

In the Shadow of Boone and Crockett: Race, Culture, and the Politics of Representation in the Upland South

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Review

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Hartman, Ian C. *In the Shadow of Boone and Crockett: Race, Culture, and the Politics of Representation in the Upland South.* University of Tennessee Press, \$49.95 ISBN 9781621901693

Legal Notions of Identity and Poverty Chased Imagined Categories of Antebellum Races

The issues of race, poverty, politics and culture in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries feature prominently in Ian C. Hartman's *In the Shadow of Boone and Crockett*. Hartman, assistant professor of history at the University of Alaska Anchorage, uses case studies of early eugenics proponents and policies, as well as examinations of popular culture and the politics of the civil rights era, to explore the idea of the "collapse of Anglo-Saxonism" and its effect on government policy related to poverty (4). While many of the early anti-poverty programs were advertised to the public as means to uplift and protect the vestiges of the noble and historical Anglo-Saxon race ensconced in the upland South, the emergence of black urban violence in the 1960s led War on Poverty detractors to criticize and ultimately scale back government programs within poor communities.

Beginning with Theodore Roosevelt and other academics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Hartman writes of elite fears that increased immigration put the American population on a course of racial degeneration. These scholars of history and the social sciences looked to the upland South (the Appalachian region of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia) as "a bastion of biological purity and cultural authenticity" (15). Tucked away from the urban centers where immigrants crowded into tenements, the Appalachian Mountains protected an Anglo-Saxon way of life and race needed to keep the United States from succumbing to cultural and racial decline. Hartman examines the origins of the myth of Anglo-Saxon purity (the Appalachian region had long been the domain of both native peoples and African

Americans), through the works of popular authors such as John Fox, Jr. and Julian Ralph. He then turns to the race theories posited by scientists, and the realities observed by missionaries to the region in order to lay the foundation for how various organizations and government proposed to deal with the issues of poverty, ignorance, and sexual immorality that threatened white racial purity.

Hartman devotes two chapters to early eugenics thought and programs, starting with a history of Oscar McCulloch and the passage of the world's first mandatory sterilization law in Indiana in 1907. McCulloch, a Congregational Church minister in Indianapolis in the 1870s and 1880s, observed that vast numbers of the white poor, who he called the "Tribe of Ishmael," had moved to the Indianapolis area from the upland South. As the heirs of Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon blood, he was shocked at their pauper status and connected their fallen state to a lost work ethic, deviancy, and poverty. This led to a loss in the hereditary stock of the Anglo-Saxon race, and McCulloch and others feared that "as long as poor families grew, so too did the pauper problem" (51). Finding that antimiscegenation and restrictive immigration laws were not enough to protect the race, Indiana put in place a sterilization law to deal with the problem of crime and destitution. Many questioned how the proud race that had birthed a Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett could fall so low without outside racial mixing, and the answer hinted that the geographic isolation of the upland South led to incest and denigration of the worst sort. Thus, sterilization was the only answer to save the race from irreparable harm. This desire to protect the Anglo-Saxon race was repeated in Virginia, where a 1927 Supreme Court case decided in favor of the state's forced sterilization law. Hartman explains how advocates of measures to protect the race had to find examples of successful preservation, and this led to efforts such as John Powell's creation of the White Top Folk Festival in the 1930s. An event organized to preserve Anglo-Saxon music and to battle the growing popularity of "hillbilly music," the Virginia festival fell prey to organizers' notions of what traditional Anglo-Saxon music was. The festival itself created a stereotype that ignored the musical contributions of African Americans and other European immigrants.

Hartman then turns to the issue of postwar liberalism and the move to address issues of poverty in the upland South. Policy debates in the postwar era Kennedy and Johnson administrations fell upon the rhetoric of "fallen whiteness" as "critical to stewarding legislation through Congress and sustaining its popular support" (102). The image of the white upland Southerner shifted from the noble Daniel Boone to the down and out Tom Fletcher of Inez, Kentucky, who

President Lyndon Johnson visited in 1964 on his poverty tour. Fletcher, and others like him, “embodied a rustic folksiness, and they supposedly retained, in flesh and blood, a cherished link to the past” (103-104). This theme is further reflected in the comics and television programs of the mid-twentieth century that celebrated a romanticized view of white Southerners, and is best exhibited in the Clampetts of the 1960s television comedy, *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Hartman examines the origins of the show and how it acted as a critique of middle class life and reinforced the idea that upland Southerners who had not found quick wealth like Jed Clampett were deserving of government help. The decline in viewership as the 1960s progressed corresponded to a change in political alignments, as critics of the War on Poverty emphasized that the poverty programs “had fashioned liberals into enablers of sloth, excess, and, most ominously, black male insurrection” (134). Government programs came under increased scrutiny, and those once promoted as support for members of the white upland South were seen as inciting riots, discontent, and vagrancy in urban black populations throughout the country. As a result, the Johnson administration scaled back anti-poverty measures and increased law enforcement that in turn created a swell in prison populations. Hartman concludes with a brief evaluation of the effectiveness of federal poverty programs in the 1960s and the turn from them in the Nixon and Reagan administrations.

Hartman summarizes the work of other historians on the subject well, but the value of Hartman’s writing is in the connections he describes between race and public policy. His examination of scientific studies and the writings of both academics and popular novelists, provides a view toward the values and principles guiding the creation of state and federal law. Those interested in race, poverty, and the creation (and dismantling) of public policy will find the book useful.

Andrea S. Watkins is an associate professor of history at Northern Kentucky University, in Highland Heights, Kentucky. She teaches U.S. history, Kentucky history, and the American South, and she is the co-author, with James A. Ramage, of Kentucky Rising: Democracy, Slavery, and Culture from the Early Republic to the Civil War.