon the other decades considered in this study, which may or may not be consistent with them.

The book's greatest shortcoming lies in its formal structure. I wonder why, for example, the introduction dedicated to the history of higher education preceded the first chapter "How Smart Is Too Smart?" which introduces his proposed research in light of anecdotal evidence of contemporary anti-intellectualism. Similarly, chapters 2 and 3, "American Intellectual History, Anti-Intellectualism, and the Mass Media" and "Media Among Society's Institutions: The Most Prominent and Dynamic Part," which are rich reviews of the literature, rarely inform the latter half of the book. Aside from Richard Hofstadter and David Rigney's theories, which are comprehensively presented throughout the entire work, few of the other theorists invoked are incorporated in the analysis of Clausson's findings. Foucault, Habermas, Raymond Williams, Edward Said, Allan Bloom, and Noam Chomsky are only a few of the scholars reviewed here, and they do not inform the research other than to provide the reader with a plethora of alternative definitions of intellectualism, of hypothetical approaches that the book could have adopted but didn't, or to foreground the lack of content analysis carried out with anti-intellectualism in mind. I don't mean to imply that these chapters are superfluous. They are not. Clausson's review of the literature is extensive and clearly demonstrates his expertise in the field; nonetheless, the book's episodic structure weakens its persuasive appeal.

Clausson's analysis of popular magazines is a significant contribution to communication and cultural studies if only because this book clearly points to the considerable shortage of research dedicated to anti-intellectual content in popular media and the apparent richness of material available for further analysis. Regardless of the weaknesses in Clausson's approach, the evidence brought to the fore does substantiate Rigney's theory of American anti-intellectualism. Clausson's research suggests that popular print media contribute to the devaluation of knowledge for knowledge's sake; he demonstrates how the print media overpoweringly trivializes academic work, promotes education as a means to greater financial gain or the acquisition of a job; and finally, how it prefers to document the affective and social dimension of the university experience over and above the actual education itself. Furthermore, the review of the literature may seem abnormally lengthy and occasionally misplaced within the confines of this book, but considered independently, it constitutes a valuable resource to anyone wishing to pursue research in this area. Both the review of the literature and the articles cited allude to intersections between homophobia, sexism, ageism, and anti-intellectualism, all of which are understandably beyond the immediate scope of Clausson's analysis but suggest exciting avenues for future research.

Rachel Cyr
Concordia University