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The Lingering Menace

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THE LINGERING MENACE

A Master's Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate College of
Missouri State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Logan Burke

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THE LINGERING MENACE

Religious Studies

Missouri State University, December 2018

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ABSTRACT

This thesis applies modern approaches to better examine a largely neglected nativist publication, *The Menace*. This thesis also challenges the importance scholars have placed on formal associations, including prominent nativist groups such as the Klan. Instead, this thesis will focus on *The Menace*, a print publication that was mainstream with respect to its popularity as well as in the way it was produced. At the same time, *The Menace* was also similar to other nativist groups in the way it viewed race, gender, and religion.

KEYWORDS: klan, religion, the menace, nativism, America

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A Master's Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate College
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In the interest of academic freedom and the principle of free speech, approval of this thesis indicates the format is acceptable and meets the academic criteria for the discipline as determined by the faculty that constitute the thesis committee. The content and views expressed in this thesis are those of the student-scholar and are not endorsed by Missouri State University, its Graduate College, or its employees.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	Page 1
Key Approaches to Nativism	Page 6
Chapter 1: Historic Approaches to Nativism	Page 12
Propaganda Studies	Page 16
Media Studies	Page 19
Conspiracy Studies	Page 22
Other Approaches	Page 23
Historical Context	Page 24
Summary	Page 31
Chapter 2: Mainstream News Making	Page 33
<i>The Menace</i> and its Place in Scholarship	Page 41
Anti-Catholicism as a Mainstream Ideology	Page 42
Summary	Page 47
Chapter 3: <i>The Menace</i> or a Menace	Page 48
Bets, Oaths, and Unsatisfying Endings	Page 51
Summary	Page 62
Chapter 4: Approaching Nativism Through Race, Gender, and Religion	Page 63
The Vagueness of Nativist Discourse	Page 66
Using Disproven Materials	Page 69
Emphasis on the Violence a Group Produces	Page 70
Education and <i>The Menace</i>	Page 72
Conclusion	Page 74
References	Page 81

INTRODUCTION

Approaching religion in a scholarly manner is difficult. There is no one definition of religion and there is no one approach to studying religion. This problem is intensified when a religious group uses religion to condemn others while advancing a perverse ideology. Some scholars are hesitant to refer to this as religion, while other scholars do not question a religion's validity and instead attempt to bracket themselves from their subjects. Additionally, there are others who consider it bad religion, but religion nonetheless.

Nativism, in particular, is difficult to study because of its prevalence in the past, as well as its existence in the present. Sometimes, scholars are forced to discover disturbing and too frequently overlooked events in our shared past. This tendency has led to inadequate studies of nativist publications and their engagement with the wider society. This thesis will focus on *The Menace*, arguing that nativism was a widely held belief and that the publications that endorsed it should be more thoroughly examined by scholars. *The Menace*'s relative obscurity in scholarship was categorized as a problem as early as the 1980s by Aileen S. Kraditor.¹ Other scholars such as Elliott Shore argue that anti-Catholicism's ties to socialism need to be more explored more carefully.² This thesis should be regarded as an attempt to both study *The Menace* but also to more thoroughly examine *The Menace*'s connection to socialism.³

¹ Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Radical Persuasion, 1890-1917* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981).

² Elliott Shore, *Talkin' Socialism: J.A. Wayland and the Role of the Press in American Radicalism, 1890-1912* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 255.

³ Ibid.

The Menace was an anti-Catholic publication established in Aurora, Missouri by Wilbur Phelps and his stepson Thomas Earl McClure. The run of the newspaper was rather short-lived. However, despite its short run (1911-1919), it had a very large following. During its peak, it had over a million subscribers. Along with a successful newspaper, *The Menace* also owned a large publishing plant that had 135 employees.⁴

Even after the paper ceased its initial production, it was able to be rebranded and revived several times.⁵ The rebrands had different staff members and went through some ideological shifts. As a result, this thesis will focus on *The Menace* (1911-1919) and will not examine the subsequent publications.⁶ It is also important to note that individual contributors to *The Menace* will not be examined in great detail because there is little to no information known about them as *The Menace* did not usually credit content contributors. However, the information that is known will be included.

Of the contributors, the most is known about Wilbur Phelps. Most of the information about Phelps and other members of *The Menace* comes from a single article published in *The Menace*. This particular article was a response to some allegations made by *The Standard and Times*, published in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. These allegations are primarily about *The Menace* and its connection to socialism. The article acknowledges that Phelps was at one time employed at the *Appeal to Reason*, located in Girard, Kansas. However, *The Menace* disputes the notion that he left the *Appeal to Reason* and immediately started *The Menace*. Instead, *The*

⁴ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1963), 2245.

⁵ “About *The Menace*. (Aurora, Mo.) 1911-1920,” *Chronicling America*, accessed October 5, 2017.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Menace emphasizes that his employment at the *Appeal to Reason* and his founding *The Menace* are events that are several years removed from one another. A later article in the *Appeal to Reason* alleges that Phelps' departure from that publication may have been due to "immoral and indecent conduct toward female employees."⁷

There is an *Appeal to Reason* article that mentions that Phelps was a shareholder and that his behavior was one of the reasons workers were on strike. *The Menace* does not mention these events. However, it does mention that Phelps could have been a socialist, but even if he was it was irrelevant to *The Menace*.⁸ *The Menace* was not a socialist paper like the *Appeal to Reason*, but it was not anti-socialist either.

The Standard and Times article that is mentioned by *The Menace* also alleges that Marvin Brown, who at one point was the manager of *The Menace*, was a socialist. *The Menace* notes that he, like Phelps, was a printer at the *Appeal to Reason*, but that it was his "moral and legal right to do so."⁹ *The Standard and Times* article also notes that *The Menace*'s attorney J. I. Sheppard is a founding member of the socialist college, the Peoples' College, located in Fort Scott, Kansas. *The Menace* does not refute this, but does note that he is no longer their attorney and they do not mention him being a socialist.¹⁰

Finally, Thomas Earl McClure, co-founder of *The Menace* and Phelps' stepson, is mentioned in *The Standard and Times* as well. *The Standard and Times* alleges that he went on to edit another anti-religious publication which *The Menace* refutes slightly. *The Menace* states

⁷ A. W. Ricker, *Appeal to Reason* (Girard, Kansas), February 4, 1905.

⁸ "Genesis According to Priest Noll," *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), March 22, 1919.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

that he “was at one time publisher, but not editor, of *The American Citizen* at East Orange,” in New Jersey. They also emphasize that it “was not an anti-religious paper at that or any other time. It was frankly anti-papal and as vigorously pro-Protestant in its defense of real religion from papal meddling and aggression.”¹¹

It is clear that many of the founding members and contributors of *The Menace* had ties to socialist organizations. This is important to keep in mind while studying *The Menace*, but it also needs to be emphasized that *The Menace* itself was not a pro-socialist paper. When writing about socialism *The Menace* was at times very critical, but also saw itself as an apolitical institution. In one article about socialism *The Menace* states that it “is not the spokesman for any political party; but it will proffer the socialists the same kind of advice that it offers Republicans and Democrats. Clean the cross-backs out of your party and make it one-hundred per cent American.” However, *The Menace* was critical of the socialist press and gives this advice to socialists

If you are going to be Socialists, insist on having a Socialist press that isn’t afraid to tackle the arch enemy of Socialism. That method would be more sane and more scientific than the attitude of the average Socialist editor who, like certain pseudo-Protestants, is eternally trying to make himself solid with the enemy of all freedom and progress.¹²

The Appeal to Reason was also very critical of *The Menace*. As previously noted, it accused *The Menace* of stealing its production techniques as well as taking several of its workers. The editor of the *Appeal to Reason* also accused *The Menace* of stealing the idea for *The Menace*. According to Fred D. Warren, the editor of the *Appeal to Reason*,

this paper [*The Menace*] was conceived by Comrade J. A. Wayland, and it was his wish that it be published in the Appeal office. This I refused to do, not that I did not recognize

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² “Romanism Socialism and Science” (Aurora, Missouri), September 6, 1919.

the growing political power of the Catholic church in this country, but because I did not believe in an attack on any man's religion was the way to change his political views.¹³

Warren goes on to mention that "As the lessee of the Appeal plant, I had the final say as to what should be done with the *Menace*, and it was not started in Girard. It was at this time that Comrade Wayland Succeeded in interesting other parties in the venture."¹⁴

What exactly this means is not entirely clear. *The Menace* definitely denies that Wayland owned *The Menace* or was ever employed by *The Menace*. As a result, it is difficult to determine who is telling the truth about Wayland's role in *The Menace*. What is clear is that both *The Menace* and the *Appeal to Reason* acknowledge that *The Menace* employed several people who were formerly employed by the *Appeal to Reason*. However, *The Menace* attributed this to the fact that Girard, Kansas and Aurora, Missouri are only a little over a hundred miles apart.¹⁵ Ultimately, Warren concludes his article about *The Menace* by stating that he hoped if the *Appeal to Reason* was to go out of business that *The Menace* would follow suit.¹⁶ Clearly, the *Appeal to Reason* did not have a high opinion of *The Menace*, but *The Menace* did not believe it was in conflict with socialists and wrote in response to this article that:

It is useless to bicker and quarrel. Rome's plan since time immemorial has been to divide and conquer, and nothing would tickle her more than to see the Menace and the socialist party get embroiled in a difficulty. So far as the Menace is concerned there will be no quarrel!¹⁷

¹³ Fred D. Warren, "Facts about the Appeal," *Appeal to Reason* (Girard, Kansas), July 5, 1913.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "Sunday Visitor's Latest Falsehood," *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), August 4, 1917.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "Phunny Little Fred," *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), July 12, 1913.

Regardless of what *The Menace* thought about socialism, it did not see socialism as an evil and it did not believe that socialism was incompatible with nativism. To better understand *The Menace*, it is important to first understand nativism and its place in scholarship.

Key Approaches to Nativism

There have been many approaches and disciplines used to study nativism. However, there is no one approach that has been agreed upon. While the lack of a common methodology is present in religious studies as a whole, its issues are compounded when religious nativism is studied. There are, however, several different approaches from other disciplines that are necessary to consider when approaching nativism.

A number of historical approaches and disciplines will be outlined in Chapter One. This section will be extensive for two primary reasons. First, there is no dominant way to study nativism. Second, the methods employed in nativist studies have implications that go beyond this field and even beyond academia. Nativist studies exists in between academia and outside institutions. Nativism also cannot adequately be explained without an interdisciplinary approach that, at the very least, acknowledges that nativism is a complex phenomenon.

This thesis too exists in an interesting time, when scholars and people outside of academia link past extremist and nativist groups to present manifestations of nativism and extremism. These attempts are important because they show that there is an increasing willingness in academia to examine the past in order to better understand the present.

As well as adding to academic discourse, scholars of nativist groups come into contact with experts that exist and work outside of the academic system. There is, however, a recent movement in religious studies to better bridge the gap between the universities and law

enforcement. This gap exists for several reasons, but as noted in Jayne Seminare Docherty's article "Bridging the Gap between Scholars of Religion and Law Enforcement Negotiators," one of the biggest hurdles religion scholars face is the perception they are more interested in protecting religious freedom than they are in attempting to combat religious extremism.¹⁸ This perception is influenced and perpetuated by the methods that are utilized by scholars. Each time a method or theory is dismissed, a choice is made, and that choice says something about the scholar, but also scholarship in general.

More importantly, there are several disagreements about scholarship and no one unified way to approach religion, let alone religious extremism. These disagreements make it difficult to identify a single methodology that can be accurately defined as religious studies. Instead there are many subdivisions of religious studies with their own theories and methodologies. In order to better address some of the difficulties present when studying religious nativism, this thesis will utilize an interdisciplinary approach.

In order to adequately study nativist publications, several methods and theories must be employed to create a more complete picture of nativism. There is also significant scholarly discourse that must be engaged. The subject of this thesis is a nativist publication that used religion. Therefore, religious studies must be incorporated. For the purposes of this thesis, nativism refers to a way of "identifying the foreign other by ethnicity, race, or religion."¹⁹

¹⁸ Jayne Seminare Docherty, "Bridging the Gap between Scholars of Religion and Law Enforcement Negotiators," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 3, no. 1 (October 1999): 9, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/nr.1999.3.1.8>.

¹⁹ Rodger M. Payne, "Nativism and Religion in America," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, February 2017, doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.437.

However, it is important to note that, in the view of *The Menace*, race and religion were, in some cases, linked. For example, Catholics were written about as a separate deplorable race that held beliefs that were incapable with American values. This view of Catholics as an inferior race was not unique to *The Menace*, but is a view that existed in the United States for a very long time.²⁰

Since *The Menace* is a religious nativist publication, it used religion to otherize groups that it opposed. Religious studies is divided on how to approach religious organizations that advance problematic ideologies. This tension will be discussed at length later in this section. Another tension is, what is the difference between news and propaganda? There is no one answer to this question and scholars do not agree. As a result, *The Menace* will be approached as a publication that produced news using certain aspects of propaganda, but also conventional journalistic techniques and themes.

Nativist studies needs a more coherent methodology to study groups and publications. There is simply too much variation in the methods that are used by different scholars and the conversation surrounding the efficacy of many of these approaches is either non-existent or attracts just a few scholars. Currently, scholars approach nativism with a large variety of methods that rely on multiple theories. The variety of scholarship on the subject has led to many scholars writing against one another without directly engaging with each other. As a result, there is no one approach that can be defined as nativist studies.

Another problem with nativist studies is the tendency to focus on groups with strong formal membership instead of approaching nativism as a movement that had a strong presence in

²⁰ Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 132-134.

the wider society. Currently, nativist publications that have formal ties to groups such as the Ku Klux Klan are disproportionately studied. This approach has ignored the wider context that surrounds nativism. Along with better defining membership, nativist studies needs to examine and acknowledge the political climate within which these groups were created and operated. By better accounting for membership and informal connections, nativist studies can more thoroughly examine how religion is used by nativist groups. Nativist publications, as well as other publications and their relation to one another, need to be better explored. By better understanding how *The Menace* was viewed by readers and other publications, it is possible to more accurately portray how *The Menace* was shaped by its context, but also the role it played in shaping other publications. More broadly, examining other publications helps establish that nativism was a mainstream value. Religion is frequently neglected when nativist groups or publications are explored. However, nativist studies scholars can more adequately examine the groups they wish to study by employing a more interdisciplinary approach that would not neglect the importance of religion.

To better explore some of the problems scholars have faced, as well as to build on the advancements that have been made, this thesis uses a hybrid approach to studying religious nativism. This thesis uses an interdisciplinary approach to address some of the difficulties that arise when religious nativism is studied. In order to more thoroughly study religious nativism, Chapter One frames the conversation that has historically surrounded nativist and extremist publications. Chapter Two explores some of the difficulties that these approaches have faced. Chapter Three further explores the context in which *The Menace* operated and how it interacted with other publications of the time. *The Menace* regularly presented its opponents as impious and

insincere. It did this in several ways, but the ways in which *The Menace* condemned its opponents are illustrated in Chapter Four.

This thesis will build on past scholarship and contribute to several conversations in religious studies. First, this thesis argues that religious nativism should be considered a religion. Some scholarship has a tendency to focus on other aspects of nativism and thus has left religion understudied. Undoubtedly, different publications have emphasized the importance of religion to varying degrees; however, in the case of *The Menace*, religion was its primary concern. *The Menace* cannot be studied without focusing on the importance of religion and the way its contributors used religion to explain their beliefs about immigrants, women, and other groups such as native-born Catholics. Through the examination of newspaper articles, it sheds light on *The Menace*'s worldview. This thesis also argues that privileging official membership over unofficial ties has resulted in an incomplete picture of religious nativism. Instead, religious nativism, regardless of its formal affiliation, capitalized off of similar cultural ideas and preyed on similar fears.

This thesis adds to the discussion of methods and theories used to study nativist publications. However, not all of the approaches in this thesis apply to every nativist publication. This is because only some nativist publications have all of their issues online while others have been lost to history or exist only on microfilm. Microfilm creates a significant limitation for scholars because it is not searchable on a computer and as a result keyword searches cannot be used.

Fortunately, *The Menace* has had all of its issues digitized and can be studied using keyword searches. These keyword searches were used to determine how *The Menace* used religion to otherize its opponents while using religion to advocate for ideals. Keyword searches

were also utilized to provide examples of *The Menace* engaging with mainstream nativism in other spheres such as politics. Additionally, they were used to explore how *The Menace* views gender, religion, and race. For *The Menace*, religion was both a source of good and evil and only the religion for which it advocated was compatible with justice.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORIC APPROACHES TO NATIVISM

This thesis incorporates approaches and methods advanced by Kathleen Blee, Kelly J. Baker, and Nancy MacLean, as well as the societal analysis proposed by Jessie Daniels. Blee's methods are important to consider when approaching a nativist publication because she accounts for how men and women interacted with these groups differently. Blee argues that they had different roles and motivations for joining. Following in Blee's footsteps, it is important to acknowledge the possibility that men and women likely engaged with *The Menace* differently and had different motivations for subscribing to the publication.

In *Women of the Klan*, Blee writes that the KKK in particular endorsed a masculine form of Protestantism that portrayed its adversaries as weak and effeminate.²¹ Blee also notes that the Klan used religion as a weapon for political gain and to cause terror.²² In this way, *The Menace* is very similar to the Klan and can be approached in a similar manner.

In *Gospel According to the Klan*, Baker notes that print culture has historically "served as a method of community building for various religious groups."²³ Baker also notes that many evangelical publishers during this period believed in a "perfect reader" that would receive a newspaper's message regardless of the context in which they received it.²⁴ This notion of a

²¹ Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 45.

²² Ibid.

²³ Kelly J. Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan: The KKK's Appeal to Protestant America, 1915-1930* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 24.

²⁴ Ibid.

perfect reader likely shaped how the message was presented and how it was used by religious publications.

Baker argues that the Klan should be considered a religious organization. She writes that “the Klan subscribed to Protestantism, and the order created their own definition, history, and vision of faith for its members.”²⁵ Whether or not *The Menace* is a member or even an advocate of the Klan, it is clear that it uses religion in a similar manner.

Blee argues that much of the power the group gained was attained by providing members (her study focuses on women) with collective support and friendship, as well as by advancing some progressive values.²⁶ At the very least, it is important to acknowledge that readers have different agendas they hope to advance or bolster by subscribing to *The Menace*. It is equally important to realize that *The Menace*, like other nativist publications, had its own agenda that was adopted to varying degrees by subscribers. This thesis focuses on the message advanced by *The Menace* and not the messages adopted by individual readers.

These advancements in the study of the Klan and other nativist organizations have introduced some of their own problems. Blee’s approach, in particular, has assumed that reactionary movements produce volatile members that are only capable of short-term dedication.²⁷ However, even by Blee’s own admission, there are similarities between the Klan and “the new right.”²⁸ Blee highlights a link between past and present nativist groups.

²⁵ Ibid., 38.

²⁶ Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 180.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

The Menace is a precursor to the second Klan, which began in 1915 and was another religious nativist organization. *The Menace* is a notable example of a group that capitalized off past nativist movements. It is clear then that nativism and dedication to the cause of nativism are never truly out of the consciousness of America even when formal groups decline in membership or seemingly cease to exist. By privileging formal membership, scholars have allowed unofficial nativist organizations to go largely unstudied and inadequately examined.

In order to more adequately address the issue of official membership, it is important to consult other authors who have addressed similar issues. Klan studies in particular has struggled with this question because of the nature of the KKK. This struggle is largely due to the fact that the Klan was a secret organization and it is difficult to determine exactly who was and was not a member in many cases. Considering *The Menace*'s strange relationship with other nativist organizations, it is difficult to determine its exact ties with each group. This relationship is further explored in Chapter Three and Chapter Four. However, considering the significant amount of print material produced by *The Menace*, similar techniques can be employed to study this newspaper.

Current Klan scholarship describes a worldview that includes religion, gender, politics and America as a whole. This is a challenging task because of the secrecy of the nativist movement. However, this is made possible because of the existence of several official documents and publications. By reconstructing official and unofficial sources, scholars have tried to reconstruct a Klan worldview. However, the analysis of this worldview should be expanded to cover more religious nativist groups because of their similarities and should be explored in future scholarship. This would allow scholars to construct a more complete map of the nativist worldview.

It is also important to understand to what lengths and how a group intends on establishing, but also protecting, its worldview. Scholars such as Linda Gordon have noted that when certain worldviews are challenged more extreme creeds may be adopted.²⁹ It is not surprising, then, that later iterations of *The Menace* were more extreme and even willing to occasionally advocate violence. While *The Menace* was an anti-Catholic nativist publication, it was also careful in the way in which it constructed its message. This kept *The Menace* mostly out of the court system. However, *The Menace* was sued a few times. The most famous case brought against it resulted in *The Menace* being acquitted of all seven of the charges that were brought against it. In several ways this allowed the editors of *The Menace* to play the victim because it was being attacked by Catholics who, in their view, intended to take their freedom of speech away in order to silence them.³⁰

Additionally, historian Nancy MacLean has extensively studied the rise of the second Klan. She argues that there are multiple strands to the Klan's worldview. In MacLean's view, these strands include "its reactionary populism, its racialism, its gender conventions, and its overall alarm about the state of society and government."³¹ MacLean also urges scholars to examine what is important to the group because it shows what is worthy of a condemnation versus what is allowed to passively proceed.³² MacLean argues that groups focus their

²⁹ Linda Gordon, *Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York City: Liveright Publishing, 2017), 32.

³⁰ Justin Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep: Anti-Catholicism and American Print Culture in the Progressive Era* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 1-5.

³¹ Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 149.

³² *Ibid.*

condemnations on perceived threats to society. MacLean's argument may not be groundbreaking, but it is still important to consider. Nativist publications can be approached in this way because they are news organizations that choose what they will cover. Because there is limited space on the page, it is reasonable to assume that they cover what is important to them. However, despite the fact that *The Menace* was readily available, the people behind the scenes are relatively obscure and it is difficult to write about the motives behind the authors, editors, and founders.

Propaganda Studies

Propaganda studies is also important to consider because, as previously established, there was significant buy-in to nativist ideology by the wider society. Propaganda studies is also valuable to consider because it argues that messages can be popular regardless of their accuracy, as long as the message aligns with the receiver's views. This is particularly important when studying *The Menace* because many of its articles were poorly sourced and frequently fabricated.

However, propaganda studies does have its own host of issues. It is difficult to accurately define propaganda and it is difficult to ignore the negative connotation that propaganda carries with it. Some scholars such as Aaron Delwiche have emphasized the importance of examining all forms of propaganda even if their aims are less extreme.³³ It is also difficult to separate scholarship on propaganda from the value judgements of the scholar. It is often easier to speak about some of the aspects of propaganda. One of the aspects of propaganda is that "it is designed to reach and influence a mass audience, and as such, it is a kind of technique that must appeal

³³ Aaron Delwiche, "Why Think about Propaganda?" Propaganda Critic: Special Appeals Fear Appeal, 2011, Introduction, <http://www.propagandacritic.com/>.

successfully to the emotions, commitments and enthusiasms of the crowd to win acceptance for a conclusion.”³⁴ It is difficult to analyze these aspects of propaganda because it is hard to distinguish them from conventional news making techniques. If the term is applicable to all mass media, it is difficult to use.

However, *The Oxford Handbook of Propaganda Studies* outlines thirteen helpful propositions about propaganda.

1. *Propaganda is not intrinsically evil or immoral.*
2. *Propaganda entails propagation, but not everything that propagates is necessarily propaganda.*
3. *The relation between propaganda and information is fluid, varying according to context and function.*
4. *Although propaganda is not an essential category with precise formal attributes, particular techniques of propagation can be studied with variable results.*
5. *Any given practice of propaganda must be understood in relation to culturally specific proximate institutions, such as education, religion, public diplomacy, advertising, and literature.*
6. *Propaganda changes according to specific media but cannot entirely be defined by the attributes of a given medium.*
7. *Propaganda in its effects can be partial, and it need not be total.*
8. *Analyzing propaganda requires paying as much attention to networks of information flow (how) as the content (what).*
9. *People can actively use propaganda and are not simply passive dupes used by it. Propaganda does not necessarily spread from the top down.*
10. *Propaganda can produce unintended effects beyond the control of both producers and receivers.*
11. *To be effective, propaganda must harness a rich affective range beyond negative emotions such as hatred, fear, and envy to include more positive feelings such as pleasure, joy, belonging, and pride.*
12. *Propaganda is an integral feature of democratic societies.*
13. *The study of propaganda remains highly relevant and in all likelihood will continue to be a critical issue in the future.*³⁵

³⁴ Nicholas O’Shaughnessy, “Social Propaganda and Social Marketing: A Critical Difference?” *European Journal of Marketing* 30, no. 10/11 (1996): 388, doi:10.1108/03090569610149791.

³⁵ Jonathan Auerbach and Russ Castronovo, “Introduction: Thirteen Propositions About Propaganda,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Propaganda Studies*, by Jonathan Auerbach and Russ Castronovo (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 5-12.

While these 13 propositions do not provide a definitive definition, they help provide a solid way to examine propaganda. These propositions are applicable to *The Menace*. Of particular importance are propositions one and three. Proposition one is important because, as will be discussed at length later in this chapter, it is necessary to humanize groups, even hate groups, in order to better understand them. Proposition three is especially relevant to *The Menace* because it would regularly fabricate stories, but it would also include some true material alongside complete fabrications. While these propositions do not provide scholars with a concrete definition, they are still necessary to consider when studying nativist groups and help scholars refrain from unhelpful value judgements.

Other scholars have suggested that propaganda should be defined by its end goal.

Nicholas O'Shaughnessy states that:

The ultimate goal of propaganda is to get the respondents to take a particular course of action. Many definitions of 'propaganda' postulate that the goal of propaganda is to change the respondents' beliefs, or to persuade the respondents to accept some proposition as true (or false). But these goals, although they are typically part of propaganda, are secondary to the ultimate goal, which is always (as a matter of practical politics) to get the respondents to do (or abstain from doing) something. These secondary goals are always means to the ultimate end of propaganda, which is action, or compliance with action.³⁶

This way of examining propaganda has a number of problems as well. It still seems that it would be difficult to separate propaganda's end goals from those of any social organization that aims to change society in some way. In any event, this is not how the term propaganda was used historically.

The term propaganda itself originated from the Congregation de Propaganda Fide. It was used to refer to meetings Pope Gregory XIII had with cardinals that aimed to combat the

³⁶ Ibid., 394.

Reformation.³⁷ It is unlikely the term had a negative connotation back then, at least not among Catholics.³⁸ It was used by the allies during both world wars but only to describe the enemies' "opinion-forming activities."³⁹

The reason why propaganda studies is worth considering when studying *The Menace* or other nativist publications is because it provides definitions that can be used to better identify the goals behind various publications. Propaganda studies provides scholars with a helpful window into the motivations behind the text. However, even if it is fair and accurate to refer to *The Menace* as anti-Catholic propaganda, it is also important to note that *The Menace* reflected the popular journalism of its day. *The Menace*, like other nativist publications, also endorsed a message that had been cultivated both inside and outside of America.⁴⁰

Media Studies

It is important to examine these publications in historical and social context and engage with the discussion of whether the publication is using mainstream techniques or adopting new or perhaps even less common techniques. In the view of Justin Nordstrom, *The Menace*, like other nativist publications infused three themes that were "central to print culture immediately prior to and during World War I." These three themes were progressivism, masculinity, and

³⁷ Douglas Walton, "What Is Propaganda, and What Exactly Is Wrong with It," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (October 01, 1997): 383.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 384.

⁴⁰ For more information about the rise of Anti-Catholicism see Bryan Le Beau, "'Saving the West from the Pope': Anti-Catholic Propaganda and the Settlement of the Mississippi River Valley," *American Studies* 32, no. 1 (Spring 1991).

nationalism.⁴¹ *The Menace* was also involved in mainstream politics and advanced an ideology that was at least compatible with some of the legislation that was passed during its run. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Two. However, it is clear that *The Menace*'s subscriber numbers and its style of journalism reflected a more mainstream approach.

Wilbur Phelps, the founder of *The Menace*, is difficult to understand because little is known about him. What is known is that he published the local paper in Aurora besides *The Menace*, and "prided himself on his progressive outlook."⁴² This is important because it shows that he was engaged professionally with another outlet and his connection to a local paper could explain why *The Menace* used themes and techniques found in mainstream journalism. He also worked at the *Appeal to Reason* and *The Menace* would later be accused by the *Appeal to Reason* of copying its typography, methods and language.⁴³ The *Appeal to Reason* also noted that it lost several employees to *The Menace* who wanted to work for an anti-Catholic publication.⁴⁴ This might explain some of *The Menace*'s production techniques.

It is also important to note that journalism has changed a lot over the years and it is easy to overlook this when examining an older publication. For example, in the early 1900's, objectivity was a term that would not have been used in journalism or in critiques of

⁴¹ Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep*, 3.

⁴² Ibid. *The Menace* and the Klan in general have both been considered progressive on certain issues.

⁴³ "Phunny Little Fred," *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), July 12, 1913.

⁴⁴ Warren, "Facts about the Appeal."

journalism.⁴⁵ Americans had different expectations for publications during this time.⁴⁶

Previously, the public had wanted “small, dense type and long winded editorials; the public was now the urban masses who liked banner headlines, large drawings, and photographs, snappy and spicy writing.”⁴⁷ *The Menace* reflects this style of journalism in several ways. More broadly though anti-Romanist papers provided readers with “an inflammatory, even militaristic tone reflective of the “investigative” and exposé -minded journalists of the early twentieth century.”⁴⁸

The Menace employed bold, or “snappy” titles of articles and it is also important to note that many of those titles are banner-like and take up a large amount of space. Additionally, *The Menace* had many cartoons on its pages and on rare occasion it would even feature a photograph. However, cartoons were far more common. The format of *The Menace* would have been compelling to its audience because it imitated and reflected the journalism that the public was interested in reading. The message of *The Menace* was also important to its success.

Additionally, *The Menace* was very aggressive towards its detractors. When there was an attempt to ban the sale of *The Menace*, it wrote an article critiquing Roman Catholic editors. *The Menace* wrote that the articles in Catholic publications had “poor grammar, worse rhetoric and bum proof reading.”⁴⁹ In doing so *The Menace* attacked the quality of the papers that wrote

⁴⁵ Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 122.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep*, 10.

⁴⁹ “The Fight Is On---Are You In?” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), August 17, 1918, *Chronicling America*.

against it. This was a common technique that *The Menace* would employ, and it would regularly present itself as more qualified, better or simply more professional than its opponents.

Conspiracy Studies

Conspiracy studies emphasizes the presence of paranoia in all aspects of one's worldview. Michael Barkun writes that the essence of conspiracy beliefs is "attempts to delineate and explain evil."⁵⁰ Barkun also writes about three emphases that a conspiracists' worldview uses:

Nothing happens by accident. Conspiracy implies a world based on intentionality, from which accident and coincidence have been removed. Anything that happens occurs because it has been willed. *Nothing is as it seems.* Appearances are deceptive, because conspirators wish to deceive in order to disguise their identities or their activities. Thus, the appearance of innocence is deemed to be no guarantee that an individual or group is benign. *Everything is connected.* Because the conspiracists' world has no room for accident, pattern is believed to be everywhere, albeit hidden from plain view. Hence the conspiracy theorist must engage in a constant process of linkage and correlation in order to map the hidden connection.⁵¹

As will be established later in the thesis, *The Menace* relied quite heavily on establishing the intention behind actions in order to condemn its detractors. A conspiracist's worldview condemns enemies and argues that everything is connected. Some scholars, including Kathleen Blee, have argued that past and present hate groups are linked and share a past. Because of these connections, it is worthwhile to consider that earlier conspiracists have influenced modern ones, but also that later ones, such as *The Menace*, were heavily influenced by their predecessors.

⁵⁰ Michael Barkun, *Culture of Conspiracy Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 3.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

Other Approaches

Certain models for examining violent subcultures may also prove fruitful because *The Menace* is part of a pre-violent subculture. *The Menace* is pre-violent in the sense that it does not publicly endorse explicit acts of violence, but it does hold an ideology that resulted in significant bloodshed in the 1920s and before. It is not until *The Menace* relaunched as *The New Menace* that it publicly endorses violent acts and violent actors.⁵² However, it could be argued that advocating for discrimination is itself an act of violence. In order to better illuminate certain aspects of *The Menace*, it is worthwhile to consider the model proposed by James W. Clarke.

Clarke argues that there are seven principle propositions that can exist in violent subcultures. The list is as follows:

- (1) No subculture can be totally different from or totally in conflict with the society of which it is a part.
- (2) To establish the existence of a subculture of violence does not require that the actors sharing this basic value element express violence in all situations.
- (3) The potential resort or willingness to resort to violence in a variety of situations emphasizes the penetrating and diffusive nature of this culture theme.
- (4) The subcultural ethos of violence may be shared by all ages in a subsociety, but this ethos is most prominent in a limited age group ranging from late adolescence to middle age.
- (5) The counter-norm is non-violence.
- (6) The development of favorable attitudes towards, and the use of, violence in this subculture involve learned behavior and a process of differential learning, association or identification.
- (7) The use of violence in a subculture is not necessarily viewed as illicit conduct, and the users therefore do not have to deal with feelings of guilt about their aggression [or fear of punishment].⁵³

⁵² It is important to note that this resurrected newspaper is not created or run by the same creators.

⁵³ James W. Clarke, "Without Fear or Shame: Lynching, Capital Punishment and the Subculture of Violence in the American South," *British Journal of Political Science* 28, no. 2 (April 01, 1998): 275-276, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/194307>.

However, this model is not without its problems. Clarke assumes that the norm is violence and while that might be true, it is difficult to establish that all normal society is violent. This view could be considered pessimistic and limiting and is nearly impossible to prove. However, *The Menace* does reflect several aspects of a violent subculture despite its unwillingness to publicly endorse violence.

The Menace had several anti-Catholic cartoons it would publish alongside news articles. However, these cartoons, as well as other nativist cartoons, have not been widely studied. Recently, scholars such as Lynn S. Neal have advocated for a more intensive study of the religious symbolism contained within these works.⁵⁴

Scholars have struggled with how to approach secret organizations or organizations with little information about their founders. Some scholars speculate about the potential meanings or motives behind different nativist publications. Other scholars stick to official publications and simply present what is on the page. In doing so, they avoid much of the speculation. An approach that relies less on speculation is the best approach for publications that are shrouded in secrecy. *The Menace* fits this description. However, it would be irresponsible to ignore theories that explore hidden rhetoric and look beyond what is on the page.

Historical Context

The Menace was rebranded and revived several times throughout its run. Every version of *The Menace*'s brand advanced a form of nativism that endorsed Protestant Christianity while condemning Catholic influence in America. There is a common thread that all of these

⁵⁴ See Lynn S. Neal, "Christianizing the Klan: Alma White, Branford Clarke, and the Art of Religious Intolerance," *The American Society of Church History* 78, no. 2 (1995), 350-378.

publications share. These commonalities need to be better established in future studies, but that goes beyond the scope of this project.

The Menace's strongest endorsement was of Protestant Christianity. It viewed Protestantism as a protest against Catholicism and the "assumed authority of popes to supreme dictation concerning what is right and what is wrong."⁵⁵ In *The Menace*'s view "Protestantism is the religious expression, as democracy is the political expression, of personal and social liberty."⁵⁶ This quotation demonstrates that *The Menace* saw religion and democracy as playing the same role in different spheres.

Despite their popularity, little has been written about nativist publications and even less has been written about *The Menace* specifically. However, scholars such as John Higham argue that *The Menace* is useful to examine.⁵⁷ *The Menace* was an anti-Catholic publication that advanced nativist values while endorsing Protestant Christianity. *The Menace*'s namesake referred to Catholicism but, more specifically, to papal political influence in America. In its view, Catholicism was incompatible with American values. Given *The Menace*'s large subscriber base, scholars should pay more attention to this publication.

During its run, *The Menace* was very popular. It claimed that it had one hundred twenty thousand subscribers in its first year and over five hundred thousand by the end of its second year. In its third year it had grown to a million subscribers.⁵⁸ Despite these impressive numbers,

⁵⁵ "Why Protestantism Should Be Preached," *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), June 7, 1919, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89066178/1919-06-07/ed-1/seq-1.pdf>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism*, 5450.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 2245.

it is also important to note they are self-reported and therefore not completely reliable. These numbers have never been verified by scholars or outside sources. However, it should be noted that Aurora, Missouri did have to build an addition to its mail system in order to better accommodate the increase in traffic due to *The Menace*'s popularity.⁵⁹

It is difficult to explain the popularity of *The Menace* or other nativist groups. The Ku Klux Klan, for example, had a sharp rise in membership and an even sharper decline.⁶⁰ Some scholars associate the rise of these ideologies to “residual nationalistic hatred of immigrants and political ‘radicals’ fueled by World War 1 propaganda, and a general increase in bigotry and intolerance directed at ethnic groups concentrated in urban areas by white Protestants in rural areas, as well as a rise in religious and political fundamentalism.”⁶¹

Both *The Menace* and the Klan advanced a religious nativism that emphasized that certain groups were better than others and more connected with God. The second Klan also believed that the white race had “a personal relationship with God and the benefit of divinely ordained traits that guaranteed the success of the race. However, the race and its national home faced the threat of alien ideas, peoples, and attempts to redefine American nationalism, which Evans noted was only suitable to the racial character of whites.”⁶² The Klan and *The Menace*

⁵⁹ Matt Pearce, “A Century Ago, a Popular Missouri Newspaper Demonized a Religious Minority: Catholics,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 09, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-catholic-scare-20151209-story.html>

⁶⁰ Craig Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk: White Protestant Life and the KKK in 1920s Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011), 202-203.

⁶¹ Jessie Daniels, *White Lies* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 15. Daniels primary focus is on the Klan but *The Menace* has been characterized by past scholarship as an organization that capitalized on many of the same ideas.

both viewed themselves as civic Messiahs that were connected to the divine in a way that their opponents were not.⁶³

The Menace also focused on different “races,” especially so called “catholic races.” *The Menace* frequently wrote of German Catholics as a distinct race and on a few occasions mentioned that the Catholic-American race does not exist.⁶⁴ This was because, in *The Menace*’s view, there was a battle between American-Americans, probably meaning white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, and Catholic-Americans, who were only loyal to Rome.⁶⁵ However, despite referring to certain Catholics as different races, *The Menace* still noted that certain Catholic races, such as the Irish, were capable of great things.⁶⁶ *The Menace* also mentioned that some races were failing to mix.⁶⁷ By failing to mix *The Menace* implied that immigrants were failing to assimilate. However, *The Menace* did not support a race purity agenda, though other nativist organizations sometimes did.

Determining what the contributors to *The Menace* thought about race is difficult. *The Menace* does not appear to have a consistent view of race. Most confusingly, contributors to *The*

⁶² Kelly J. Baker, “Religion and the Rise of the Second Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1922,” Readex, August 19, 2015, 191, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://www.readex.com/readex-report/religion-and-rise-second-ku-klux-klan-1915-1922>.

⁶³ Ibid. This is the Language that Baker uses to describe the Klan but not *The Menace*. However, it is probably true that Baker would ascribe similar qualities to both groups if both groups were studied by Baker.

⁶⁴ “The World’s Trouble Makers Are Now Beginning To Reap the Whirlwind.” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), December 15, 1917. Chronicling America.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Menace believed that the Irish were capable of becoming true Americans by losing their Catholicism. In one article, *The Menace* proclaimed, “We gladly honor the heroes of that race [the Irish], who have shown undaunted courage in every continent. Curiously enough, although whenever the Irish get into another country they are brave, wise and successful, they have never carried on a successful revolution of their own.”⁶⁸

In this way, *The Menace* was a racist organization, but race in this case is intimately connected with religion.⁶⁹ Unlike some other nativist organizations, *The Menace* supported the thirteenth amendment and acknowledged that the Emancipation Proclamation was a positive event in history.⁷⁰ However, *The Menace* still had a nostalgia for the confederate states.⁷¹ What is clear is that *The Menace* viewed certain groups of Catholics as a distinct race that was incompatible with true American values.

There is significant variation among different nativist organizations and religious nativism has no one single form. These distinctions are central, and all too often neglected. It is, however, still worthwhile to approach them in a similar manner because they share significant parallels. The second Klan and *The Menace* both emphasized the importance of race, but they did not approach or characterize race in the same way. This deviation is important and should be noted, but it does not exclude either group from being a religious nativist organization.

⁶⁸ “Creel’s Sinn Feinism Cracked By N.Y. Times Book Reviewer,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), August 30, 1919, accessed July 12, 2017, [Chronicling America](#).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

The Menace and the Klan suffered a similar fate. The Klan as well as *The Menace* were successful because they used similar techniques to expand their reach. Craig Fox attributes the sharp rise in the Klan to its marketing as well as other gimmicks and general cultural acceptance.⁷² Fox does not subscribe to the widely accepted notion that the nativists were uneducated and unable to produce works that their recipients accepted, endorsed, and disseminated regardless of their factual nature.

The Menace itself was no stranger to marketing techniques. Besides having a compelling message, it had the right format for a large audience. *The Menace* also marketed itself well. The first issues of *The Menace* were distributed for free.⁷³ This would have obviously been helpful in building an initial following. It is not entirely clear where *The Menace* got the money to distribute the first issues for free. In order to better spread its message, *The Menace* allowed people to purchase in bulk and would go on sale from time to time.⁷⁴ They would also have “call to arms” articles.⁷⁵ These articles came in many forms. Some of them mentioned that if the message was not spread to a larger audience then the price would have to increase.⁷⁶ An article written in 1917 stressed the issue of getting the paper to a wider audience, it stated:

In *The Menace* this week. The two strong indictments of Romanism contained on this page, in themselves, should furnish, to any patriot who is interested in

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Robert P. Lockwood, *Anti-Catholicism in American Culture* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2000), 36.

⁷⁴ *The Menace* (Aurora Missouri), November 27, 1915, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89066178/1915-11-27/ed-1/seq-4/>.

⁷⁵ “Sow This Country Broadcast,” *The Menace* (Aurora Missouri), October 13, 1917, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89066178/1917-10-13/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁷⁶ “Seven Weeks,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), December 15, 1917, accessed June 5, 2017, Chronicling America.

exposing the workings of Romanism, sufficient incentive to make it his business to see that this issue goes into 100 extra homes in his vicinity without delay. The facts set forth as to Louisville and Dubuque are of national interest because they are typical of every community where Rome has similar advantages and the same lack of organized opposition. They are facts that will make friends for *The Menace* in your community. It will only cost sixty cents for you to put this paper in one hundred extra homes THIS WEEK.⁷⁷

Issues like this one stressed how important it was to *The Menace* to spread its message.

This issue was seen as central to their outreach. *The Menace* offered a discount to those interested in spreading the message. Given how popular *The Menace* became, such marketing techniques must have been successful.

Fox notes that nativist organizations reignited themselves with the fire from past groups.⁷⁸ *The Menace* sold and reprinted earlier anti-Catholic nativist literature. By reprinting these past sources, *The Menace* capitalized on widely known works. Often scholars focus on the sharp rise and decline of nativist groups, while neglecting the climate in which they rise and fall. It is fair to say that *The Menace* was short-lived, but the form of anti-Catholicism it advanced was not.

There are other misconceptions about nativist groups that have only recently been examined. By examining the members of different Klans, Fox has determined they were usually quite diverse in occupation, as well as education.⁷⁹ Fox found that Klan members in some cities were more diverse than the general population for the area.⁸⁰ Exploring one form of diversity, Fox focuses on the socio-economic class of the members, including their professions. It is clear

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, 212.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 90.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

that a white supremacist group would be far less diverse in other demographic areas. However, Fox's study is still important because it shows that nativists did not come from one single background, but instead nativists were, at least in some places, economically diverse. Detailed records are not available for *The Menace*'s subscribers, which raises the question who they were and who typically subscribed to nativist publications.

By researching the Klan, Fox found that nativist groups are more diverse than previously thought. These groups have members that are educated as well as uneducated. The makeup of *The Menace*'s subscribers is important because it would better establish whether the publication was more economically diverse than previous scholarship on nativism indicates. It is also important to examine the climate that *The Menace* was forged and thrived in as well as the climate that influenced it.

Summary

Chapter One includes a lengthy discussion of approaches to better situate the discussion and to illustrate where the field of nativist studies is today. It shows there are several approaches that have been employed with success, while also highlighting that there are some general deficiencies in how nativism is viewed. This thesis argues that some nativism cannot be adequately studied until more publications are examined and included in discussions on nativism. The subject of this thesis, *The Menace*, is presently understudied and rarely mentioned in scholarship, but publications like *The Menace* as well others, such as *The Jeffersonian*, are receiving greater attention. However, scholars need to continue to pay attention to these publications because they highlight a time in history where discriminatory views were widely

held. *The Menace*'s popularity illustrates the prominence of these views, but also how this publication constructed itself and played a role in its prominence.

Chapter Two critiques the view that *The Menace* and nativism were endorsed by a minority of uneducated people. On the contrary, *The Menace* was mainstream both in subscriber count and because of the news making techniques that it employed. These techniques made the newspaper more similar to its non-nativist counterparts. Since its subscriber base was, at the very least, close to the most popular papers of its time, it seems odd that it is studied in a way that makes it seem fringe. However, neither nativism nor *The Menace* were fringe and this mischaracterization, while attractive because it makes history appear less problematic, is incorrect. Following in the footsteps of other scholars such as Blee, Baker, and Daniels, this thesis argues that nativism is an important ideology that needs to be studied more frequently. This thesis, however, constructs its argument differently, focusing on a different subject while exploring common territory.

Chapter Three focuses on how *The Menace* interacted with other publications, as well as how it was perceived by them. This further look at the context in which *The Menace* operated in, helps outline the role in which *The Menace* played during its run. It also highlights some of the various ways *The Menace* fabricated events, made false claims, and exaggerated history to forward its agenda.

Chapter Four establishes that nativist groups such as the Klan and nativist publications such as *The Menace* should be studied with similar methods because they have similar views on race, gender, and religion. Additionally, Chapter Four emphasizes the importance of religion to *The Menace* and how the newspaper advanced its ideology.

CHAPTER 2: MAINSTREAM NEWS MAKING

The Menace did not exist in a vacuum. In order to better understand *The Menace*'s context, it is important to look at its subscriber numbers as well as its relationship with the wider society. However, it is also necessary to establish that *The Menace* advocated for certain nativist legislation. Such political involvement shows that the publication engaged with the wider society. It did so, as previously noted, using more traditional news creating techniques. This chapter presents a group that is part of the journalistic mainstream because of its subscriber numbers, its news making techniques, and its engagement in politics.

The Menace engaged with mainstream politics using traditional news making techniques such as banner headlines, snappy and spicy writing, and sensationalism. *The Menace*, like other leading papers, focused on telling a good story. Michael Schudson emphasized in *Discovering the News* that Joseph Pulitzer was able to produce papers that grew rapidly by using sensationalism.⁸¹ *The Menace* used similar techniques which likely contributed to its success and rapid growth. These strategies were common and according to Schudson:

at the turn of the [nineteenth] century there was as much emphasis in leading papers on telling a good story as on getting the facts. Sensationalism in its various forms was the chief development in newspaper content. Reporters sought as often to write 'literature' as to further news.⁸²

The Menace also used mainstream themes such as progressivism, masculinity, and nationalism. With these techniques and themes, *The Menace* advocated for Protestant Christianity while condemning Catholicism. For this reason, *The Menace* should be considered a religious organization. This classification does not require that scholars agree with its religious

⁸¹ Schudson, *Discovering the News*, loc 1024.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 67.

message. In other words, to acknowledge *The Menace* as a religious publication does not necessitate that scholars refrain entirely from value judgements about the organization. There has been a tendency in scholarship, as well as outside of the academy, to privilege “objectivity” over value judgements, but this assumes the existence of pure objectivity.

The Menace's use of religion also complicates discussions of the publication. *The Menace* advanced the notion that native born Protestants were moral and capable of being true Americans. Since *The Menace* privileged native born citizens over foreign born Americans, as well as Protestants over Catholics, it is fair to classify the group as a religious nativist publication. However, this classification also introduces some other difficulties. Failing to criticize a nativist group can seem like an endorsement. On the other hand, condemning a group can lead scholars to ignore its popularity. This is also especially true for groups that express views that are no longer adopted to the same degree that they once were.

Scholars do not agree on how to properly approach such organizations. This thesis approaches *The Menace* as a religious publication that used religion to advance a nativist ideology. However, this classification would be contested by some scholars because religion is rarely focused on. Challenging such scholarship, this chapter will establish that *The Menace* was far more mainstream than its place in scholarship suggests.

Historians such as Kathleen Blee and Kelly J. Baker disagree on how the religious elements of a nativist organization should be studied. Blee argues that much of the racism and nativism of the 1920s was motivated by attitudes toward morality and chastity. She does not directly associate morality with religion. Baker, on the other hand, believes that nativist morality is motivated and influenced by a group's religious views and asserts that religion plays a more central role in shaping a group's worldview.

Past scholars such as David M. Chalmers have presented previous nativist groups as political organizations that were capable of using their message to influence legislation. Unlike other scholars, Chalmers emphasized the political aspects of nativist groups, but downplayed the importance of religion. However, Chalmers' argument did not account for when nativist groups (such as *The Menace*) advocated for political change using religion. Chalmers also emphasized that some nativist groups, including the Ku Klux Klan, were "partaker[s] in the least laudable aspects of Protestant fundamentalism."⁸³ However, contemporary scholars do not approach nativism in the same way as Chalmers.

Contemporary scholarship has approached nativist publications, such as *The Menace* and *The Liberator* in more objective terms, rather than simply condemning them or speculating about the motivations behind their acts. It has proven fruitful to approach the Klan in this way and it is worthwhile to approach other nativist groups and publications in a similar manner. It has been successful because it allows scholars to more fully study the religion that nativist groups advanced. When value judgements enter unduly into scholarship, certain aspects of a group cannot be examined. However, this more objective approach has not yet been applied to *The Menace* and has only rarely been applied to nativist publications in general.

The question of how much scholars should bracket themselves from the subject they are studying has plagued the humanities. It is difficult to show empathy without establishing where one is coming from. On the other hand, showing a more human side of scholarship has often been tied to value judgements. As noted by Stephen Prothero, it is difficult to discern exactly

⁸³ David Mark Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 111.

where the line is between religious studies and theology.⁸⁴ This problem comes into focus when studying a form of Christianity that advocates discrimination and violence.

In this way, scholars can find themselves at odds with the theology of their subjects. Prothero argues that sources cannot truly be engaged unless the brackets are removed.⁸⁵ However, Prothero acknowledges that brackets are necessary and that understanding through empathy is still necessary even when brackets are discarded.⁸⁶ Prothero's primary argument is that no matter what, something is always otherized and by employing the technique of bracketing off the scholar from the subject, the scholar has been otherized.⁸⁷

Prothero has been critical of scholars who bracket off where they are coming from and treat past experiences as irrelevant to how they approach the complexities of religion.⁸⁸ Even when scholars remove the brackets, it is still important to exercise caution. This caution has been exercised long before religious studies was formally created and long before this debate was formally started in academia.

Scholar Jessie Daniels does not bracket herself from her subjects. She considers "lunatic" to be appropriate language to be used to describe a group.⁸⁹ Daniels also emphasizes the impact

⁸⁴ Stephen Prothero, "Belief Unbracketed a Case for the Religion Scholar to Reveal More of Where He or She Is Coming From," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 32, no. 3 (2004), 10.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁸⁹ Daniels, *White Lies*, 2.

that her own life has had on her study. She notes that her ties to the Klan are direct enough that she felt compelled to explain where she is coming from.⁹⁰

Many people study subjects that have affected them or their families. This tendency makes disclosure difficult but important. In the case of Daniels, she was molested by her grandfather, a Klan member, an event she discloses in her own work.⁹¹ This makes it even more troublesome to determine when bracketing is necessary, whether or not personal disclosure should be common, and what level of transparency is necessary in scholarship. People are undoubtedly shaped by events in their lives and these, consciously or not, introduce biases that are impossible to avoid.

Scholars are not the only ones who have engaged with the issue of bracketing or engaging with the other side. While not a scholar, President Lincoln was careful to not demonize the other side and refused to “denounce the South in absolute terms.”⁹² Lincoln is relevant because he was in charge of the country during what might accurately be characterized as the most divided time in United States history. Now looking back, scholars attempt to engage with a past that formed their present without acknowledging the influence it has had on them. This act of bracketing is particularly important when scholars engage directly with the objectively reprehensible. However, I would not side entirely with Prothero because there is a time and place for bracketing. That time and place is not when studying nativist organizations. There is a line

⁹⁰ Ibid., 119.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Mark A. Noll, “‘Both... Pray to the Same God’: The Singularity of Lincoln’s Faith in the Era of the Civil War,” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, Winter 1997, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jala/2629860.0018.103/--both-pray-to-the-same-god-the-singularity-of-lincolns-faith?rgn=main%3Bview>.

between objectivity and subjectivity and a line between empathy and action and scholars have sat on the sidelines and in their ivory towers (as Prothero puts it) for far too long.

No matter how reprehensible a group, empathy can still be exercised. Both Kathleen Blee and Kelly J. Baker have approached the Klan with more empathy. As a result, their works have yielded a more complete picture of nativism. Blee, in particular, has explored why women were drawn to join the Klan and endorsed nativist messages. Understanding the groups in this way has encouraged scholars to look into the demographics of nativist organizations. This has revealed a more diverse movement than previously thought. It is important to look at a group as a collection of individuals who each have different motivations for joining.

Numerous scholars have dismissed Prothero's approach including David Chidester, Pamela E. Klassen and Robert Orsi.⁹³ Chidester argues that moralizing the study of religion will not make it a moral force.⁹⁴ Instead Chidester argues that the central problem that plagues religious studies is defining religion. Klassen is skeptical that scholars should approach religion in this way because of how it can be used against the scholars. She fears that the media will create sound bites that are used to discredit scholars.⁹⁵

Supporters of Prothero, such as R. Marie Griffith, argue that transparency in religious studies is essential and the act of bracketing limits this transparency.⁹⁶ However, even Griffith is concerned that Prothero does not take the role of empathy seriously.⁹⁷ In particular, Griffith is

⁹³ Robert Orsi et al., "Responses to 'Belief Unbracketed'," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Winter 2004, 16-18.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

critical of Prothero's notion that empathy has resulted in a fuzzy study because Griffith believes empathy is the only way to precisely listen to a subject.⁹⁸

For better or ill, this thesis will rely on the bracketed approach, but will lean more towards a hybrid approach like the one suggested by Griffith. This approach will be employed because of the sensitive subject matter. As a result, I must state that I unreservedly condemn the message of the nativist organization that is central to this thesis. However, I do believe that it is still worthy of study and its neglect in scholarship shows some of the limitations of an overly empathetic study. Due to empathy's influence in religious studies, scholars have shied away from studying the groups that fall outside of the bounds of empathy. That said, this thesis will not claim, as some scholars have, that *The Menace* does not practice religion or use religion to advance its message.

Regardless of the way it is used, if participants define something as a religion then it should be approached and studied as a religion. The possibility of religion in this case being used for reprehensible aims does not disqualify it from being religion. However, not all scholars are in agreement that "bad" religion should be approached in the same way or even be considered religion at all.

It is important to note that the contributors to *The Menace* did not believe their anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant advocacy was problematic and they surely did not believe that they were practicing bad religion. In one article, *The Menace* wrote that "to oppose what is wrong and inimical is just as much a mark of virtue as to support what is good and wholesome. In fact, the

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

support of a cause cannot be consistent unless it opposes the opponents of that cause.”⁹⁹ In its view, advocacy was not only permissible, but required. However, it did not advocate for violent protest, but instead a more civil one.

The Menace wrote in 1919 that “This fashionable talk about tolerating popery because Protestants and papists should dwell together in harmony is the sickliest kind of illogical sentiment.”¹⁰⁰ *The Menace* wanted Protestants and Catholics to be able to publicly disagree like Democrats and Republicans.¹⁰¹ While it is clear that *The Menace* is using a political example, it still viewed itself as advancing religious discourse.

There has also been a tendency to dismiss nativist publications as propaganda rather than news. Yet much is gained by approaching these publications as news. As noted by Gaye Tuchman in *Making News a Study in the Construction of Reality*, news “must be judged pertinent to both speaker and listener in order to be judged newsworthy.”¹⁰² As a result the stories that are covered are important, even though several were fabrications, but were presented as facts and historic events that happened. These false stories demonstrate something about the group that produces the text, but also the people who purchase the paper itself.

The way *The Menace* presented the news might be correctly viewed as a hybrid of traditional and unconventional techniques. Perhaps, most strikingly, nativist publications approached stories in a completely different way from more traditional publications. Tuchman

⁹⁹ “Why Protestantism Should Be Preached,” *The Menace*.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1980), 8.

notes that news organizations emphasize events rather than issues.¹⁰³ However, it is important to note that in the case of *The Menace*, the paper focused on issues rather than events. This was done to advance *The Menace*'s agenda, but to some degree every paper has an agenda. As a result, this difference is not as significant as it may initially appear. *The Menace* created several stories that had little to no factual basis, but they did so to provide themselves an opportunity to discuss specific issues. News organizations make conscious decisions on what stories to cover and what stories are not included in order to discuss specific issues or to sell papers. There are more traditional elements contained in *The Menace* and, like more mainstream publications, *The Menace* relied on the credibility of others.¹⁰⁴ Its willingness to rely on traditional news making techniques is just one way in which *The Menace* was a mainstream publication.

***The Menace* and its Place in Scholarship**

It is difficult to determine whether or not *The Menace* should be approached as a mainstream publication. It had a massive subscriber base and its circulation was three times greater than the largest daily papers in Chicago and New York.¹⁰⁵ However, as will be demonstrated, anti-Catholicism had significant support both politically and societally, although the term mainstream itself is a loaded term. It implies that the ideology advanced by *The Menace* was dominant, which is not entirely true. What is provable, however, is that *The Menace* advanced an ideology capable of garnering a significant number of subscribers.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 134.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 95.

¹⁰⁵ Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep*, 10.

Some scholars such as Nancy MacLean have stressed the importance of approaching these groups as they actually existed and not as a fringe ideology that had little support among Americans.¹⁰⁶ However, it is important to acknowledge that even early promoters of the second Klan were surprised by its widespread appeal. Initially the group expected to find far more success in the South, but it found success throughout the nation.¹⁰⁷ MacLean notes that in the early 1900s many nativist organizations, such as the Southern Publicity Association, endorsed similar messages and in some cases shared talent.¹⁰⁸ *The Menace* poached talent from other publications, but its procurement of talent and influences has previously been established. More importantly though, MacLean presents these groups as capitalizing on the popularity of nativism.¹⁰⁹ In MacLean's view, these groups blended mainstream values with a more radical ideology.¹¹⁰ The Klan, like the rest of America, believed that the family was important, but the way that the Klan enforced that value was different and often more violent.

Anti-Catholicism as a Mainstream Ideology

It is clear that *The Menace* advanced some of its own ideas, but it also built a base around nativist values that already existed. As previously noted, nativism reignites itself by recycling past ideas and past literature. Nativism as a whole was quite pervasive and had a significant influence on mainstream American politics in the early 1900s. Due to *The Menace*'s popularity

¹⁰⁶ MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, 4-5.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

nationwide, it is important to examine different examples that show the pervasiveness of nativist values.

The political landscape of the 1910's included an anti-Catholic element that *The Menace* capitalized on. *The Menace* made bold statements about Catholic candidates and presented these allegations in a way that made them appear realistic. They boldly and plainly stated that readers should vote against Colorado candidate Thomas Tynan because "He is a Knight of Columbus and so proud of it that he wears a badge on his coat. Such is the advice we have on him."¹¹¹ The information was presented in a clear manner because *The Menace* borrowed from the credibility of other anti-Catholic writers. In this way, *The Menace* engaged in politics using both religion and traditional news making techniques.

In *Rising Road: A True Tale of Love, Race, and Religion in America*, Sharon L. Davies writes, "In 1916, Florida voters signaled their concern about the Catholic menace ... by electing Baptist minister Sidney Johnston Catts governor after he vowed to roll back the papist tide."¹¹² *The Menace* supported Catts and wrote that "... Mr. Catts is a poor man—but he is rich in character, high ideals and nobility of purpose."¹¹³ In the same article, the paper predicted that "Catts will be overwhelmingly elected governor in November if every patriot stands at his post and sees to it that an honest election is held and an honest count of the ballots is had." This is just one example of *The Menace*'s involvement in politics. It is also important to note that *The*

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Sharon L. Davies, *Rising Road: A True Tale of Love, Race, and Religion in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 16.

¹¹³ "Florida's Shame Now, A Benefaction Later," *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), October 7, 1916, accessed October 4, 2017, [Chronicling America](#).

Menace supported political candidates that were capable of being elected democratically. These candidates also advanced *The Menace*'s ideologies while in office.

In South Dakota, the legislature passed a bill that required convents to be searched once a year.¹¹⁴ This bill also stated that all denominational seminaries had to be searched. Strangely, the people living at these institutions were referred to as “inmates.”¹¹⁵ *The Menace* also referred to women living in convents as inmates.¹¹⁶ On September 2, 1916 *The Menace* wrote that “Convent Inspection is now assured in Georgia. Governor Harris has signed the Veazy inspection bill which passed both houses by large majorities. Georgia is the second state in the Union to heed the call of democracy and give to inmates of Rome’s cloistered institutions a ray of hope. Arkansas was the first.”¹¹⁷ Many laws like this had anti-Catholic agendas behind them.

Whatever the case for the South Dakota bill, *The Menace* felt passionately about it. Shortly after its passing, *The Menace* stated, “A CONVENT INSPECTION BILL IN EVERY STATE IN THE UNION IS THE SLOGAN FROM NOW ON.”¹¹⁸ A similar bill was passed in Arkansas in 1915.¹¹⁹ The Arkansas bill required twelve citizens to petition local authorities in

¹¹⁴ *South Dakota Constitution and the Laws Passed at the Special Session and the Laws Passed at the Session of the Legislature of the State of South Dakota* (Hipple Print. Company, 1917), 831, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=odFGAQAAMAAJ>.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ “Convent Inspection,” *The Menace* (Aurora Missouri), September 2, 1916, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89066178/1916-09-02/ed-1/seq-1/>.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ “Bulman and the Convent Inspection Bill in S. Dakota,” *The Menace* (Aurora Missouri), March 24, 1917, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89066178/1917-03-24/ed-1/seq-3/>.

order for a search to be legal.¹²⁰ However, these were not the only laws and discrimination that Catholics faced during this time. In 1919 legislators in Tallahassee, Florida endorsed a similar plan:

heeding many of their constituents, [legislators] proposed such anti-Catholic measures as a convent inspection bill to investigate suspected wrongdoings in “closed” convents and parochial schools, prohibition laws depriving churches of sacramental wine, “garb” bills to prohibit priests and nuns from wearing religious clothing or insignia while teaching in public schools, taxation of church property, and required Bible readings in public schools.¹²¹

Florida had a difficult relationship with Catholicism. Many people were fearful of a Catholic takeover despite the fact that Catholics made up only three percent of the state’s population.¹²² According to Rackleff, “many of the same people who had fought railroads and land barons at the turn of the century were fighting the Catholic hierarchy a few years later.”¹²³

Similarly to *The Menace*, the Florida legislature focused on education. In almost every issue of *The Menace*, the editors printed a small cartoon which called the public school system “The Antidote for Papal Poison.”¹²⁴ In 1913, Florida passed a bill which gave county boards the

¹¹⁹ James M. Woods, “Convent Inspection Act of 1915,” Convent Inspection Act of 1915, December 15, 2015, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=7744>.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Robert B. Rackleff, “Anti-Catholicism and the Florida Legislature, 1911-1919,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (April 01, 1972): 353, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/30147306?ref=search-gateway:8dd94d969f9719d891d8b455f03b0c2e>.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ “The Antidote for Papal Poison,” *The Menace*, October 31, 1914, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89066178/1914-10-31/ed-1/seq-1/>.

power to regulate what a teacher could and could not wear.¹²⁵ However, this law was mainly used in counties where Catholics were teaching non-Catholics.¹²⁶ This bill was exceptionally popular in the House, passing with 49 votes for and only 11 against.¹²⁷

In Colorado, a bill was introduced that would have required Catholic churches to acquire a liquor license to serve sacramental wine.¹²⁸ In Alabama, a convent inspection bill failed to pass, but that did not stop the legislature from passing a law requiring compulsory bible reading in public schools.¹²⁹ According to one account, “In Birmingham a nativist organization was voted into the city administration, and it purged the staff of all Catholic employees.”¹³⁰ *The Menace* would have supported such legislation and there was a large amount of it being produced in a number of different states. As a result, it is not fruitful to approach nativism as a fringe ideology that was only advanced by a minority. Nativists were able to get politicians elected that shared at least some of the aspects of their ideology. *The Menace* was not a fringe publication, but part of the journalistic mainstream.

These bills and *The Menace*'s coverage of them demonstrate that the newspaper was engaged with the wider society. In this way *The Menace* was mainstream for its time, and it presented its message, at least in part, using popular news making techniques. *The Menace* engaged with a large subscriber base through its use of mainstream news making techniques,

¹²⁵ Rickleff, *Florida*, 356.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 357

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 359.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 353.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 354.

such as sensationalism, and as a result impacted the political environment at the time. The following chapter will establish that *The Menace* also interacted with other publications to advance its nativist message.

Summary

Chapter Two established that *The Menace* used traditional news making techniques in order to deliver a message that was compelling to a large group of people. It also engaged with wider political movements and endorsed values that were reflected in numerous bills passed throughout the country. *The Menace*'s popularity and its news making techniques suggest it should be viewed as a mainstream publication and it should be more regularly included in discussions about nativism. By recognizing that this publication was mainstream in several aspects, it is possible to better understand *The Menace*, but also nativism as a whole. Chapter Three will examine in greater detail the ways in which *The Menace* interacted with other publications to advance its agenda and combat critiques.

CHAPTER 3: *THE MENACE* OR A MENACE?

The previous chapter established that while the views expressed in *The Menace* are troubling they were far from fringe. This chapters aim to further illustrate how *The Menace* was viewed by and interacted with the wider society and other publications.

While nativism was a mainstream value that was held by many politicians and seen in legislation it was obviously not endorsed by every American. Nativism was also actively fought against by different people, politicians, and publications. This chapter will explore how various publications from the period viewed *The Menace*. Publications from all over the United States will be discussed, but the focus will primarily be on publications from surrounding states.

In general, publications wrote about *The Menace* for three different reasons. First, and probably most commonly, publications would cover *The Menace* when it was in court. Second, *The Menace* would be written about if it was urging its readers to vote for or against a specific candidate. Finally, *The Menace*'s general message would sometimes be attacked by using testimonials or editorials.

It is important to note that many papers discussed in this chapter are Catholic publications. This is unsurprising because of the content of *The Menace*. It also needs to be stressed that there was a general hopelessness felt by many publications that did not share *The Menace*'s view because legally it was very difficult to attack *The Menace*. However, attempts to combat *The Menace* in court took two forms. First, smaller individual cases were brought against *The Menace* and second, and more severely, different groups tried to get it banned for violating obscenity laws.

When *The Menace* did find itself engaged in a legal battle or a potential legal battle, it would attempt to turn it into a free speech issue and not one of fact versus fiction. *The Menace* would also regularly run articles defending nativists or anti-Catholics while they were in court. In an article written after two men were arrested for distributing some anti-Catholic material, that *The Menace* had not seen, the newspaper published the following:

IF THE SECOND INQUISITION MUST START AT THIS TIME, A MORE FITTING PLACE THAN PHILADELPHIA, THE CRADLE OF LIBERTY, COULD NOT HAVE BEEN SELECTED. IT WOULD BE IN KEEPING WITH THE KIND OF PATRIOTISM POSSESSED BY THE POLITICAL POLLIWOGS WHO ARE RUNNING THIS GOVERNMENT AT THE PRESENT TIME!¹³¹

While *The Menace* was no stranger to the courtroom, it rarely found itself in any significant trouble, at least in the United States. In Canada the Postmaster General decided to ban the publication. In the United States there was a law in place that banned sending obscene material through the mail, but the U.S. Postmaster General failed to make a decision on the issue, allowing it to be distributed.¹³² *The Menace*'s central argument that kept it from getting banned was that the material had already been circulated by several sources through the mail already.¹³³ As a result, *The Menace* was successful in turning this into a free speech issue. The jury was convinced by this argument, even if they were not willing to endorse its message.¹³⁴ In an article written about the court case, *The Menace* states that even its Catholic detractors had sent

¹³¹ "Catholics Warring on the Menace," *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), March 1, 1913.

¹³² Kenneth C. Barnes, *Anti-Catholicism in Arkansas: How Politicians, the Press, the Klan, and Religious Leaders Imagined an Enemy, 1910-1960* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2016), 81-82.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

“evidence” through the mail.¹³⁵ *The Menace* would regularly pen articles about its impending legal troubles in order to garner support from its readers. This also gave them the opportunity to reestablish that they were making waves and that is why they were being attacked.

Individual court cases against *The Menace* were largely unsuccessful. That is likely why many publications aimed to get *The Menace* banned once and for all as it had been in Canada.

One article in *The Catholic Tribune* reminded the Postmaster General that:

As postmaster general you have express power, under section 161, page 80 of United States compiled statutes, to prescribe regulations, not inconsistent with law, for the government of your department and the performance of the business in your department.¹³⁶

This article is a published letter to the Postmaster General which, when sent, included a copy of *The Menace*. The copy of the paper was included to illustrate that the paper should be banned because of the “tone and character of the publication in general, as well as to the advertisements it contains.”¹³⁷ Other publications argued that it should be banned because its “sole and only object is to create dissention, spread poison and inflame the passions of hate ought to be considered a public nuisance.”¹³⁸ According to an Oregon newspaper, “it is capitalizing on man’s well-known weaknesses, intolerance, bigotry, suspicion and ignorance and its poor dupes are pouring money into its coffers.”¹³⁹

¹³⁵ “Side Lights on the Trial,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), January 29, 1916.

¹³⁶ “A Strong Argument Against The “Menace”,” *The Catholic Tribune* (St. Joseph, Missouri), September 19, 1914.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ “More Religious Bigotry,” *Corvallis Gazette-Times* (Corvallis, Oregon), April 21, 1917.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

In an editorial, *The Daily Review* (published in Decatur, Illinois) stated that “*The Menace* which is a menace to decency and true citizenship, has seen fit to attack president Taft because he has honored good, true and competent men who believe in the catholic faith.”¹⁴⁰ *The Daily Review* went on to state that “*The Menace* is neither a newspaper nor a periodical.”¹⁴¹ In the view of *The Daily Review*, the purpose of *The Menace* was “to enrich its editor, incite strife, promote ill-feeling among neighbors and in some communities may possibly be the cause of riot and perhaps murder.”¹⁴² Needless to say many publications viewed *The Menace* as an extremely divisive publication that was a hatred producing machine.

Bets, Oaths, and Unsatisfying Endings

The Menace also engaged with a number of other publications and individuals through various bets and response articles. Even when *The Menace* was not the center of attention, it found a way to inject itself into the conversation. One of the best examples of this is the newspaper’s relationship with the Knights of Columbus Oath. Accusing the Catholic fraternal organization of disloyalty, *The Menace* alleged that the Knights used a treasonous oath. This alleged oath is a form of anti-Catholic propaganda that emphasized that Catholics were unable to be loyal, patriotic Americans. The alleged oath is as follows:

I, _____, now in the presence of Almighty God, the blessed Virgin Mary, the blessed St. John the Baptist, the Holy Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, and all the saints, sacred host of Heaven, and to you, my Ghostly Father, the superior general of the Society of Jesus, founded by St. Ignatius Loyola, in the pontification of Paul the III, and

¹⁴⁰ John H. Ryan, “From the People,” *The Daily Review* (Decatur, Illinois), August 26, 1912.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

continued to the present, do by the womb of the Virgin, the matrix of God, and the red of Jesus Christ, declare and swear that His Holiness, the Pope, is Christ's vice regent and is the true and only head of the Catholic or Universal Church throughout the earth; and that by virtue of the keys of binding and loosing given His Holiness by my Savior, Jesus Christ, he hath power to depose heretical kings, princes, States, Commonwealths, and Governments and they may be safely destroyed. Therefore to the utmost of my power I will defend this doctrine and His Holiness's right and custom against all usurpers of the heretical or Protestant authority whatever, especially the Lutheran Church of Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway and the now pretended authority and Churches of England and Scotland, and the branches of same now established in Ireland and on the Continent of America and elsewhere, and all adherents in regard that they may be usurped and heretical, opposing the sacred Mother Church of Rome.

I do now denounce and disown any allegiance as due to any heretical king, prince, or State, named Protestant or Liberals, or obedience to any of their laws, magistrates, or officers.

I do further declare that the doctrine of the Churches of England and Scotland, of the Calvinists, Huguenots, and others of the name of Protestants or Masons to be damnable, and they themselves to be damned who will not forsake the same.

I do further declare that I will help, assist, and advise all or any of His Holiness's agents, in any place where I should be, in Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Ireland, or America, or in any other kingdom or territory I shall come to, and do my utmost to extirpate the heretical Protestant or Masonic doctrines and to destroy all their pretended power, legal or otherwise.

I do further promise and declare that, notwithstanding I am dispensed with to assume any religion heretical for the propagation of the Mother Church's interest, to keep secret and private all her agents counsels from time to time, as they entrust me, and not divulge, directly or indirectly, by word, writing, or circumstances whatever, but to execute all that should be proposed, given in charge, or discovered unto me by you, my Ghostly Father, or any of this sacred order.

I do further promise and declare that I will have no opinion or will of my own or any mental reservation whatsoever, even as a corpse or cadaver (*perinde ac cadaver*), but will unhesitatingly obey each and every command that I may receive from my superiors in the militia of the Pope and of Jesus Christ.

That I will go to any part of the world whithersoever I may be sent, to the frozen regions north, jungles of India, to the centers of civilization of Europe, or to the wild haunts of the barbarous savages of America without murmuring or repining, and will be submissive in all things whatsoever is communicated to me.

I do further promise and declare that I will, when opportunity presents, make and wage relentless war, secretly and openly, against all heretics, Protestants and Masons, as I am directed to do, to extirpate them from the face of the whole earth : and that I will spare neither age, sex, or condition, and that I will hang, burn, waste, boil, flay, strangle, and bury alive these infamous heretics : rip up the stomachs and wombs of their women, and crush their infants' heads against the walls in order to annihilate their execrable race.

That when the same can not be done openly, I will secretly use the poisonous cup, the strangulation cord, the steel of the poniard, or the leaden bullet, regardless of honor, rank, dignity, or authority of the persons, whatever may be their condition in life, either public

or private, as I at any time may be directed so to do by any agents of the Pope or superior of the Brotherhood of the Holy Father of the Society of Jesus.

In confirmation of which I hereby dedicate my life, soul, and all corporal powers, and with the dagger which I now receive I will subscribe my name written in my blood in testimony thereof : and should I prove false or weaken in my determination, may my brethren and fellow soldiers of the militia of the Pope cut off my hands and feet and my throat from ear to ear, my belly opened and Sulphur burned therein with all the punishments that can be inflicted upon me on earth and my soul shall be tortured by demons in eternal hell forever.

That I will in voting always vote for a K. of C. in preference to a Protestant, especially a Mason, and that I will leave my party so to do: that if two Catholics are on the Ticket I will satisfy myself which is the better supporter of Mother Church and vote accordingly. That I will not deal with or employ a Protestant if in my power to deal with or employ a Catholic. That I will place Catholic girls in Protestant families that a weekly report may be made of the inner movements of the heretics.

That I will provide myself with arms and ammunition that I may be in readiness when the word is passed, or I am commanded to defend the church as an individual or with the militia of the Pope. All of which I, _____, do swear by the blessed trinity and blessed sacrament which I am now to receive to perform and on part to keep this, my oath. In testimony hereof, I take this most holy and blessed sacrament of the Eucharist and witness the same further with my name written with the point of this dagger dipped in my own blood and seal in the face of this holy sacrament.¹⁴³

Other publications such as *The Catholic Tribune* classified *The Menace* as little more than “anti-Catholic propaganda.”¹⁴⁴ *The Catholic Tribune* also emphasized that *The Menace* was creating organizations outside of the publication and noted that this was disconcerting.¹⁴⁵ *The Catholic Tribune* also ran an article that was originally published in the *Western Catholic of Quincy* which offered a \$10,000 reward to *The Menace* if it won a particular court case. However, if *The Menace* was convicted and agreed to the \$10,000 bet, it would have to print this confession of guilt in each and every issue:

¹⁴³ United States, Senate, *Congressional Record*, vol. XLIX, Part IV (Washington, 1913), 3216.

¹⁴⁴ “The Menace and Its Club,” *The Catholic Tribune* (St. Joseph, Missouri), January 18, 1913.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

I. The editor of the ‘Menace,’ fully, freely and without reservation confess, that I have lied about the Catholic church, the Knights of Columbus and all things Catholic. All this I did without one thread of justification, knowing that I was lying, my sole and only purpose to stir up hatred against the Catholic church and all things Catholic. I realize that I richly deserve and ought to receive the eternal contempt and condemnation of all honest men.

Upon my bended knees I humbly beg the merciful pardon of those pure, noble self-sacrificing men and women whom I have sought, by my base lies, to slander. I confess that I am not only a liar, but a sneaking coward as well, who would turn his back on his country’s flag as shamefully as did Benedict Arnold. I am a prating, blatant, masquerading patriot in times of peace, but a whining, cringing coward when my country is in danger. Finally, I confess that my crimes cry to heaven for vengeance, and that an eternity is too short to make amends.¹⁴⁶

The Menace’s claims about the Knights of Columbus are well documented by several publications. *The Hunting Herald* printed a quote from Rev. J. F. Noll refuting the authenticity of the Knights of Columbus oath. He also offered to pay \$10,000 to anyone who could prove that any Knight of Columbus took this oath. Alongside this quote, *The Hunting Herald* also printed, “‘The Menace.’ The sheet is as its name implies. It is a menace to decency—a menace to peace and order---a menace to tolerance---a menace to true Americanism—a menace to the spirit of fraternity.”¹⁴⁷

The Menace responded to the bet, printing the terms in full and mostly unaltered. However, *The Menace* doubted that the doctor had the money or the intention of ever going through with the bet. *The Menace* claimed to have sent Dr. Charles J. Cummings a self-addressed stamped envelope, but never received a response. Unfortunately, this is where the story ends. A lot of *The Menace*’s interactions appear to end in this way. The formula was quite simple. Another publication would write something about *The Menace*, a reader of *The Menace* would

¹⁴⁶ Charles J. Cummings, “The ‘Menace’ Editor Must Give Proofs.,” *The Catholic Tribune* (St. Joseph, Missouri), October 26, 1912.

¹⁴⁷ “Rev. Noll Offers Opportunity to Collect Sum of Money,” *The Hunting Herald* (Indiana), October 31, 1912.

send in a clip and *The Menace* would respond, but rarely if ever did the other paper end up responding a second time.

The lack of a response from Dr. Cummings is not particularly surprising, even if *The Menace* actually did respond to him directly. This is because the bet was altered by *The Menace*. *The Menace* proposed that they form a committee of three disinterested parties with *The Menace* choosing one member and Dr. Cummings choosing another. These two members were to select a third member cooperatively. In one article, *The Menace* mentioned that it had already selected its committee member, but never stated who it had selected. *The Menace* also wanted to meet in person and confusingly wanted to know how the “expense of meetings should be divided and taken care of.” In the same article *The Menace* noted that it planned to use the money to expand its publication.¹⁴⁸ It is easy to see that this bet would likely never be resolved because it would be hard enough for the committee to be formed and even more difficult still for a consensus to be reached.

The Menace's relationship with the Knights of Columbus Oath was particularly strange. *The Menace*'s publishing of the Knights of Columbus Oath was extremely careful. It was printed as an oath in *The Menace* and it is heavily implied that the oath was legitimate, but even the subheading of the article refers to it as an alleged oath. Despite this, *The Menace* does print the oath in full. *The Menace* also noted correctly that the oath is in the *Congressional Record*.¹⁴⁹ However, *The Menace* treated this as evidence of the oath's legitimacy rather than noting that it was only ever introduced into *Congressional Record* because Congressman Eugene C.

¹⁴⁸ “A \$10,000 Bet Is Called,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), December 7, 1912.

¹⁴⁹ George H. Buss, “Congress Prints Alleged K. C. Oath,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), March 8, 1913.

Bonniwell believed that an organization supporting his political opponent printed this oath in order to slander him.¹⁵⁰ The oath was not originally printed by *The Menace*, but instead *The Menace* only printed it after Bonniwell submitted it before Congress. However, even though Bonniwell's issue was not with *The Menace*, his complaints were very similar to what other people would later say about *The Menace*. Bonniwell wrote that:

But when a calumnious, viperish attack upon either faith or race is launched, injecting religious bigotry into the political affairs of this Nation, then this protest is made in the certain confidence that all patriotic men, mindful of the religious as well as the political liberty that the forefathers designed should be our heritage, will rise and strike down the beneficiary of such a treacherous and dastardly movement.

After this article, *The Menace* was not done using or mentioning the oath. One sidebar later printed in *The Menace* read:

We wish to again state that the Menace does not now sell the alleged Knight of Columbus oath in Circular form. It can be found in Menace No. 99 which can be supplied at 50 cents a hundred or \$4.50 per thousand, or it can be found in the Congressional Record of Feb. 15, 1913.¹⁵¹

While offering bulk pricing was not a concrete endorsement, it is safe to say that it was a long way from a firm condemnation. Later articles of *The Menace* would speculate on what the oath included. Ultimately *The Menace* concluded that "No matter what their oath, or whether they take one of any kind, the Nits can regain some degree of standing in the United States only by behaving themselves. It is up to them."¹⁵² This oath was important because it showed *The Menace* interacting with a different publication, in this case the *Chester Republican*. It also

¹⁵⁰ United States, Senate, *Congressional Record*, vol. XLIX, Part IV, 3216.

¹⁵¹ "Notice to Readers," *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), February 28, 1914. *The Menace*'s citation is incorrect, but my previous footnote is the correct location of the oath.

¹⁵² "That Knights of Columbus Oath," *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), September 12, 1914.

illustrated how *The Menace*, unlike other publications and individuals, was able to stay out of legal trouble while essentially endorsing the same values. Unfortunately, the fake oath did not die with *The Menace*, but instead lived on. Even articles in the 1920s mention that publications were still attempting to refute this oath. After *The Menace* ceased publication, the fact the oath was entered into *Congressional Record* remained compelling to people who were either unable or unwilling to verify why it was entered in the first place.¹⁵³

As previously noted *The Menace* was frequently in court, but rarely convicted. As a result, many newspaper references to *The Menace* were in regard to its legal troubles. Particularly interesting is the court case that was filed by Peter E. Burress of Joplin because it is mentioned by both *The Menace* and other publications. When writing about the court case *The Menace* reminded its readers that:

we do stand unalterably committed to the principle of free speech and free press, and we claim the right to protect our interests where they become involved with socialists the same as if they were involved with democrats or republicans, and a conspiracy to destroy the Appeal to Reasons is no better than a conspiracy to destroy any other business, if that conspiracy is malicious and contrary to law.¹⁵⁴

While *The Menace* was allied with *The Appeal to Reason* in regards to free speech and a free press, it was definitely opposed to its general message referring to *The Appeal to Reason* as an “aggressive champion of Socialist propaganda.”¹⁵⁵

In contrast, the *Lawrence Chieftain* provided more details about the case and little commentary. Peter Burress alleged that he lost the election for two reasons. First, *The Menace*

¹⁵³ V. H. Pannell, “The Alleged Knights of Columbus Oath,” *Austin American-Statesman* (Texas), March 17, 1923.

¹⁵⁴ “A Heretofore Unheard of Conspiracy Against The Menace Brought to Light!” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), April 12, 1913.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

printed articles containing libelous material, and second, it circulated copies in the county where he was attempting to get elected.¹⁵⁶ The only thing that is known about the conclusion of this court case is that it was ultimately settled out of court.¹⁵⁷

Other publications, such as the *Catholic Tribune*, printed testimonials of ex-nativists or Catholic converts. One such testimonial in the *Catholic Tribune* alleges that people were engaged in disseminating nativism long before *The Menace*'s editor was born. This testimonial concludes that *The Menace* "contains nothing new to us."¹⁵⁸ This article is particularly interesting because it established that people were aware that *The Menace* was using past material to resurrect an old message. Past chapters have mentioned that *The Menace*, like other nativist publications, used older material in order to advance its message. Nativism was not created by *The Menace*, but instead it was made more popular by packaging and repackaging techniques. At least one testimonial highlighted this fact.

Other articles, such as the one by the *Trenton Evening Times*, showed that different dioceses and clergy members were aware that *The Menace*'s vague allegations were a powerful tool that kept the newspaper out of legal trouble. Another article noted that "up to this time the paper is said to have dealt only in generalities in referring to the Catholic bishops, priests and nuns. Now that it has mentioned a particular convent the church authorities have decided to appear against it in court."¹⁵⁹ This intentional vagueness was a powerful tool that allowed *The*

¹⁵⁶ "Menace Sued For Damage," *Lawrence Chieftain* (Mount Vernon, Missouri), September 26, 1912.

¹⁵⁷ Kenneth C. Barnes, *Anti-Catholicism in Arkansas: How Politicians, the Press, the Klan, and Religious Leaders Imagined an Enemy, 1910-1960* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2016), 81.

¹⁵⁸ "An Open Confession," *The Catholic Tribune* (St. Joseph, Missouri), August 2, 1913.

Menace to stay out of court, but it also allowed *The Menace* to create stories that were not capable of being successfully challenged.

Other articles took a different tone and some, on occasion, contained factual errors. One article from *The Catholic Advance* alleged that *The Menace* was “founded, financed, owned and run by socialist money, in the interest of Socialism under the cloak of antagonism to the Catholic Church.”¹⁶⁰ This claim is unlikely given that *The Menace* only supported socialism when it was having legal trouble. *The Catholic Advocate* went on to allege that J. A. Wayland was the founder of both *The Menace* and *The Appeal to Reason*.¹⁶¹ This claim is however, very likely untrue and denied by *The Menace*.¹⁶² Some scholars have supported this claim because *The Menace*, the *Appeal to Reason* and the socialist party in Kansas all used the same attorney. However, the original citation for that claim acknowledges that their connection is “circumstantial.”¹⁶³

Certain articles also provided readers with a means of evaluating a paper’s value. One such article can be found in the *Kentucky Irish American*. This article stated that:

As a rule it is a safe bet to judge a paper or magazine by the advertising it carries, but I hate to think that the Rev. Teddy Walker and his associates on the *Menace* are as

¹⁵⁹ “Charging Libel and Indecency to Sue 'Menace',” *Trenton Evening Times*, September 26, 1913.

¹⁶⁰ “Plain Language,” *The Catholic Advance* (Wichita, Kansas), August 16, 1913.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² “Genesis According to Priest Noll,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), March 22, 1919.

¹⁶³ Shore, *Talkin' Socialism*, 255. This connection is used frequently by scholars, but it is irresponsible to allege this without a more reliable citation. Unfortunately business records are not available and so a concrete tie is unlikely to ever be proven. However, as previously noted *The Menace* employed many people who were previously employed by the *Appeal to Reason*.

disreputable as the ads they run on its sanctified pages. It is a well-known fact that they are narrow-minded religious zealots who have been bitten with the lust for money.¹⁶⁴

The article went on to explore *The Menace*'s demographics. The article stated that:

The Menace and its followers are on the wrong track and going in the wrong direction. Fortunately, however, they constitute a very small minority of Protestants. Only the riff raff, the cheap, petty, dogmatic, ignorant followers of Protestantism give way to wild, unreasoning prejudice.¹⁶⁵

This article fell into a common trap that even scholarship is for a time guilty. As noted in Chapter One, it was commonly asserted that members of nativist groups, namely the Klan, were uneducated and poor, but that has since been disproven. It is unlikely that *The Menace* was that different from other nativist groups.

What is clear is that people were divided on how to combat *The Menace*. As outlined in this chapter, many publications sought to have *The Menace* banned entirely. In order to more thoroughly refute *The Menace*'s claims, quotes and sometimes complete articles were printed in different newspapers. Sometimes letters were also printed that were written by either contributors to *The Menace* or supporters of *The Menace*.

One such article can be found in *The Tribune*. This article was an open letter written against some of the sentiments that were endorsed in *The Menace*, but also in a letter that *The Tribune* decided to run. This response was several pages long, but it contained five central points.

1. The allegations in the letter are old and "getting decrepit from many campaigns."
2. Benedict Arnold was anti-Catholic and thus it is hard to be American and anti-Catholic
3. *The Menace* makes big claims but also rejects evidence
4. *The Menace* has a wide reach and a large subscriber base and makes a lot of money
5. *The Menace* advocated for violence against Catholics

¹⁶⁴ "Menace," *Kentucky Irish American* (Louisville, Kentucky), December 16, 1916.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

This response letter provided evidence on a number of occasions, but there is no record of a correspondence between this paper and *The Menace* after these two letters. It appears that repeated engagement was uncommon and that there were few if any examples of *The Menace* engaging directly with the same paper multiple times regarding a single issue or claim. Even the author of this response letter acknowledged that the letter's authorship was not entirely clear, and she was unsure to whom she was addressing. Regardless, this summarized response is included because at the very least it shows that smaller publications outside of Missouri were very much aware of *The Menace*. The response is quite detailed and even provides some dates to check out if the reader is interested in verifying what she is saying. This is despite the fact that the author of this letter states plainly she does not read *The Menace*.

One date that is mentioned is August 10, 1918. The author of the letter in *The Tribune* wrote that "the Menace, which in the August 10th issue advocated the wholesale hanging of Catholics in America as a war measure..."¹⁶⁶ As previously noted there is a consensus in scholarship is that *The Menace* was a mostly non-violent publication. However, this claim is not entirely true. The August 10, 1918 issue mentioned hanging once, but never a wholesale hanging of Catholics. Instead *The Menace* wrote that "Certainly it would be better to abolish the Vatican, hang a few cardinals, bishops and priests than it is to go on indefinitely with a war of exterminating the poor helpless slaves of the Kaiser."¹⁶⁷ While the response letter from *The Tribune* greatly exaggerated what was written in *The Menace*, it did highlight that *The Menace*, at least at times, was willing to endorse violent action. While there were few if any other

¹⁶⁶ "A Strong Argument Against The "Menace"," *The Catholic Tribune* (St. Joseph, Missouri), September 19, 1914.

¹⁶⁷ Gilbert O. Nations, "Diplomacy and Intrigue of Pope," *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), August 10, 1918.

examples of *The Menace* advocating for violence, this letter did challenge the notion that *The Menace* was completely non-violent or opposed to violence.

Summary

Reading how *The Menace* was viewed by its contemporaries helps better situate it in its context. Too often a dominant view is studied but dissenting voices are robbed yet again of their voice. This chapter showed that while *The Menace* was a massive publication that engaged with the wider society. This chapter also shows that the detractors' critiques were not always completely accurate and sometimes facts were stretched or exaggerated, and, in some cases, inaccurate information was included.

CHAPTER 4: APPROACHING NATIVISM THROUGH RACE, GENDER, AND RELIGION

In general, nativism has been approached on an individual basis, but there are several strands of nativism that can be found in different nativist groups. This is particularly true with *The Menace* because of how it viewed women, Catholics, and ethnic groups. However, rarely is *The Menace* included in discussions about nativism and the prevalence of nativist values in American society. Chapter Two's primary goal was to establish that *The Menace* and nativism were mainstream and should be studied more frequently. Chapter Three focused on how *The Menace* interacted with other publications and individuals. Chapter Four will establish that *The Menace* was not quite as different from other nativist groups as it might initially appear.

This link to other nativist publications, as well as nativism in general, is important to establish for several reasons. One reason is because there "is a frustrating lack of any extant business records or correspondence within or between [progressive-era anti-Catholic] papers."¹⁶⁸ As a result, scholars are forced to look at common themes and repackaged stories in order to establish that the groups were similar.

It is equally important to acknowledge that while these groups were similar in many ways, they did have differences as well. Scholars such as Justin Nordstrom have noted that anti-Catholic publications in general shied away from using racial caricatures and writing about ethnicity.¹⁶⁹ However, while this is generally true for anti-Catholic papers, this is not entirely true for *The Menace*. Despite its different techniques, *The Menace*, like other anti-Catholic

¹⁶⁸ Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep*, 11.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

publications, endorsed other anti-Catholic papers and received endorsements from them in return.¹⁷⁰

For this reason, nativism is best approached as a phenomenon that regularly reignited itself using past literature, but did so by repackaging old materials in new ways. It often produced new materials using common themes, but with a slight refocusing. This can make the coherence of the repackaged materials hard to follow, but it is clear that *The Menace* attempted to repackage past material in a way that produced a coherent message.

Chapter Four will also examine some of the ways in which different nativist groups have used and changed common themes in order to advance competing agendas. Nativism has consistently found new ways to reignite itself, but it has also found new ways to reinvent itself. While many forms of nativism articulate different messages, they use similar terms, sometimes with different meanings, in order to advance the ideologies, they endorse.

One such term is race. Previous chapters have established that, while *The Menace* was a racist organization, it was not racist in a modern way, but instead reflected some similar views to that of other organizations and publications that existed during its run. *The Menace*, like other publications, viewed a person's nationality as his or her race. However, as highlighted by Daniels, the way a group perceives race is influenced by more than just the color of someone's skin or where they come from. Daniels rightly highlights that gender also plays a prominent role in how a person is perceived, but race and gender are not wholly detached from one another.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 80-81.

¹⁷¹ Daniels, *White Lies*, 71-85.

The Menace, like other nativist organizations, frequently described women in different terms than men. Men were misled into being Catholic or were active participants in misleading others, but women were described as victims.

It also suggested that Catholicism was its own race in a few articles, but this idea was never fleshed out fully. Clearly, *The Menace*'s contributors believed that regardless of where people were from, they could still assimilate and become American by changing their race and thereby changing their citizenship.

Other nativist groups and publication also advanced the idea that someone's race could be changed through their own actions. However, some groups and publications asserted that this was accomplished through contact with other races.¹⁷² From the perspective of many nativists, switching races was a negative event. However, in *The Menace*'s view, a change in race was only possible through an ideological shift, not through sexual contact with another race. *The Menace* also never mentioned a Protestant changing his or her race by converting to Catholicism.

Regardless, this conception of race is not wholly different from other nativist groups or publications. Sociologist Jessie Daniels notes that other publications have also adopted different conceptions of race in order to maintain some level of coherence or to advance an agenda.¹⁷³ In a similar way, *The Menace* used its conception of race to show that assimilation could change people and on at least one occasion *The Menace* privileged U.S. citizenship over where a person was originally from. Nativist publications, as noted by Daniels, did not agree on how to approach

¹⁷² Ibid., 80.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 78-79.

race. As a result, there are many different conceptions of race.¹⁷⁴ It is, however, clear that many nativist groups viewed race in similar ways.

The Vagueness of Nativist Discourse

The Menace viewed Protestantism as very important to American society, but it is a stretch to say that *The Menace* advanced a form of religion. *The Menace* endorsed and condemned certain values. However, it did not consistently advocate for different religious values in absolute terms. This is largely because *The Menace*, like other nativist publications, gave specific examples when dealing with its opponents and only endorsed certain values in vague terms.

In general, *The Menace* presented itself in vague terms while it constructed its opponents in a very concrete way. However, it frequently used religion as a means of constructing itself as well as otherizing its enemies. *The Menace* did not doubt the beliefs of Catholics, but instead attacked the hierarchical structure that established their beliefs. The structure itself was viewed as a corrupting force. This corrupting force was, in the view of *The Menace*, capable of destroying essential American values, such as the family unit.

Nordstrom rightly notes that anti-Catholic publications were particularly concerned with the ideology of their opponents, as well as their political aspirations.¹⁷⁵ When attacking the ideology of Catholicism, *The Menace* was uncharacteristically specific. In general, *The Menace* presented itself as a publication that did not condemn Catholicism as a religion, but instead opposed “the superstitious, priest owned, sublimely ignorant papist, whose every hope of eternal

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep*, 27.

life rests in the petticoated ‘father’ to whom he goes in every emergency.”¹⁷⁶ However, *The Menace* did offer the Catholic Church some terms that needed to be met before the fight could end. In an article from 1915, *The Menace* outlined seven things that needed to change.

- (1) She [the Catholic Church] must cut wholly loose from the temporal sovereignty of Italian Popery.
- (2) She must champion sincerely the doctrine of complete separation of church and state.
- (3) She must champion our civil laws as being above the laws of the Vatican.
- (4) She must get out of and stay out of American politics.
- (5) She must champion the American public system.
- (6) She must throw open the doors of her convents, nunneries, monasteries and Houses of Good Shepherd to official inspection.
- (7) She must occupy the same position in this country as do the Protestant, Jewish and all other churches.¹⁷⁷

If these terms were met, then the Roman Catholic Church would “enjoy full and untrammelled religious liberty under our Constitution.”¹⁷⁸ These terms are important because they are a concise summary of what *The Menace* advocated.

The alleged problems that *The Menace* identified also played into how it viewed Catholics from different regions. *The Menace* did not view every Catholic as similar, but instead divided them by the countries they came from. *The Menace* viewed Italians as a more subversive group than the Irish.¹⁷⁹ In the newspaper’s view, the Irish were capable of becoming Americanized and had done so at such a rapid rate that the Vatican had begun sending over

¹⁷⁶ “Shin Bone Citizens,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), September 25, 1915, *Chronicling America*.

¹⁷⁷ “What Rome Must Do To Be Saved,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), July 24, 1915, *Chronicling America*.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 2245.

Italians rather than Irish people.¹⁸⁰ This led *The Menace* to more actively attack Italian Catholics and to more passively condemn Irish Catholics. However, *The Menace* did not look favorably on either group.

The Menace also emphasized that because of the American political environment and perceived endorsement of private schools, Catholicism had taken a stronger hold in the United States than in France or Germany.¹⁸¹ In one article cataloging the church affiliations of Italians, *The Menace* presented them as insincere passive participants that largely disregarded the institution. However, *The Menace* also believed some Protestants in America “to be as much, if not more, under the influence of the Vatican than either France or Italy.”¹⁸²

The Menace relied quite heavily on quotes from different Catholic leaders. In an article about an archbishop addressing his Italian Catholic constituents, it argued that building more Catholic social centers would delay the assimilation of Italian Americans.¹⁸³ This was a common theme in *The Menace*. *The Menace* regularly asserted that foreign Catholics were attempting to subvert already established institutions.

However, for *The Menace* there was more at stake than the establishment of social services. In an article titled “Those Catholic Aliens,” *The Menace* noted that “Italians who flock to this country are largely Catholic, have lived in a Catholic atmosphere and fall under influence

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ “Church Affiliations of Italians,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), March 9, 1918, *Chronicling America*.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ “Social Centers Denounced By Roman Bishop of Philadelphia,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), July 19, 1919, *Chronicling America*.

and control when they upon our shores.”¹⁸⁴ It was the frequency of contact that *The Menace* found troubling. In the view of *The Menace*, these charitable organizations limited Catholic contact with the outside, Protestant world. As a result, they threatened American values and that is why *The Menace* took issue with them.

Using Disproven Materials

Like other nativist organizations, *The Menace* presented Catholicism as a subversive religion. *The Menace*, like other nativist organizations, presented Catholics and particularly clergy as sexual deviants who preyed on women who could not protect themselves.¹⁸⁵ As previously noted *The Menace* supported and reprinted *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, despite the fact that it had already been refuted and disproven by this point in history.

Continuing to use disproven material, *The Menace* wrote about the Popess Joan. Joan, however, was a fabrication, and did not exist.¹⁸⁶ Despite this fact, *The Menace* still wrote about her. In one article *The Menace* emphasized that the Catholic clergy were not celibate because when they had a female Pope she gave birth on the streets of Rome.¹⁸⁷ Joan was likely emphasized because *The Menace* regularly alleged that the Catholic Church had sexually promiscuous clergy.

¹⁸⁴ “Those Catholic Aliens,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), February 5, 1916, *Chronicling America*.

¹⁸⁵ MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, 116.

¹⁸⁶ Johann P. Kirsch, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), s.v. “Popess Joan,” <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08407a.htm>.

¹⁸⁷ “A Boquet of Benedicts,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), September 19, 1914, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89066178/1914-09-19/ed-1/seq-1.pdf>.

Like other nativist groups, *The Menace* frequently focused on women and their important role of instilling proper values in children. Women were also viewed as good indicators of the purity or corruption of American values. If women were behaving like “good” women, then American values were intact, but if they were behaving improperly, then American values were deteriorating heavily, and something needed to be done.

Women were central to the message of *The Menace*, as well as the KKK. *The Menace* argued in several articles that true freedom cannot exist if women do not have freedom.¹⁸⁸ This is not surprising because, as will be demonstrated later in this chapter, *The Menace* and the KKK viewed women as value instillers as well as barometers of moral decline.

Emphasis on the Violence a Group Produces

The Menace, like other nativist groups, emphasized the violent nature of its opponents. In one article, *The Menace* provided statistics about Roman Catholic involvement in murders. The article concluded it was better for women to have no religion than be Catholic because Catholicism was making them violent. This article also asserted that Catholic education was also to blame for the increase in violence among this group.¹⁸⁹

This depiction of women served as a powerful message to its readers for two main reasons. First, it showed that women were being negatively impacted by practicing Catholic teachings, and second, it demonstrated that women, the instillers of values in children, were

¹⁸⁸ “Rome’s Terrorist Tactics Demonstrate Necessity for Press Defense League,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), April 17, 1915.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

becoming increasingly violent. It is clear that this would be viewed as a negative reality by the readers of *The Menace* because of how women were perceived.

Women were also a means of measuring abuse. Pregnancies were, at least in the view of some anti-Catholic books like *Maria Monk*, indisputable evidence that abuse had taken place. Likewise, the confession booth was a place where the clergy were able to obtain information in order to better exploit women. In one article, *The Menace* alleged that a priest had given a young girl a pill in order to produce an abortion to cover up his misdeeds.¹⁹⁰

Abortion and sexual depravity were important to *The Menace*, as well as other nativist groups, because they challenged the role of women, as well as the role of men. Under Catholicism, women were not able to be married in the way they were supposed to be married. The aforementioned articles noted that many women were assaulted, including women who were extremely young or married.¹⁹¹ This means that marriage, as well as family values, were being challenged by the Catholic Church. Abortion is an interesting example because it was something *The Menace* was unlikely to support and something that the Catholic Church definitely did not support. *The Menace* frequently relied on examples that showed that the Catholic Church was inconsistent. It did this presumably to contrast its “consistent” system with Catholicism’s inconsistent one.

Catholicism’s alleged exploitation of the poor was one of the most important issues for *The Menace*. It is also where *The Menace*’s view of race issues was finally explained. The paper only mentioned Africans or African Americans when it believed they were being exploited. One article alleged that Catholic church authorities were exploiting poor Catholics into donating their

¹⁹⁰ “The Beast and Mother of Harlots,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), August 30, 1913.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

money so that the church could continue to spread.¹⁹² Other issues of *The Menace* emphasized that Protestant missionaries claimed Catholicism was one of the biggest opponents to the spread of Protestant Christianity.¹⁹³

Education and *The Menace*

Besides viewing itself as a protector of women, *The Menace* also believed that protecting children from Catholics was of the utmost importance.¹⁹⁴ In an article from 1915, *The Menace* argued that Italian children were being forced into Catholicism through parochial schools. This article and others criticized the Catholic school system for controlling the minds of youth. Not surprisingly, most of their calls to protect children were thinly veiled attempts to put Protestants in control of the public-school system. As previously noted, *The Menace* endorsed anti-Catholic legislation that would increase the power of Protestants in the public schools and limit the autonomy of private Catholic schools. This would give Protestants the ability to keep their children away from papal influence.

The Menace also viewed education as a way to fight “misinformation” among adults.¹⁹⁵ In one article, *The Menace* endorsed a reviewer’s condemnation of a book that supported Ireland’s emancipation. However, *The Menace*’s primary complaint with the book was that it called on Irish American citizens to vote against legislation that would hurt England until they

¹⁹² “Inspection Needed,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), December 18, 1915.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ “Capturing Children,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), December 18, 1915.

¹⁹⁵ “Creel’s Sinn Feinism Cracked By N.Y. Times Book Reviewer,” *The Menace*.

were granted freedom.¹⁹⁶ *The Menace* also feared that the Irish would create unbreakable voting blocs that would advance a pro-Catholic agenda.¹⁹⁷ This was seen as inappropriately influencing American politics.

The Menace emphasized the importance of public schools because, in its view, “Every full-fledged parochial school is a nursery where the children are taught that because they are Catholics they are a superior race and everybody outside the church heretics, inferior to them, and unworthy of consideration.”¹⁹⁸

The Menace’s style was systematic. The newspaper’s writers chose select quotes and refuted the statements with evidence. However, it was difficult to discern how accurate these statements were and it was unlikely that the average reader would have been able to verify them without great effort. This was and still is a popular journalistic technique. Journalists relied heavily on quotes in order to better establish who was correct. In this case, it was not *The Menace* condemning a group, but history as observed by other more credible people.

For example, *The Menace* wrote that “Mr. Creel [the author of the book they are critiquing] complains bitterly of the compulsion to pay tithes to the established church, but this church was disestablished, and the tithes abolished in 1870, of which fact he makes no mention.”¹⁹⁹ *The Menace* presented its opponents as sloppy and ill-informed. In particular, it

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ “Our Public Schools---Facts and Figures,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), September 15, 1915, *Chronicling America*.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

viewed the Irish as misled, but still receptive to education. It was more hopeful about the Irish than other nativist groups.

That said, this chapter has highlighted how *The Menace* was similar to other nativist groups in its views on race, gender, and, on occasion, religion. It articulated these views by using vague constructions of the groups it believed were threatening “American” values. *The Menace*, like other publications and political figures, was skeptical of private education as well as the involvement of Catholics in politics.

Conclusion

This thesis makes several contributions to debates about nativism. First, it argues that *The Menace* should be considered mainstream because of its popularity and common news making techniques. *The Menace* endorsed a form of nativism that was held by many Americans. Second, this thesis argues that *The Menace* should occupy a more prominent place in scholarship and that nativism can be better understood by examining popular publications.

Chapter One establishes that, even when scholarship has studied nativism, some relevant groups have been inadequately studied. More recent scholarship has attempted to fix this problem, but nativist studies still has a long way to go. Chapter One argued that the only way to get a clear picture of nativism is by using several different disciplines to account for the variation that is present in these groups. Currently, historian John Higham provides scholars with the most complete picture of nativism, but his work covers a large time span, so individual nativist publications are not thoroughly examined. While Higham’s book on this topic is the gold

standard, scholars must produce a more complete picture of nativism. This picture must include how groups change and adapt to combat discrimination.²⁰⁰

Chapter One also deals extensively with the issue of value judgements in scholarship. It asks how scholars can write about groups they disagree with in a productive manner. Most would agree that an overly biased scholar is a poor one, but there is certainly a spectrum of opinions. Scholars do not entirely agree on this issue. Some scholars, like Jessie Daniels, feel that self-disclosure is central to a complete work, and that calls to action should be made. This is an important discussion because the utility of scholarship is frequently questioned. As mentioned in Chapter One, non-academics are hesitant to rely on scholarship because scholars are unwilling to take sides. This perception is unfair, but it is understandable to have this view. Few scholars approach nativism with as much personal disclosure as Daniels.

Other scholars, such as Blee and Baker, approach nativist values as more explicable and perhaps more rational than Daniels. However, all of these scholars agree that nativist values never truly left the American consciousness and that they have and continue to be a problem. When read together, these scholars produce a clearer picture of what nativism means to them personally, but also why it is relevant to study and how it has shaped American society.

Chapter Two argues that nativism should be viewed as a mainstream phenomenon and should occupy a more relevant place in scholarship. More specifically, this chapter argues that *The Menace* should be studied and mentioned in scholarship more frequently because of its use of traditional news making techniques as well as its popularity. These techniques, as well as its endorsement of mainstream politicians and legislation, solidify *The Menace*'s place in history.

²⁰⁰ John Kuo Wei Tchen, "Comment: Constructing Identities, Bridging Dialogs, and the Potential Relevance of Historical Organizations," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 13, no. 2 (1994), 45-54.

Chapter Three examines how *The Menace* interacted with different publications and also how *The Menace* was perceived. This chapter highlights that while *The Menace* regularly fabricated events, exaggerated history and printed unsubstantiated claims, its opponents, on occasion, resorted to similar tactics. This chapter also highlights the context in which *The Menace* existed and interacted with other publications.

Chapter Four utilizes articles to establish that *The Menace* can and should be approached as a nativist group due to beliefs which are similar to other nativist groups. Past scholarship has focused primarily on groups that have formal membership such as the KKK, but this has left several publications understudied. Few contemporary authors mention *The Menace*. John Higham was one author that did highlight its importance and relevance long before it was digitized. Fortunately, it has never been easier to study *The Menace* as well as many other nativist publications because technology has provided scholars with an invaluable tool to better understand the messages and themes of these publications.

Additionally, Chapter Four shows that because *The Menace* is similar to other nativist publications, it should be approached using similar methods that highlight the importance of race, gender, and religion to this group. While *The Menace* did not approach these issues in the same way, it did so by capitalizing on past nativist literature as well as by putting its own spin on nativism.

The Menace is undoubtedly a more important publication than its place in scholarship would suggest. It capitalized on the worst aspects of American society and did this by employing mainstream news making techniques as well as by packaging its message using religion. While *The Menace* is no longer around and its publication ceased long ago, the messages it advanced

are still present in American discourse today and that highlights how important it is to study this influential publication.

Nativism certainly looks different in modern America, but the methods and tools are still very similar. Many groups that currently exist have a history of reframing events by omitting key details or denying an event occurred altogether. There are people today that still deny that the Holocaust occurred or reframe it in an inaccurate manner. Many politicians have resorted to describing the actions of a small number of people to justify wide sweeping changes that will affect large groups of people. An example of this is seen today with immigration. Unfortunately, many condemnations are based on the country from which immigrants come from. Condemnations issued by some politicians are also strategically vague, much like *The Menace's* attacks. This strategic vagueness is utilized for two key reasons, first, it is difficult to refute a vague statement because its claim is unclear, and second, it greatly reduces the odds that a lawsuit will be brought. While *The Menace* was not the most influential nativist publication, it is unfortunately relevant today. Like other nativist publications, it is a part of America's shared past that desperately needs to be explored so that the cycle can be better combatted, or ideally ended.

Unfortunately, nativist discourse has not left American politics or the wider society. It is still a prevalent ideology that is held by many Americans today. The 2016 presidential election demonstrated that nativism still is capable of having a resurgence. The rhetoric used was shockingly familiar. Below are some examples of nativist language being used in modern America. Some of the examples are strictly anti-immigration whereas other examples are anti-Catholic. Each example from present day, is compared to a similar argument made by *The Menace*.

<i>The Menace</i>	President Donald J. Trump
<p>“It is a striking Characteristic of the papal church that a large part of its priests speak English brokenly, wear foreign names and display foreign inclinations. It is as strikingly true of the Protestant denominations that their ministers speak English without accent ...”²⁰¹</p>	<p>“When these people walk into the room, they don't say, 'Oh hello, how's the weather? It's so beautiful outside. How are the Yankees doing? They're doing wonderful, that's great,'“ “They say, ‘We want deal!’”²⁰²</p>
<p>“... if their illiterates and undesirables were to be deported, many a priest would be out of a job.”²⁰³</p>	<p>“When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you. They’re not sending you. They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.”²⁰⁴</p>

²⁰¹ “Kacees” Want Jobs at Peace Conference,” *The Menace*(Aurora, Missouri), December 7, 1918.

²⁰² Darran Simon, “President Trump's Other Insensitive Comments on Race and Ethnicity,” CNN, January 14, 2018, Asian, accessed July 24, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/11/politics/president-trump-racial-comments-tweets/index.html>.

²⁰³ “Right as a Rabbit” Colonel, But---,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), December 7, 1918.

²⁰⁴ Michelle Ye Hee Lee, “Donald Trump’s False Comments Connecting Mexican Immigrants and Crime,” *The Washington Post*, July 08, 2015, , accessed August 22, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/07/08/donald-trumps-false-comments-connecting-mexican-immigrants-and-crime>.

<i>The Menace</i>	Roseanne Barr
<p>“We are not expecting favorable action by the pope’s subject politicians. Those who owe first allegiance to their pope, will get their orders from that source or from his agents.”²⁰⁵</p>	<p>“Americans don't even know that much, even though they say they do. They say they believe that people should take money out of politics and then, you know, they send their paycheck to Bernie and off he goes to hang out with the pope on a private jet on that money. The f—in' Pope, are you shittin' me?!”²⁰⁶</p>
<p>“So vast must be the tide of wealth flowing from the toiling millions to burden the groaning tills of the papal treasury; to control the purse-strings of the world; to dominate money kings, banking systems and the public press; to deceive the people and control politics: and so pave the way to further imposition and plunder.”²⁰⁷</p>	<p>“He [the Pope] owns almost every dollar in the world, that guy.”²⁰⁸</p>

This thesis argues that nativism and *The Menace* are in need of greater attention.

Nativism has a tendency of reigniting itself and packaging and repackaging past material in new ways that are compelling to a new audience. While it is very unlikely that Donald Trump or

²⁰⁵ “Girl's Fatal Leap to Escape From Rome's Charitable Prison Pen,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), January 6, 1917, accessed July 25, 2018, [Chronicling America](#).

²⁰⁶ Tracy Ross, “Roseanne Barr on Trump “Playing the Heel for Hillary,” Pot and Being a Farmer,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, June 10, 2016, accessed July 22, 2018, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/roseanne-barr-us-would-be-900413>.

²⁰⁷ Gilbert O. Nations, “Stupendous Wealth of Roman Church,” *The Menace* (Aurora, Missouri), August 17, 1918, accessed July 25, 2018, [Chronicling America](#).

²⁰⁸ Ross, “Playing the Heel for Hillary.”

Roseanne Barr have ever read *The Menace*, it is deeply troubling that they are both using language that could be found in one of the largest nativist publications in American history, a publication that argued that Catholics were less evolved because of their religion and not capable of being true Americans. While the target of nativist attacks has and will continue to change, it is important to note that *The Menace* did not invent these ideas, but instead repurposed them and even today these past ideas are being advanced, consciously or not.

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