

elling to every reader, but Skei wisely included an index and one may also consult the informative table of contents for guidance. I recommend anyone interested in Faulkner or Southern literature to make room on their shelves for *Faulkner and Other Southern Writers: Literary Essays*.

Sandra Lee Kleppe

University of Tromsø

Jørn Brøndal, *Ethnic Leadership and Midwestern Politics. Scandinavian Americans and the Progressive Movement in Wisconsin, 1890-1914*. Northfield, Minnesota: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 2004. 379 pages; ISBN 0-87732-095-0; \$40.00 hb.

Professor Jørn Brøndal received his PhD from the University of Copenhagen in 1999, where he presently teaches courses in the field of ethnicity and political development in the United States. In the intervening years he has made numerous presentations at conferences and published a variety of articles dealing with these subjects, including "The Concept of Being Scandinavian-American" (with Dag Blanck) in the pages of this journal in 2001. All circle around and draw upon the focus of his dissertation entitled *National Identity and Midwestern Politics*, as does the book being reviewed here, which recently has been given the prestigious 2005 Wisconsin Historical Society Book Award of Merit.

Brøndal's stated intentions for this work are to 1) "investigate the working of [Wisconsin's] political system that accorded ethnic considerations a certain role in politics"; 2) "analyze the challenge to this politics of tradition mounted by the progressive movement of Wisconsin"; and, supplementary to this, 3) "address the question of why so many Scandinavian-Americans spokesmen joined Wisconsin's progressive movement under the charismatic leadership of Robert Marion La Follette" (3). To this end the book is organized into three parts corresponding to these intentions – Part One: Structures; The Scandinavian Americans and the Politics of Tradition (145 pp.), Part Two: Dynamics: The Progressive Assault on Tradition (62 pp), and finally Part Three: Values; A Set of Scandinavian-American Political Principles? (50 pp) – the remaining 122 pages of the book are given over to appendices, notes, and index.

Part One consists of five chapters, four of which concern themselves with central social structures creating a Scandinavian-American identity and the relationship of these structures to the political system that existed before the onset of the progressive movement – though there is significant contextual overlap into the progressive era. The structures chosen are 1) the political and cultural environment within which a Scandinavian-Americans identity developed, 2) the role of the church, 3) that of secular societies such as mutual aid societies and the temperance movement, and 4) of the Scandinavian-American press. The section then concludes with a chapter which investigates overtly political Scandinavian-American organizations such political clubs and farmer and labor radical movements and then goes on to chart the

entrance of Scandinavian-Americans into the established associational political system of Wisconsin. A central point of this chapter is that, prior to progressivism, political offices in Wisconsin were distributed according to a matrix of four factors; party, locality, personality and nationality. Brøndal provides examples of these factors at work on both the local and state levels, particularly through the career of Congressman Nils P. Hagen, who spanned both the traditional and the progressive eras of Wisconsin politics.

This section has its clear virtues. It provides a new and interesting comparative perspective on the development of its chosen structures in all three Scandinavian groups – incidentally confirming, though not necessarily explaining the political dominance of the Norwegian Americans. The object here is to chart the invention of a Scandinavian-American identity. A difficulty with this effort is the lack of a clear theoretical definition of what exactly such an ethnic identity might consist. Nonetheless, an empirical description is developed through extensive and detailed scholarship, making this the longest part of the book. Brøndal then shows how Scandinavian-American political leaders within the dominant Republican Party mobilized voters on the basis of this identity, interlinking it with party, personality and locality. As he puts it, “the charm of this type of reasoning was that arguments were reduced to mere labels ... With labels, politicians could communicate with their voters in a manner that diminished the threat of conflict”(105).

He goes on to chart the increasing number of Scandinavian-American politicians in the State Assembly and State Senate in the period 1890 – 1914, making the important observation that the “nationality argument” had more power on the assembly level, a fact he attributes to the larger regional units of the senate districts which encompassed many ethnic groups. This made an appeal to only Scandinavian Americans a two-edged sword. In sum, the very basis that made a Scandinavian-American politician strong locally within the traditional associational political system could be a source of weakness on a higher level, a point which is driven home when following the political career of Congressman Nils P. Haugen.

It is in this context that Brøndal then turns in Part Two to the development of the Progressive Movement of the state as an alternative to traditional associational “politics as usual” and therefore a way out of the political limitations of Scandinavian-American identity. It begins with a review of the roots of the progressivism as an insurgent movement within the Republican Party under its instigator and leader, Robert La Follette. A contrast is drawn between this new and dynamic political force and the older Scandinavian-American institutions that “were part of an old and largely fixed structure”(145). The paradox that Brøndal sets out to explain is how a political movement like progressivism “that had among its many goals the eradication of the ethnic factor from politics”(146) managed to become genuinely popular among precisely such an ethnic group – the Scandinavian Americans. To that end, two political events are examined closely – 1) the alliance of Nils P. Haugen with Robert La Follette during Haugen’s failed attempt to gain the Republican nomination for Governor in

1894 and 2) the contest for that same nomination between two Scandinavian-American candidates in 1906, during the high tide of progressivism.

The first is used to illustrate that it was precisely La Follette's willingness to support Haugen as a political reformer, rather than as a "Scandinavian American" that attracted Haugen. It removed him from the corral of ethnicity and gave him an opportunity to become a statewide political figure. Although Haugen's attempt to break the power of the traditional party elite failed, it exemplifies Brøndal's point that Scandinavian-American politicians were attracted to the Progressive Movement because it freed them from the constraints of ethnicity by recruiting candidates on the basis of issues and principles. In effect, it viewed them as politicians first and Scandinavian Americans second. In contrast, the contest in 1906 between Norwegian American James O. Davidson (Jens Ole Davidson) and Swedish American Irvine L. Lenroot is used to show the durability of the ethnic factor among Scandinavian Americans in state politics.

Briefly, when then Governor La Follette decided to take Wisconsin's vacant United States Senate seat in 1905, his Lieutenant Governor James O. Davidson inherited the position for the remainder of the term – one year. When a Republican nominee for the post was to be chosen in 1906, La Follette dropped Davidson and supported his own candidate, Lenroot – effectively trying to name his own successor. Ironically, Davidson then successfully contested this and won the Republican nomination in the state's direct primary, that most typical of all progressive reforms. Brøndal contends that Davidson's success can be attributed to his successful appeal to the Scandinavian-American community, which may also have been alienated by La Follette's apparent highhandedness. His conclusion is that in 1906 "the nationality issue proved to be very powerful. La Follette...had succeeded in changing the rules and the language of the political game, but not sufficiently to assure an outcome in defiance of underlying structures of tradition and power"(199). Thus "the nationality consideration was not rooted out of politics completely, even through it was weakened"(203).

Of the two events, Brøndal makes his most convincing arguments about the first. It seems clear that Scandinavian-American politicians did gain new opportunities within the Republican Party through the Progressive Movement, as is made clear in the book's statistical surveys. On the other hand, the argument that Davidson's defeat of Lenroot can be ascribed to playing the ethnic card is less convincing. Although Davidson may not have had the respect or support of either La Follette or Haugen, Brøndal notes that he "boasted a rather impressive reform record" (191) and could claim the title of progressive, an attractive quality in itself to Scandinavian Americans. Also, Brøndal speaks of Davidson's "implicit criticism of Fighting Bob's battling style" by making a "plea for a good working relationship between the legislators and the governor" and promising "a good 'business administration'" (191). These strike me as deft political blows towards a politician who was, after all, trying rather highhandedly to control the nomination process he had himself reformed – not as deviations from a progressive movement, which was clearly split between the two

candidates. Yes, Davidson played the Scandinavian-American card, but it is doubtful if this won him the election. In sum, the waters of the 1906 nomination contest are a bit too muddied to draw any hard and fast conclusions. However, this does not undermine Brøndal's ultimate conclusion, that ethnicity continued to play an important role in the political life of the state, including the Scandinavian-American community.

Part Three of the book takes up the most difficult issue of all, "Did Scandinavian-American ... identities actually incorporate certain political values associated with the Republican Party?" (208). Was there such a thing as a Scandinavian-American political identity? It is notoriously difficult to pin down something as amorphous as cultural values in terms of concrete political actions. Brøndal examines three possible sources of evidence when grappling with this question; first, the contents of 2223 letters published in the Scandinavian-language press during the years 1890 to 1914; second, an analysis of the degree to which arguments concerning democratic reform in the Scandinavian countries were carried over into the debate about progressivism in America; finally, a brief analysis of the voting patterns among the Scandinavian-American members of the Wisconsin Assembly. All three sources concern themselves with the leaders of the communities, rather than a broad survey of the communities themselves. None can be thought of as conclusive, nor are they claimed to be. Regarding the letters, Brøndal notes that "the invocation of ... (Scandinavian-American) identity was particularly popular in unreflecting 'organizational' letters as well as in letters blending practical politics with value considerations. In those letters, thoughts about identity often took the form of vague reasonings about honesty and wisdom." He concludes, rather plaintively, that a "minority of letters did nevertheless grapple with Scandinavian-American political identity in more substantial fashion" (226). True. This is not, however, the stuff of conclusive analysis.

Similarly, with regard to connections between arguments for democratic reform in Scandinavia and the progressive movement in Wisconsin, he is able to find persons and articles which make such a connection. Indeed, sometimes the self-same persons were engaged on both sides of the Atlantic, as was the case for Nicolai Grevstad, editor of the influential *Skandinaven* in Chicago and former activist in Norway's liberal Left party (*Venstre*). The existence of such connections and ideas within the Scandinavian-American leadership must, however, be presented as more suggestive than definitive. Further, in trying to pin down such Scandinavian-American values as an inclination to support political insurgency, activist progress or reform as a democratic concept, the author must hold to very general conclusions, such as the following drawn about the concept of reform: "... to the degree that 'reform' among progressives generally described the journey of a concept from the fringes of the political universe to center stage, with a certain emphasis on basic Protestant values, something similar was true of the 'Scandinavian-American' understanding of the concept" (234).

The analysis of the voting patterns of the Scandinavian-American representatives in the Wisconsin Assembly is more profitable. It reveals a definite inclination among the

group to support progressive and reform legislation: “cumulatively at least the Scandinavian Americans emerge as an easily identifiable force on the side of progressive reform” (240). In accounting for this, Brøndal notes that “the regional and the Scandinavian-American factors overlapped: many westerners were progressives, and many Scandinavian-American legislators were westerners” (241). In addition, western Scandinavian Americans were more progressive than both their neighboring legislators and fellow ethnics from other parts of Wisconsin. He then makes a case for factoring in the temperance movement into this progressive inclination, showing its widespread popularity particularly among western Scandinavian Americans. But he must again counsel caution when drawing conclusions about Scandinavian-American values as such, given that this was a regional phenomenon and because “neither was the coincidence between progressive inclinations and pro-temperance attitudes complete, nor was the connection simple and direct” (244).

To sum up, Jørn Brøndal has written an extremely well-researched, extensive, and path-breaking history of the Scandinavian-American political leadership in the years 1890 to 1914. Its great virtue lies in its comparative structure when examining the development of a Scandinavian-American identity, its analysis of the entrance of Scandinavian-American politicians into the associational political party framework in Wisconsin, and in showing the manner in which the Progressive Movement modified this framework and the participation of the Scandinavian-American community in it. If it is less successful in pinning down the connection between Scandinavian-American values and the Progressive Movement, it is not for lack of systematic effort, but rather because this is intrinsically such a difficult task. *Ethnic Leadership and Mid-western Politics. Scandinavian Americans and the Progressive Movement in Wisconsin, 1890-1914* richly deserves the 2005 Wisconsin Historical Society Book Award of Merit.

Robert Mikkelsen

Østfold University College

Thomas P. M. Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: GP Putnam's Sons, 2004. 449 pages; ISBN 0399151753; \$ 26.95.

I have a friend named Larry Belle. Larry plays a special role in my life. He's the guy who brings me back to reality when I offer politically – or historically – unsupported opinions, which I do all the time. I praise the American medical system. He asks why Americans have the highest infant-mortality rates among industrial nations. He does that sort of thing with everything. I hate to admit it, but he's usually right.

And that's why I thought of Larry when I read Thomas Barnett's *The Pentagon's New Map*. In the area of military strategy, Barnett takes what most of us think we know and turns it on its head. He may not always be correct, but he offers the most creative and important critique of military policy that I've read in years.