

experiences of Northern women, in all their hardships, griefs, hopes, and triumphs.

REBECCA EDWARDS teaches history at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York. She recently published *New Spirits: Americans in the Gilded Age, 1865-1905* (2005).



Danger on the Doorstep

Anti-Catholicism and American Print Culture in the Progressive Era

By Justin Nordstrom

(Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 2006. Pp. ix, 296. Illustrations, appendix, notes, index. Paperbound, \$30.00.)

Justin Nordstrom's analysis of anti-Catholic popular publications during the Progressive Era views this expression of nativism as a part of the rural-urban conflict that punctuated the period. The city, and Catholics who resided there, represented strange peoples and customs, sexual licentiousness, and lack of simplicity. Nativists grafted their movement onto progressivism and, working on the principle of guilt by association, sought to make Catholics scapegoats for modernity. In the South, where Catholics were rare, as they were in most rural areas, such anti-Catholicism was particularly intense.

Anti-Catholicism was an ultra-nationalist variation on the American propensity to believe in conspiracy theories. Most threatening to this frame of mind was the idea that Catholics vested ultimate authority in a hierarchy whose epicenter lay abroad. American distrust of centralized power in any form, whether governmental or religious, had deep roots in the nation's history, dating back to

the colonial period. Protestants were troubled by the doctrine of papal infallibility, which seemed undemocratic. Yet most charges were not original, nor were they specific to North America or limited to the time. They were as old as the Protestant Reformation—and they remain today, separating Protestantism and Catholicism.

Believing, or even reading, these extremist periodicals presupposes a degree of gullibility. The writers charged that Catholics wanted to overthrow the government, make America subservient to the Pope, abolish freedom of worship, suppress dissent, and control the world. Priests and nuns had illicit sex, murdered the offspring, and buried them beneath convents. Priests exploited the confessional to manipulate women for sex. The most sensational and titillating publications were stories of the captivity, kidnapping, and sexual abuse of women and children, described in graphic, almost pornographic, detail.

The nativists had no plan of action, no solution to the Catholic menace. They viewed the dissemination of information as an end in itself. Although they might have raised the decibel level of hatred, they appealed largely to those who already harbored anti-Catholic beliefs. Nor did their anti-nativist opponents convert many bigots. Each side, in effect, was preaching to the choir.

Nordstrom's study provides a window for understanding an important, long-lived spiritual/militaristic metaphor through its manifestation in a specific context. Like most good monographs, it seeks to explore the macrocosm through a microcosm and to provide a building block for further studies. The book is thought-provoking and diligently researched in primary sources.

Although useful to specialists, the book is narrowly conceived, especially chronologically, a fact that will limit its audience. The text contains little that is original, offering instead a parade of academic experts more

appropriate for footnotes. The author's style is flawed by jargon and overuse of certain words and phrases, the most ubiquitous of which is "trope."

Some of Nordstrom's conclusions are arguable, such as his implication that nativism declined with World War I and the extinction of certain journals. In fact, the anti-Catholic prejudice of the Progressive Era might have changed form, but it actually grew. The influence of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, the attacks on Catholic presidential candidate Al Smith in 1928, and the immigration laws of the 1920s designed to bar Catholics, among others, are cases in point. *Dangers on the Doorstep* is useful, within limits.

GLEN JEANSONNE is professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and the author of *Gerald L. K. Smith: Minister of Hate* (1988) and *Women of the Far Right* (1996). He is researching a biography of Herbert Hoover.



Migrating to the Movies
Cinema and Black Urban Modernity
 By Jacqueline Najuma Stewart

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. Pp. xix, 343. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95)

In *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity*, Jacqueline Najuma Stewart describes the creation of an American cinema through its links to the Great Migra-

tion of African Americans from the South during the first twenty years of the last century. This is a brilliant move that sheds fresh light on two familiar stories. Through extensive,