

Haunted by the Alamo: The Ghost of Davy Crockett in Appalachian Education

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To have been born in South Texas, to live in South Texas in 1964, in the shadow of the Alamo--both the building and the movie--as a Mexican, that was to be one of fortune's stepchildren. (167)

--"Margarita," The Candy Vendor's Boy and Other Stories (1994), Beatriz de la Garza

Even if the Whigs created the ultimate hillbilly in Davy Crockett . . . in cynical derision of all that was outside the walls of their power, occasionally us hillbillies can take the imagery back and inhabit it and draw energy from it. (50)

--"Say It Ain't True, Davy!", Appalachian Journal (Fall 1987), Jesse Aquillah Jones

According to the editors of the anthology Appalachia Inside Out, "Appalachia has produced a striking number of heroes--not only frontiersmen like Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett, but also musical geniuses, activists, educators, and missionaries" (39). As the phrase not only suggests, the editors seem to realize that figures like Boone and Crockett are not popular folk figures so much as icons officially sanctioned by the state. Still, one wonders why Boone and Crockett are included at all in this list of heroes. What were their achievements? More importantly, what were their virtues? In this respect, one must view the legends of Boone and Crockett as similar to the "Texas legend," which Americo Paredes describes as an official Anglo-Texan narrative about the defeat of treacherous Mexicans during the Texas Revolution. Rather than being folklore in general circulation among common people, Paredes argues, the Texas legend "appears in two widely dissimilar places: in the written works of the literary and the educated and orally among a class of rootless adventurers who might have used the legend for very practical purposes" (23). These "rootless adventurers," that is, used the Texas legend to promote the ideology of white supremacy and the segregation of races. As a text that is itself intended for

classroom use in high schools and colleges, Appalachia Inside Out, despite its stated mission to examine how the region has "absorbed outside influences and exerted influences of its own" (book jacket), is not well-positioned to challenge the officially sanctioned narrative about Davy Crockett's "heroic" life. Understandably, moreover, most Appalachian writers and editors evince little curiosity in Crockett's death at the Alamo in March 1836. After all, he lived less than six months in Texas before his demise, and his motives for going to Texas are not entirely clear. After losing a bid for reelection to Congress in 1835, he seemed to be fleeing his dashed hopes more than seeking a specific goal in Texas. Born in the mountains of Tennessee in 1786 and living in the Appalachian region until early adulthood, Davy Crockett is primarily attractive to Appalachian scholars as an early settler and comic hillbilly figure.

Still, while the legend of Davy Crockett has not usually been taught on the porch swing or around the supper table, his importance in Appalachian education cannot be ignored. Indeed, this education of Appalachians on the subject of Davy Crockett occurs in movie theaters as well as in school buildings. In the 1950s, as Jesse Aquillah Jones very astutely points out, American conservatives viewed Fess Parker in Walt Disney's Davy Crockett: King of the Wild Frontier (1955) as an excellent role model and purveyor of American values. "As 'Uncle Walt' was viewed by many responsible people as the most benign of entertainers," Jones observes, "his Davy Crockett was given an official stamp of approval by leading political conservatives who seemed to think the TV show taught good Americanism. For example, the Jesse Helms of California, Max Rafferty, referred to Disney as the greatest educator of this century" (50). Unfortunately, such lessons in "good Americanism" have resulted in a troubled legacy of ambivalence,

distrust, and desire between white Appalachians and Mexican Americans. Like the Texas legend about the Anglo pioneer's defeat of the cowardly Mexican, the official legend of Davy Crockett has unavoidable racial implications. Adopting Rafferty's broad understanding of what constitutes "education," this essay employs the legend of Davy Crockett to explore how these lessons about race have been reproduced for many generations.

Colonial Education in Appalachia

For both Texas Mexicans and Appalachian young people, the classroom has often been the site where their traditions and culture have been denigrated, romanticized, or simply ignored. Both groups of students receive what might be best described as a colonial education. Such an education, as the critic Leticia M. Garza-Falcon explains, is designed as a "deliberate program of or policy of domination . . . a way of ensuring the continued presence of . . . a labor force" (242). Historically, rural Appalachian schools have been woefully underfunded. The tyrannical whims of a local elite class often determine both the quality and long-term fate of such schools. School consolidation, which requires rural children to attend unfamiliar schools far from home, is often equally damaging. In those schools, frequently, working-class students must endure blatant discrimination from both teachers and middle-class students from the suburbs. As Garza-Falcon has observed in reference to South Texas, the promotion of submissiveness and low self-esteem among working class students benefits the "established hierarchical system set in place by a ruling class" (172). Not surprisingly, just as Chicano/a authors

have made educational discrimination a central theme of their writing, Appalachian authors have recalled their personal experiences with condescension and disrespect in the classroom.

For Appalachians, higher education is often just as problematic as primary and secondary schooling. Usually underfunded, local universities are often labelled not only as second-tier but as second-rate. Regardless of whether Appalachians attend a school that is inside or outside the region, their professors, who are often non-Appalachian, tend to view these students as backward rural folk who are socially unprepared for university work. According to this blatantly classist notion, students who lack middle-class (and urban) socialization cannot succeed academically. In her poem "The Hillbilly Vampire Goes to Class" (1989), Amy Tipton Gray describes a college professor who evinces contempt for his students even as he parasitically appropriates their local lore and family history for his own professional gain. Making few demands of his students, he is popular only because he is "charming" and gives "such easy tests" (658). Beneath his pleasant facade, however, he complains to his colleagues about these hillbilly students' "stupidity" and their tendency, in his classist view, to be "literal as geese" (658). All the while, he desperately wishes that the students in this "cultural Gomorra" had "grandparents he could use / as subjects for research" (658). While this professor's scholarly discipline is not specified, he clearly participates in an Orientalist tradition of colonialist intellectuals who usurp native traditions in the service of imperialism.

Appalachia as a site of Orientalist discourse is also the central theme in Gray's "How I Lost My War with National Geographic," an article that appeared in the progressive magazine In These Times in 1997. "Movies, scholars and the popular press"

(39), she argues in this essay, have silenced Appalachian voices by granting "expert" status only to those scholars who reside outside the region. "I can't understand anything about Appalachia," Gray says sarcastically, "because that's where I'm from, but I can't really say that's where I'm from because, as everybody knows, Appalachia is a land of coal mines and poverty, the benighted home of wormy, cross-eyed children and barefooted grannies who sit on the cabin porch all day singing ballads to the plaintive accompaniment of the dulcimer" (39). To better convey her point concerning the paternalistic attitudes of "experts" toward Appalachians, Gray compares Appalachia with India, once a colony ruled by the British Raj, and American Samoa, the site where Margaret Mead, the renowned anthropologist, performed her field work in the early twentieth century. In all three sites, anthropology has been wedded to a larger colonial enterprise. Just as Gray was denied the right to articulate her own lived experience as an Appalachian, Indians and Samoans have witnessed Europeans and white Americans lay claim to an "authoritative" or even "definitive" understanding of their societies. Gray recounts "a story about a native Samoan who, in one of his university classes, was required to read Margaret Mead's Coming of Age. The young man was appalled" (40). Not recognizing "his people" in Mead's rather loosely constructed accounts of her field work, the student protests to the professor. The pompous instructor, however, cuts him off: "What, my dear boy, said the professor, would you know about it? After all, you are from Samoa yourself. Your testimony is worthless. You are entirely too close to the situation at hand to perceive the truth" (40). While useful in illustrating the sort of colonialist domination that Appalachians have encountered in the classroom, Gray's anecdote begs the question of how far we should extend her analogy. Surely, in both

degree and structure, the domination experienced by Appalachians differs fundamentally from the experiences of Indians and American Samoans. Quite simply, as a "poverty region" within the First World nation of the United States, Appalachia is not a formally organized colonial state. Unfortunately, Gray does not acknowledge this critical difference. Just as seriously, she does not acknowledge the pernicious racism that was the lived experience of many Asians and Pacific Islanders under colonial administration.

This failure to discuss the meaning and effects of racism is also evident in "No Minority" (1989), another poem with higher education as its theme. Urban, middle-class, and well-educated, the persona of this poem does not exemplify the stereotypical "Appalachian" whom some in the United States would recognize as a disadvantaged "minority." To learn traditional mountain skills, in fact, this middle-class woman has been forced to "read a book" and "take a class" (264). Her acquaintances, she finds, question the "authenticity" and "legitimacy" of her Appalachian identity (264). While it is not clear whether these unidentified rhetorical opponents are themselves from the Appalachian region, they tell her that "there is no name for what you are" and that she is "no minority" (264). Just as middle-class Mexicanos are often scorned for their agringado, or Anglicized, lifestyles, the persona finds that her Appalachian self-identification is questioned and even derided. Ironically, as a means of protecting their children from discrimination, Appalachian parents and teachers often discourage their children's adoption of traditional speech styles, taste for mountain music, and regional religious practices. The need to take college courses in Appalachian studies to familiarize herself with her own cultural heritage, therefore, simply underscores the persona's culturally peripheral status.

Still, one wonders what Gray means by the term minority. As Gray suggests, Appalachians are indeed culturally and ethnically unique. As an ethnic group, Appalachians are profoundly familiar with social and economic oppression. The use of denigrating stereotypes in the popular media, the marginalization of Appalachian studies at major research institutions, the exploitation of Appalachian workers, and intense discrimination against urban Appalachian migrants provide ample evidence that many Americans view our Appalachian identity as both Other and inferior. In this sense, one cannot dispute Gray's insistence that she is a "minority." To describe the predicament of urban Appalachian migrants in inner-city Detroit or Cincinnati, for example, the phrase invisible minority seems apt. Inexplicably, however, Gray's poem lacks any contemplation of what being a minority more typically connotes within the United States. For the persona in Gray's poem, being a "minority" seems almost to be an enviable status that entails receiving a "name" and a unique identity. Except for the enforced repression of this identity, the persona seems little interested in issues of oppression. In the United States, however, the term minority most commonly refers not to ethnic groups, however marginalized, but to people of color. Legally sanctioned, and at times mandated, segregation and exclusion based upon phenotype is a fundamentally unfamiliar experience for white Appalachians. In this context, the persona's petulant complaint that she is viewed as "no minority" has an undertone of racial resentment.

Similarly, in "Appalachian Education" (1973), Harry Brown poignantly describes how "Educators, politicians and preachers pity us. / We have failed to progress. / We haven't the modern way" (645). For these outside do-gooders, educating Appalachians means convincing them that they must adopt "modern conveniences" and learn "better

speech habits" (645). So they will more willingly provide their own persons to perform cheap labor and more submissively hand over their land, Appalachians must learn to accept the inferiority of their culture. For Brown, to the contrary, a more useful Appalachian education entails learning how the region has been robbed of its coal and other natural resources. Astutely, Brown associates paternalistic education with the process by which "progressive America" has pillaged the material wealth of Appalachia "through broad form rape at fifty cents an acre" (646). A notorious document, the broad form, often signed with an illiterate person's x mark, was a deed that permitted the buyers of mineral rights to occupy and destroy one's land. An uneducated person's shame in being duped was yet another reason to internalize feelings of worthlessness. The contemptuous attitudes of teachers, preachers, and elected officials toward Appalachian culture, Brown suggests, function to justify capitalist exploitation as necessary "progress."

Turning the stereotype of cultural deprivation on its head, Brown contrasts the strength and beauty of rural Appalachian culture with the crumbling institutions of urban American cities. Thus, he cites "murders in Chicago, / race riots in Washington, / a heroin bust in a New York City junior high, / muggings on a Dallas campus" (646). Surely, Brown implies, since urban students are literally endangered by drug abuse and physical violence, the schooling one receives at the New York junior high school and the Dallas college campus cannot be superior to traditional Appalachian education. Better to be poor within the pastoral stability of a rural Appalachian setting, Brown suggests, than to face the chaos and violence of "progressive," postmodern America. Misleadingly, Brown suggests that poverty, social stability, and organic cultural tradition coexist in

some ideally isolated Appalachian world. Bar brawls, DUI arrests, drug and tobacco abuse, domestic violence, and fast food nutrition, which are all too common components of Appalachian life, are not themes in this poem. Certainly, Brown is grieved by Appalachian poverty, which he correctly blames upon ruling class oppression; ultimately, however, he fails to analyze the systemic connections between rural Appalachia and big American cities. Despite his efforts to turn demeaning stereotypes upside down, he does not portray wealthy capitalist America as culturally "deprived." Instead, while he does not directly blame them for their plight, the impoverished residents of inner cities are the subjects of his disgust. Better to be a poor white in Appalachia, he suggests, than to resemble the poor black people of Chicago, Washington, or New York City. Thus, in addition to "race riots," Brown includes racially charged references to murders, campus muggings, and junior high drug busts in his list of what is wrong with urban America. Clearly, just as poverty in Appalachia can be attributed to economic exploitation, so inner-city poverty can be attributed to a class hierarchy that is determined largely by race. If white Appalachian intellectuals seek to combat the exploitation of their region and people, they must fully acknowledge how racism functions in formal education and the popular media as well as other social institutions.

Traditionally, the study of race in greater Appalachia [1] has focused on mountain whites and mountain blacks or on black and white southern migrants in midwestern cities. Indeed, there still exists a critical need for scholarship about this history of troubled conflict and intermittent solidarity. Now, however, Latinos constitute the largest majority in the United States and are, in fact, an increasingly significant migrant population in Appalachia. While Latinos have lived and worked in Appalachia for many

decades, their numbers before the 1990s were quite small. Thus, to understand how Latino history has influenced in specific ways the racialization of Euroamerican Appalachians as white, one must examine Appalachians' participation, both historically and as imagined in popular culture, in the wholesale annexation of the U.S. Southwest, which was formerly northern Mexico, through violent military conquest. In the Southwest, unlike the U.S. South, Mexican Americans and American Indians have been typically viewed as the racial Other. Still, through popular culture and classroom history lessons, this racial marginalization of Mexican Americans has also been sewn into the fabric of Appalachian life and culture. To explore the nature of this racialized relationship, and to reflect upon its consequences for Appalachian young people, let us now turn our attention to Davy Crockett.

Davy Crockett in South Texas, 1955-1986

The experiences of Mexican Texans with popular representations of the Alamo and Davy Crockett predate Walt Disney's TV series and film by many decades. Americo Paredes' George Washington Gomez (1990), a novel completed in 1936 when the author was twenty-one years old, portrays life in the Rio Grande Valley in the years preceding World War II. As Louis Mendoza has noted, "The importance of history and education in GWG identifies it as the most advanced form of the novel of emergence, or novel of education, in Bakhtin's delineation of the Bildungsroman" (151). Whereas the typical Bildungsroman embraces the bourgeois ideology of individualism and "serves as an affirmation of social structures" (156), however, GWG endorses the communitarian

values of the working class. As its central theme, GWG examines the role of the Valley educational system in suppressing Mexican cultural expression and subordinating Mexican students as future laborers or, at best, as middle-class middlemen for the ruling Anglo elite. For young George Washington Gomez, or Gualinto, this education in subalternity includes racially insulting history lessons that portray Mexicans as vicious and cowardly enemies during the Texas Revolution. Through this means, Gualinto's very "identity is interpolated" (151). Both Mexican and Anglo students, in fact, learn to view the Battle of the Alamo not as an event that reveals the complexities of nineteenth-century North American political conflict but as an epiphanous moment that reveals the moral superiority of the Anglo race over the Mexican race. According to this narrative, Davy Crockett and his manly companions, although outnumbered, fight nobly to the death against the diabolical Mexicans. The Battle of the Alamo, therefore, becomes an allegory that suggests the tenor of how twentieth-century Anglos and Mexicans should interact on a daily basis. As the narrator observes,

The Mexicotexan knows about the Alamo, he is reminded of it often enough. Texas history is a cross that he must bear. In the written tests, if he expects to pass the course, he must put down in writing what he violently misbelieves. And often certain passages in the history text book become subjects of discussion.

"Isn't it horrible what the Mexicans did at the Alamo and Goliad? Why are they so treacherous and bloody? And cowards too."

"That's a lie! Treacherous? That's you all over!"

"It's in our textbook. Can't you read?"

"...But the book, the book! It talks about us today! Today! It says we are all dirty and live under trees."

The teacher cannot criticize a textbook on Texas history. She would be called a Communist and lose her job. (GWG 150)

The teacher, the narrator implies, is not the primary culprit in promoting a white supremacist history curriculum. In the 1930s, both local custom and statewide "standards," as established by the Texas Board of Education, required that teachers promulgate an ethnocentric version of Texas history or be fired as "Communists." Rather than represent racism as a form of personal pathological aberrance, Paredes demonstrates that a racist curriculum was official state policy that served the political needs of the hegemonic ruling class.

In the years after the events of George Washington Gomez, which concludes before the onset of World War II, Mexican Americans achieved substantial victories in their struggle for civil rights. Following the war, many Mexican American men were able to attend universities with funding from the G.I. Bill. With renewed determination, veterans who fought for the United States refused to be treated as second-class citizens. When a funeral home in Three Rivers, Texas, refused to bury the remains of a Mexican soldier, for example, the G.I. Forum, a veterans group that promoted civil rights, took their case to U.S. Congressman Lyndon B. Johnson, who made arrangements to bury the remains of Felix Longoria in Arlington National Cemetery. Change was painfully slow, however. Overt discrimination in housing and employment sometimes continued until the 1970s. In Texas schools, despite some major victories for Mexican Americans, few changes occurred in how state history was taught to students.

In her short story "The Kid from the Alamo" (1994), Beatriz de la Garza portrays the effects of the colonial education inflicted upon Mexican-American school children in South Texas, a region where Mexicanos are a majority of the population. The narrator and central protagonist of the story is Ruben Morales, a middle-class and middle-aged San Antonian. Returning to his small hometown of Poggendorf to attend a nephew's marriage, Ruben reflects upon his school days in the years leading up to the Vietnam War and the Chicano Movement. Specifically, he remembers attending sixth grade at Elmer Poggen Elementary School "in 1958 or 1959" (203). In choosing this historical setting for her story, De la Garza invites the reader to reflect both on the democratizing achievements of the 1960s Chicano Movement and to consider how the educational system in Texas still fails its Mexican American students. In her short stories, as critic Leticia M. Garza-Falcon has observed, "De la Garza portrays historical events which are usually absent from the dominant history of the United States but which relate specifically to present-day experiences" (219). The absurdly slanted history taught in the late 1950s, De la Garza suggests in "The Boy from the Alamo," does not differ fundamentally from the exclusionary and still implicitly racist history curriculum still taught in Texas classrooms. Angela Valenzuela, an educational theorist who has done extensive fieldwork with Mexicano high school students, uses the term "subtractive schooling" to describe these current educational practices. Subtractive schooling, she argues, is "designed to divest Mexican students of their culture and language" (20) and thus "subtract[s] resources from youth" (27). Embodying the ideological worldview of this Anglocentric schooling is the history curriculum, which continues to focus on such

figures as Davy Crockett, the archetypal freedom fighter and common everyman who meets his death at the Alamo.

In the late 1950s, despite the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision of 1954, the Anglo-Texan ruling class continued to enforce segregation of schools and mandate a racially biased curriculum.[2] In sixth-grade, therefore, Ruben is required to take a class in Texas history that celebrates Anglo-Texan settlers as "heroes" while relegating all mention of Mexicans and Spaniards to a few early pages about the explorer Coronado and the Mexican dictator Santa Anna. As a boy, Ruben feels confusion and repressed anxiety about his own identity as a Texas Mexican:

So where did we come in? We came in at the Alamo, where we killed Davy Crockett, and at San Jacinto, where we were whipped by Sam Houston. That was it. Santa Anna and the wicked Mexicans were taken care of in a couple of chapters. . . . Well, as I said, parts of Texas history bothered me, but I had more important things to think about, like baseball and keeping my father from chewing me out because I played too much and didn't study enough. (210)

Ruben internalizes a sense of racial inferiority. What he learns in his Texas history class is that "we," the "wicked Mexicans," killed Davy Crockett but were deservedly "whipped" by Sam Houston. He learns that Mexicans are treacherous and bloodthirsty, while Anglos are brave and noble. While he is "bothered" by aspects of his Texas history class, he ascribes such dislike to his love of sports and dislike of study.

Notably, Ruben's Anglo teacher is neither apathetic nor consciously contemptuous toward her Mexican-American sixth-graders. Despite her passion for teaching, however, she

unwittingly demeans and alienates these students. Rushing through the assigned history book, Miss Gibbs explains that she wishes to study "in depth the most important part of the course: the Texas Revolution" (211). This "in-depth" study entails a class trip to the Alamo, which is only forty-five miles away, and a three-page essay assignment about "the four or five major heroes at the Alamo," who include Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, James Bonham, and William Travis but no Mexicans (213). Outside the classroom, despite Miss Gibbs' omission of this history, the Mexican students eventually learn that there were Tejano defenders of the Alamo. As one student says, "What do you know . . . it wasn't just Davy Crockett and all Gringos at the Alamo. There were some of us too" (218). Unaware of these Tejano fighters, however, the teacher recognizes only Anglo "heroes."

The term heroes itself, of course, betrays the chauvinistic character of the teacher's history lesson. Critiqued matter-of-factly by modern historians as a shameless chapter of U.S. racism and imperialism, the Anglo-American conquest of what was formerly northern Mexico was deeply controversial even in the nineteenth century. The expansion of slavery, aggressive filibustering, fraudulent land speculation, colonists' white supremacist worldview, and the ideology of Manifest Destiny caused early Anglo settlement in Texas to be hotly debated among U.S. intellectuals. For much of the twentieth century, however, the rulers of Texas did not permit these problematic aspects of Anglo colonization to be addressed in school textbooks. In addition to romanticizing the exploits of early Anglo colonists, Texas textbooks have portrayed Santa Anna's soldiers as ignoble, cowardly followers of a tyrannical despot. Actually, these Mexican soldiers, many of whom were forcibly conscripted from impoverished cities and rural villages, endured extreme hardships during an awesomely courageous march that began in Mexico City. At no time in Miss Gibbs' classroom, however, would any of these issues emerge as study topics.

Assaulted by this hostile and alienating portrayal of Mexicanos, Ruben becomes violently angry without fully comprehending the cause of his rage. "Why didn't I have a relative who had been a hero?" (215), he asks himself. To avoid humiliating quarrels and name calling by Anglo students, he feigns sickness. Then, when chastised harshly by his father for skipping school, he gets the hives (217-18), a psychosomatic condition that allows him to remain out of classes. Only as an adult can Ruben begin to grapple with the psychic damage inflicted by his early school years. While he obtains a college education and a middle-class lifestyle, Ruben remains bewildered by the legacy of racism in his educational past.

Sadly, other Mexican children were not so fortunate. Like Ruben, Lupita suffers when Anglo children taunt her. Sobbing, she tells fellow Mexican students that her Anglo classmate Janey "had said that Mexicans had it coming to them. We had killed Davy Crockett; we were mean; we were stupid" (212). Like Ruben, Lupita pretends she is sick; whereas Ruben returns to school, however, she eventually drops out altogether. In De la Garza's short story, we learn of the conflicted, ambivalent feelings that young Mexican children feel toward both the Alamo as a symbol of Texas pride and their own Mexican identity. Miss Gibbs, the Anglo teacher of the sixth-grade class, remains oblivious to the tumult among her students. "I don't know how much out of things Miss Gibbs had to be," Ruben comments, "to not realize the open hostility that had flared up between the Anglo and Mexican kids since she had started her 'in-depth study' of the Texas Revolution" (213). Thus, the sacrifices of Davy Crockett, his Tennessee volunteers, and the other defenders at the Alamo help make sixth grade an agonizing hell for the young students.

Like Ruben and Lupita, the critic Garza-Falcon grew up in South Texas in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Like the characters in De la Garza's "The Kid from the

Alamo," she recalls that she and her peers "were not conscious of this overtly 'separate but unequal' system" (242), although differences in achievement became painfully obvious when she and the other sixth-grade Mexican children were finally placed in the same classroom with Anglos. Instead, Garza-Falcon observes, disparities in scholastic skills "made us inferior even in our own eyes. Certainly, we did not see this situation as a deliberate program or policy of domination. . . . Instead, we marveled at how much the Anglo children 'knew' compared with us, without questioning the system we were trained to accept, and we felt fortunate just to be receiving an education, for most of our parents had not" (242). Thanks to his father's valiant confrontations with the school board, Ruben has not faced similar segregation during the elementary grades. Instead, De la Garza examines the equally damaging practice of negating Mexican history and culture.

In 1968, a decade after the fictional events of "The Kid from the Alamo," Rolando J. Romero, a thirteen-year-old immigrant from Mexico, attended the David Crockett Elementary School, a barrio school on the West Side of San Antonio. The crossing guards at this school, Romero tells us, were called Davy Crocketts (2). To celebrate Fiesta Week, on April 22, 1968, "the organizers invited the participation of the crossing guards, dressed in their Davy Crockett buckskins and raccoon caps (2). A photographer took a picture of these Davy Crocketts, a photograph that still appears on tourist brochures. Much like the terrifying hordes that make up Santa Anna's Mexican soldiers in Alamo films and history textbooks, these Mexican schoolchildren do not show their faces to the viewer. Still, while the children's anonymous, unindividuated features may resemble the Mexicans of Hollywood, the tourist who picks up this souvenir brochure cannot identify the children as Mexicans. Taken from the back, the photograph shows

only the tails of the children's coonskin caps. The donning of these coonskin helmets, in fact, conveys contradictory symbolism. The coonskin cap, so closely associated with the freedom-loving mountaineer, Davy Crockett, has come to represent the "frontier spirit" of self-reliance, independence, and individualism. If Mexicans in Alamo movies appear as faceless masses, the not-so-subtle message is that Mexican society is strictly hierarchical, dictatorial, and antidemocratic. Davy Crockett and his cohorts, to the contrary, are unique, even eccentric, individuals. To construct the children in the tourist brochure as "Americans" (Anglos) and thus non-Mexicans [3], however, the photographer must disguise both their phenotypic features and any form of dress, posture, or hairstyle that might suggest their Mexicanness and, consequently, their individual personalities. In this respect, the children's costumes effectively provide both forms of disguise. Hiding the children's hair and skin from the cameras, the coonskin caps and buckskins also provide an impersonal uniform for these quasi-military crossing-guards who stand in disciplined formation.

Beneath the photograph on the tourist brochure, the caption relates that these schoolchildren had marched from their school through the streets "to lay flower wreaths at the Alamo in memory of the heroes who died there in 1836" (qtd. in Romero 2). As Romero explains, "It was not coincidental that the school teachers made an immigrant child from Mexico, unable to speak English, stand in front of a building that was then projecting two different memories: one national, that has served the Anglo-American as the creation myth of the Texas Republic . . . , the other . . . one that mirrored the acculturation process through education in the very site of the battle that gestated the U.S. plunder of Mexico" (2). In 1968, during the heart of the Chicano Movement and

liberation movements worldwide, Davy Crockett's sacrifice at the Alamo was still the basic tool in oppressively assimilating Mexican American children.

In addition to their Anglicized, "American" appearance, the costumes of the young Davy Crocketts are stereotypically masculine. Again, however, this appearance is deceiving. As crossing guards from a public elementary school, the children would include a sizable, perhaps equal, number of girls. Oddly, in his poignant reminiscences, Romero fails to mention the presence of these female Davy Crocketts. Just as Anglos constitute the only legitimate ethnic group within hegemonic Texan culture, males comprise the only normative gender. Whether Anglo or Mexican, Texan society is intensely patriarchal. Nevertheless, the absence of female symbolism during this Fiesta Week event is not necessarily typical. Rather, the obliteration of female identity from this student ritual at the Alamo conveys stereotyped Anglo attitudes toward Mexican-American girls in particular.

In traditional narratives about the Battle of the Alamo, the historical figure of Susanna Dickenson has played a prominent role. With her daughter Angelina and William Travis's slave, Joe, she was released from Santa Anna's capture so that she could inform Samuel Houston of what had transpired in San Antonio de Bexar. As the widow of Almeron Dickenson, who had sacrificed his life at the Alamo, and the mother of the infant Angelina, Suzanna Dickenson became the perfect maternal symbol of the new Republic of Texas. While the men may have sacrificed their lives for country and freedom, Suzanna Dickenson represented the biological potential for many future generations of Anglo Texans.

From what, however, were her husband and the other male combatants defending her? Traditionally, Alamo films have invoked the figure of Suzanna Dickenson to underscore the sexual threat of Mexican men to white women. In the Anglo-Texan imagination, the Mexican woman was generally perceived as a "sexy senorita" (Limon, Encounters 110) or "bar-girl/prostitute" (108); thus, she required no protection of her virtue. The chastity of the Anglo woman, in contrast, was perceived to be at constant risk from Mexican male violence. Gaston Melies' The Immortal Alamo (1911), for example, revolves around the efforts of Senor Navarre, a "Mexican spy," to forcibly marry the fictional Lucy Dickenson, a character clearly based on the historical Suzanna. As Richard Flores argues, the film "collapses, and therefore, negates, the sociohistorical events of 1836 into the sexual desire of Anglo women by Mexican men" (97). In Martyrs of the Alamo, or the Birth of Texas (1915), similarly, the plot concerning Suzanna Dickenson, left defenseless by the death of her Anglo husband, resonates with a plot involving Deaf Smith, who survives the battle but then must rescue his beloved, who has been captured by Santa Anna. In this film, too, "the protection of women and the whiteness engendered by keeping them safe from miscegenation" (106) is a central theme. The eventual triumph of white patriarchy is portrayed as a moral necessity; as Flores says, Martyrs of the Alamo promotes "the ideology of whiteness and male supremacy as the proper attitude toward a fabricated miscegenistic and tyrannous Mexican threat" (106). While white males remain the central figures of strength and authority in these films, the introduction of female characters "serves to add an element of . . . gender to the production of whiteness" (106). Because the construction of female whiteness is integral to filmic

narratives about the Alamo, the absence of female figures in the photograph of "male" Davy Crockett crossing guards is especially noticeable.

Just as the representation of a faceless Davy Crockett "army" contradicts popular notions of fiercely independent freedom fighters at the Alamo, so a strictly masculine image of Alamo Texians contradicts the popular image of Suzanna Dickinson as the gentle, domestic, and morally pure Mother of Texas.[4] Standing devotedly behind the hypermasculine trinity of Crockett, Bowie, and Travis, Dickenson typically has been mythologized as the image of perfect Texas womanhood. Reflective of her quiet and retiring manner, no schools (and almost no hotels, streets, parks, restaurants, gift shops, or taverns) in San Antonio are named after Dickenson. Thus, one cannot be too surprised at the absence of Suzanna Dickenson crossing guards. The rather passive figure of Suzanna Dickenson is simply too soft and nurturing for the quasi-military ritual of these young keepers of law and order. Conceivably, moreover, the ruling adults could not fathom their young Mexican females dressing up as the symbol of innocent Anglo purity.

Perhaps, also, school officials and Fiesta Week organizers took their cue from Walt Disney's Davy Crockett, which, unlike earlier films, eliminates Suzanna Dickinson as a character. As if in a strained effort to preserve its "family values" aura, Disney's narrative does include Crockett's wife, Polly, and two little blonde boys, but only in very brief scenes of family intimacy and bliss. Eventually, Crockett receives word that Polly has died and that the boys are being cared for by a relative. Thus, they pose no obstacle when Crockett up and leaves for Texas. In the rest of the film, Crockett hangs out with his sidekick, George Russel, in all-male, homosocial settings, whether with Andrew

Jackson's soldiers in their war against the Creek Indians or at the Battle of the Alamo itself. Obviously, in 1968, San Antonio also had no Polly Crockett crossing guards.

Ultimately, only Davy Crockett, the heroic backwoodsman, is an appropriate symbol of male Anglo-Texan power. Ironically, though, in order to maintain this coonskin illusion of a white male student body at David Crockett Elementary School, the symbolism of traditional Texan iconography must be inverted. These Fiesta Week marchers constitute neither a wholesome "family" of males and females, nor do the coonskin cap wearers convey a virile male individualism. Instead, the little "male" soldiers are faceless, anonymous, orderly, and disciplined.

Davy Crockett in Appalachia

Apparently identifying with Davy Crockett as a lone male outcast from civilization, Appalachian writer Jesse Aquillah Jones is described in his author's bio as "a permanent refugee from graduate education 'working for the National Park Service far enough off the main roads to make me non-threatening to the tourists.' He lives near Gatlinburg, Tenn." (45). Like Rolando Romero, Jones fails to examine the more gendered aspects of the Davy Crockett legend. Having grown up in rural America, he recalls that "boys and girls alike" (50) were glued to their family TV sets to watch the three-part Davy Crockett series on ABC-TV. Not otherwise elaborating on the gender of his playmates, Jones suggests that the figure of Crockett is universally appealing for both males and females. What Jones perceives as liberally inclusive, however, can more accurately be viewed as the establishment of male identity as normative and the depiction

of female identity as aberrant or even irrelevant. Given the complete absence of strong women characters in the Davy Crockett series and most other popular entertainment during the 1950s, many young girls internalized a view of female identity as weak and inadequate. In addition to overlooking the gendered implications of Disney's Davy Crockett for young female viewers, Jones fails to consider how this very racialized narrative of Crockett's adventures might have affected the Mexican American children who tuned in to the series. Certainly, many thousands of Mexican American children, as Romero and other Chicano authors have observed, encountered narratives about Davy Crockett not only in fanciful films but in comic strips, historical markers, school textbooks, and lectures provided by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT) during field trips to the Alamo. For these Mexican American children, the film Davy Crockett functioned as yet another pointed reminder of Mexican avarice, cruelty, and barbarism. Many rural Anglo Americans, however, find in Davy Crockett an image of cultural affirmation. Unlike Chicano authors, few rural whites describe recall life-changing or traumatic classroom discussions about Crockett. Still, these writers recall how the Disney film nurtured a strong sense of regional pride. For him and his fellow "country rubes" (50), Jesse Aquillah Jones recalls, the Disney TV series validated their sense of hillbilly identity: "I was eleven years old when the Disney shows aired on ABC-TV, and I got right into the thick of the coonskin cap craze. . . . We were country people and hill people to boot--'hillbillies,' truth to tell, and right defiantly proud of it and pretty much free already of middle-class pretensions, but something in the television backwoodsman released a flood of rank wild juice in all our systems, and we got right hard to handle" (50). In Jones' view, clearly, "hillbillies" have a unique affinity with

Davy Crockett. As used by Jones, the term hillbilly denotes the wild, intractable independence of the rural frontiersman; also, however, the term refers to the country rube who unwittingly plays the buffoon for a more elite class. While historians disagree about the actual nature of Crockett's relationship with the Whigs and the Jacksonian Democrats, Jones takes the view that Crockett "managed to become the tool of anti-democratic Whigs who knew the uses of image far better than he. . . . The worst thing David Crockett ever did was allow the Whigs to put his name on books he never wrote which attacked the Jacksonian Democrats and promoted the Whig cause" (47). Because he took pleasure in the attention he received as a larger-than-life legend, that is, Crockett "embraced the image others put on him" (47) and thus allowed himself to be portrayed as an illiterate, backwards hillbilly. Crockett, then, is both the autonomous frontiersman "free . . . of middle-class pretensions" and a clownish figure. Encompassing these two configurations, Davy Crockett perfectly embodies the quintessential "hillbilly."

Like Crockett, Jones and his playmates have been socially conditioned to view themselves as rubes and rural idiots. In the Walt Disney TV series and subsequent film, however, the mythic Davy refuses to play the fool. The history of Davy Crockett, therefore, becomes the iconoclastic history of poor people's resistance against those who rule. Despite being a "hillbilly," Jones recalls that watching Davy Crockett as a young boy left him feeling "defiantly proud" of being "country." Clearly, Reed and his young friends did not view themselves as members of a despised minority or subjugated working class; rather, they felt "free . . . of middle-class pretensions" (50). Identifying completely with Fess Parker's Davy Crockett, Jones felt a joyfully unbridled appreciation of his "dirty little cousins," his rural hill folks. An upstart politician and backwoods

soldier from humble origins, Parker's Crockett was a socially marginalized outcast among the political and economic elites of Nashville and Washington. Young viewers, however, admired and revered this subversive backwoodsman as a heroic American. Thus, Jones suggests, rural white children who identified with Parker's character found no cause to feel ridiculed, stigmatized, or humiliated. Unlike the Mexican American children who have been shamed and silenced by the Alamo myth, country kids find pride in their historical connection with Davy Crockett, the "hillbilly" frontiersman.

According to Jones, all young Americans, including "rich kids in mansions" (50), aspired to be Crockett-like hillbillies in the 1950s. In Disney America, Jones claims, "a whole generation of youth . . . reinhabited for a time the essential freedom of being hillbillies in an uptight, button-down, dryclean-only culture" (51). In describing this "whole generation" that seeks to emulate the normally stigmatized hillbillies, Jones erases the distinctions between poor Appalachians and more affluent urban Americans. These affluent admirers of Davy Crockett, that is, are not simply hillbilly wannabes; rather, they actually become hillbillies by "reinhabiting" hillbilly freedom. Divorced from the larger categories of culture and economic class, the term hillbilly conveys the very essence of the American democratic spirit. Urban or rural, rich or poor, Jones argues, any American child can relate to the Davy Crockett legend. Much like the cowboy, in Jones' view, the hillbilly is both a national symbol and a universal archetype that transcends class, gender, and region. Like the American millions who watched Davy Crockett with gleeful admiration, hillbillies can be "boys and girls alike," both Republicans and hippies, mountaineers and flatlanders "from the cane" (46). Jones does concede that the term hillbilly is often bestowed by a privileged urban class upon unwilling, poor country folks.

What Jones fails to address, however, is the association of the "hillbilly" identity with a very particular, stigmatized form of racial whiteness. White Appalachians, especially, must carry this hillbilly identity. Representing free will, personal autonomy, and "untamed" independence, what hillbilly signifies for Jones is primarily a matter of individual choice. Ultimately, according to Jones' formulation, the term hillbilly is almost completely indeterminate.

As rebellion, the political impotence of such indeterminacy is suggested in the phrase "Eisenhower subversion," which is Jones' own oxymoronic term for the anti-authoritarian frontier ethos embodied by Fess Parker. By the time they grew up, he argues, the young patriots who once avidly watched Davy Crockett had evolved into the intrepid protesters who "stormed the Democratic Convention in Chicago, defied authority, facetiously stuck flowers in the barrels of guns, and brought down a president" (510). These protests of the late 1960s, of course, were efforts to end the Vietnam War as well as to make the Democratic Party more proactive in the struggle for civil rights. Ironically, however, many of the white activists of that era failed to be racially inclusive in their own organizations or to critique the Vietnam War in terms that condemned U.S. imperialism. Indeed, these young protesters embodied many of the same contradictions that are reflected in the life of Davy Crockett, who was both a legendary Indian fighter and a fierce opponent of Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act, both a believer in democratic principles and a reckless adventurer whose actions spoke in favor of militaristic aggression and Mexican disenfranchisement. Despite the opportunities for an extended comparison between Crockett and the young white protesters, however, Jones does not initiate a discussion of the ways in which race and empire have impacted young

white Americans. Rather, with weak ironic humor, he briefly discusses what he feels are the good intentions of the makers of Disney's Davy Crockett. Fess Parker's Crockett, he says, "killed Indians sometimes, but he really had a soft spot for them and tried to help them because he was a true democratic American and believed in equal justice for all" (51). One doubts that Native Americans and Mexicans would find this conception of Davy Crockett to be either attractive or inclusive. Indeed, one wonders why Jones neglects to mention Mexicans even in passing.

Much like Jesse Aquillah Jones, J. W. Williamson portrays Davy Crockett as a "hillbilly." In Hillbillyland: What the Movies Did to the Mountains and What the Mountains Did to the Movies (1995), therefore, Williamson discusses films about Davy Crockett and the Alamo as prototypical hillbilly films. As a hillbilly on the western frontier, however, Crockett was not alone. Again like Jones, Williamson finds the origins of the twentieth-century American "hillbilly" in nineteenth-century frontiersmen, including Daniel Boone, Samuel Houston, and Andrew Jackson (Williamson 86). In Hillbillyland, consequently, Williamson devotes an entire chapter to "The Coonskin Boys." As he recognizes, these frontiersmen exemplify the violence and aggression of European settler colonialism. Making "savage warfare on the frontier look patriotic," Williamson comments, "on average they're an embarrassing lot" (86). If these "race heroes" (86), as he describes them, do not often receive extended attention in Appalachian studies, Williamson suggests the reason. "The coonskin-wearing heroes," he says,

aren't so much of the mountains as they are in them, passing through on their first step to conquering the continent. The pelts and skins they wear are trophies that

they have taken by force. For the typical Daniel Boone, the mountains are purely a barrier to western expansion. The only people who actually live there are either wild Indians, whose humanity is rarely hinted at, or viciously malevolent white renegades, who have reverted to bestiality. (86)

In addressing these "race heroes" in coonskin caps as hillbillies who are integral to his study of movies about the "mountains," Williamson boldly challenges fellow scholars in Appalachian studies to confront their limited conception of what constitutes an "Appalachian" identity and to engage themselves more intensely in comparative regional studies.

Nevertheless, Williamson still observes a distinction in Hollywood movies between those "in the mountains" and those "of the mountains," the Appalachian folk who are typically portrayed as "viciously malevolent white renegades" (86). This distinction made by Hollywood producers simply mirrors a distinction made by Appalachians themselves between "authentic" mountain people and "outsiders." Treated and represented as "Other," Appalachians have integrated this sense of alterity into a means of cultural self-identification and resistance. The Mexicans of South Texas, one might observe, make a similar distinction based upon regional identity. Here I refer not to the distinction between Mexicans and various waves of Anglo settlers, or even between Tejanos and Californios, but rather to the difference between Tejanos and "fuereno" newcomers. During the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920, as Jose Limon has explained, the term fuerenos referred to immigrants from the interior of Mexico, "a refugee peasantry . . . with few belongings, and looking for work" (Dancing 86). For old settled Tejano families, Limon says, "fuerenos are a different kind of mexicano. They have no

ties to the land of south Texas and its local tradition of resistance" (85). Similarly, modern Appalachians dread the cultural loss they fear will arrive with "Yankees," "techies," the surge of white flight from Atlanta, or, in recent years, a new generation of fuerenos from the interior of Mexico. Appalachians' fear of outsiders, however, is not limited to recent arrivals but also to those frontiersmen in their historical past who seemed simply to pass through the region. Not meshing neatly with Appalachians' view of themselves as an oppressed but valiantly resistant people, these frontiersmen of the past threaten Appalachians' sense that they are culturally unique. While these frontier passers-by arrived under different historical circumstances than the fuerenos in South Texas, Appalachians resemble the old Tejano ranching families in their reluctance to integrate the "coonskin cap boys" into their historical narratives.

Both culturally and economically, Appalachians have been a dominated population since at least the late nineteenth century; still, one must ask whether nineteenth-century mountain people actually were fundamentally different from the frontier people who "passed through." In this regard, Appalachians, like Chicanos, should perhaps consider the function of film and other forms of popular culture in constructing an Appalachian identity. In Remembering the Alamo (2002), Richard Flores concludes that the early film Martyrs of the Alamo (1915) is "much more concerned with 1915 than 1836" (106); at a time when Mexican field labor was needed in the fields and orchards of South Texas, that is, Martyrs of the Alamo and similar Alamo films provided a "visual manifestation" of Mexican "alterity" (106) that justified the racial oppression of Mexicans. The Alamo films did not create Mexican culture; they did, however, produce an image of Mexicans as alien, exotic, and irredeemably inferior to Anglos. Similarly,

twentieth-century hillbilly movies, together with hillbilly TV shows, comic strips, and local color fiction, helped to establish Appalachians as Other in a manner that justified the exploitation and marginalization of the Appalachian region. What constitutes a genuine "mountain" identity, and what differentiates Appalachians from western frontier people, are questions that seem to haunt J. W. Williamson. He provides no rhetorical closure or determinate answers for these issues.

Rather than examining in depth the historical and political linkages between Appalachia and the western United States, he universalizes the concept of the "hillbilly" as a metaphysical construction. Williamson never claims to focus exclusively or even primarily upon southern Appalachian culture. For Williamson, "mountains" become a metaphor for "antiorde" and "sin" (18), which, in social terms, exist on the "hilly sides of the American economy, the parts out of the mainstream" (16). Consequently, just as mountains are simply a metaphor for what is marginal or against-the-grain, the term "hillbilly" means rough, rural, poor but fruitful, blatantly antiurban, and often dangerous, but not necessarily hailing from the Southern Appalachians or even from any mountains" (16). The qualities of the hillbilly, that is, simply represent the chaos and disorder of the metaphorical "mountains." For Williamson, the Hollywood "coonskin cap boys" are "hillbillies" not because they are from Appalachia but in the sense that they mirror "the conflicted urban memory of necessary frontier rudeness" (16). Both historically and in "the conflicted urban memory," as Williamson is fully cognizant, racism constitutes much of this "frontier rudeness." Rather than fully theorize how issues of race affect our conception of the "hillbilly," however, Williamson prefers to universalize a very abstract notion of hillbilly identity.

Emphatically entitled "Fooling with Coonskin: The One and Only Original American Hillbilly," a subchapter of "The Coonskin Cap Boys" introduces us to the crucial figure of Davy Crockett, who remains the central organizing motif throughout the rest of the chapter. As the most commonly recognized character in "hillbilly movies," Williamson argues, Crockett is the prototype for a whole range of later films about frontier heroes, hillbilly fools, and backwoods buffoons. In a brilliant discussion of Crocodile Dundee, for example, Williamson reminds us that Paul Hogan is simply a latter-day version of Fess Parker's Davy Crockett. Just as Parker demonstrates his affinity with wild creatures by staring down a "b'ar," for example, Hogan stares down a water buffalo (95). Certainly, the settlement of white Europeans in Australia constitutes the ultimate form of western expansionism, which both Crocodile Dundee and Davy Crockett aptly symbolize. Again, though, Williamson does not focus on this historical connection; rather, he is interested in Dundee as a "backwoods scapegoat for the purpose of criticizing modern mainstream American culture" (94). In addition to Crocodile Dundee and Davy Crockett, according to Williamson, "mountain-dwelling Slovaks," "mountain Kurds," the "peasants of the Guizhou Province" of China, the "hairy Ainus" of Japan (20), and the "fringe Celts of the Roman Empire" (74) are all "hillbillies." Having moved from white settler colonizers to socially marginalized ethnic minorities, many of whom have experienced colonization, we are clearly now at some distance from a particular historical notion of what constitutes a "hillbilly" identity.

In his metaphysical conception of "hillbilly" identity and his view of Davy Crockett as a universal archetype, Williamson constructs an argument very similar to that of Jesse Aquillah Jones. Indeed, this similarity is not coincidence, for one learns in a

footnote that Jesse Aquillah Jones is in fact Williamson's nom de plume. As in most scholarly books, in fact, Williamson incorporates the earlier article by "Jones" into his larger text. In addition to a discussion of Walt Disney's Davy Crockett, which is the focus of "Jones," Williamson examines a much broader range of Alamo films, including Martyrs of the Alamo. Thus, while the Disney Crockett devotes relatively little time to Crockett's final days, Williamson in Hillbillyland is able to reflect upon Crockett's final sacrifice at the 1836 Battle of the Alamo as the thematically central as well as narratively climactic moment in most Alamo films. He aptly observes that Crockett's supposed love for Texas positions him as a "fatalistic foot soldier in the acquisition of territory" (83). While Williamson does at least refer to Texas political history, neither he nor Jesse Aquillah Jones refer to the Mexican soldiers in Santa Anna's army, to the Tejanos who defended the Alamo, or to Mexican American moviegoers who have found little except hurtful racial stereotypes in Alamo films. Neither persona finds Mexican Americans to be critical in an examination of hillbilly identity.

Ultimately, one wonders whether Jesse Aquillah Jones is simply Williamson's pen name or an alter ego. As the longtime editor of the Appalachian Journal and the author of frequently cited books and articles, of course, Williamson has never needed a fictional persona to achieve recognition or legitimation in the field of Appalachian studies. What the Jones persona does offer, however, is a personal sense of possessing an Appalachian identity. In a sense, then, Jones symbolizes the "bona fides" that Williamson already possesses for his claim to an Appalachian identity. Like Jones, after all, Williamson lives "near Gatlinburg" and escaped "graduate education" (45) at Appalachian State University, where he taught graduate students, to be sure, but also

became a passionate teacher of both undergraduates and nonenrolled adults in the community of Boone, North Carolina. As a Tennessee mountain man born among "hill people" (50), however, Jones goes a step further by implying that he has always been an Appalachian. In this respect, the implication is misleading.

Shedding the Jesse Aquillah Jones identity in Hillbillyland, Williamson informs the reader of his childhood in the Texas Panhandle, a region where "everybody . . . scraped the soil to survive or depended on people who scraped the soil" (14). Describing a large extended family of "greats and grands" (15) in which people "depended utterly on a network of goods and services, bartered and borrowed" (15), Williamson makes the similarities between the Panhandle and Appalachia vividly and movingly clear. Certainly, one now understands why Williamson challenges his colleagues in Appalachian studies to adopt a more inclusive, less rigidly regional view of what constitutes a "hillbilly" identity. Still, one is left to wonder why Williamson adopted an Appalachian persona in the article about Davy Crockett, a man who may have been born "on a mountain top in Tennessee" but who died in San Antonio de Bexar. Born and raised in the Texas Panhandle, Williamson is well-positioned to understand the powerful symbolism of Davy Crockett's sacrifice not only in terms of the nineteenth-century conflict with Mexico but also to understand how filmic and literary representations of the Battle of the Alamo have functioned to establish a racial hierarchy between Anglos and Mexican Americans. Historically, of course, the Texas Panhandle has been a region of rural white farmers; thus, one might assume that Williamson's oversight is due to a lack of familiarity with the ethnic identities and tensions that characterize life in San Antonio and South Texas. No Texan, however, can elude the Alamo legend and its racial implications. As presented in

stereotype, however, white Appalachians are a homogeneous folk group descended from Anglo-Saxons and Scotch-Irish immigrants. In addition, according to popular mythology, Appalachians are a victimized population rather than a group that victimizes others. One senses, then, the attractions of Jesse Aquillah Jones, the Tennessee mountaineer, for a Texan writing about Davy Crockett.

In an isolated sentence in a chapter of Hillbillyland that is separated by several dozen pages from his biographical reflections, Williamson makes a curious admission. Providing his bona fides as a rural "hillbilly," albeit a Texan hillbilly, Williamson recalls "my grandfather's brothers and various in-laws with fiddles and bull-fiddles and guitars (but no banjos that I ever remember) far down there in the pecan groves of south Texas on the Nueces River in August" (45-46). For many non-Texans, including Williamson's many appreciative Appalachian readers, such references to rivers and pecan groves will seem quite obscure. Although he states the regional setting for his anecdote as South Texas, these readers may fail to make the cognitive leap from the Panhandle to the border region. For most Texans, however, this one sentence suffices to establish a specific location both geographically and culturally. When one crosses the Nueces River, that place "far down there," one has reached deep South Texas. The Panhandle, however, is much farther north. Williamson refers here, then, to childhood trips his family took to visit with relatives in a distant and dramatically different region of the state. One is left to wonder about the lives and identities of these great-uncles and in-laws. Had they always lived in South Texas? Did he have close ties with these relatives? How familiar were the Williamson "hillbillies" with Mexican-American culture?

Traveling with his family from the Panhandle to South Texas, Williamson went from a region settled largely by whites from the U.S. South to a region with an Anglo minority but overwhelmingly populated by Mexican Americans. Thus, while the Anglos who lived along the Nueces may very well have played fiddles in large family gatherings, the omission of any reference to the accordions and drums of 1950s Mexican American conjunto bands is puzzling. Embedded within Williamson's description of the family's instruments, certainly, is the suggestion that the Spanish-origin guitars might be comparable to the African-origin banjos of Appalachia; thus, the Panhandle family excludes the banjo while embracing the guitar. Only the most assiduous reader, however, can discover this racially inflected but implicit comparison. Admittedly, many South Texas communities were strictly segregated in the 1950s; moreover, a significant number of towns were primarily Anglo. Since the term hillbilly is a term that invokes a white racial identity, however, a discussion of these Texan hillbillies' racial Others would seem to be useful. Instead, the single compressed sentence regarding family visits to South Texas suggests a form of psychological repression that we might refer to as an Anglo-Texan political unconscious. That place "far down there," much like the bodily sexual region, signifies both danger and an unarticulated desire for the alluring Other.

Just such repression, according to Chicano scholar Jose E. Limon, occurs in the nostalgic writings of J. Frank Dobie, a scholar of southwestern folklore who was arguably the most influential public intellectual in Texas during the twentieth century. Writing nostalgically about the South Texas ranch where he grew up, Dobie recalls a "romantic" architectural feature on the west bank of the Nueces River that was "called Fort Ramirez. It was never a fort, but it was called a fortified ranch house built by a

Mexican named Ramirez before Texas became a republic. Not within the memory of the oldest resident of the county had the fort been inhabited" (qtd. in Limon, Dancing 45). What remains unexplained in the reminiscences of Dobie, who was a descendant of affluent "pioneers" from Virginia, Limon points out, is "where the Ramirez family went, leaving land and fortified stone ranch house behind, and why they went" (45). More specifically, Dobie does not explain how the founding of the Texas Republic of 1836 is related to the disappearance of major Mexican landowners.[5] Given the fact that his own family "came to settle in Texas in the great colonization of the 1830s, his parents eventually becoming ranchers in south Texas in the 1870s" (44), Dobie's silence is especially resounding. Following the Texas Revolution of 1836 and the U.S.-Mexican War of 1846-1848, Anglos usurped Mexican lands through legal wrangling, social ostracism, economic pressure, and physical violence. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this violence included hundreds of lynchings and the murders of entire families. Much like white Appalachians have romanticized the Cherokee past while repressing the memory of Cherokee displacement that culminated during the Trail of Tears, Dobie romanticizes Mexican culture while repressing the memory of Mexican displacement from South Texas. Not coincidentally, the Trail of Tears occurred in 1836, the same year that the founding of the Texas Republic established Anglo rule in the formerly Mexican territory.

As a South Texan descended from non-Appalachian southerners, J. Frank Dobie may seem at some cultural remove from twenty-first-century Appalachians. Rather arrogantly, scholars in Appalachian studies often perceive their own work as the paradigm and prototype for all other forms of regional studies in the United States. Given

this worldview of Appalachian scholars, Dobie's work may seem particularly irrelevant to the study of the eastern mountains. Indisputably, however, Dobie was among the very first American academics to legitimize the formal study of regional folklore and literature. Dobie's Life and Literature of the Southwest course, in fact, is still taught both at The University of Texas at Austin and at other public Texas universities. In his desire to teach a "multicultural curriculum of cowboys, cattle, and Mexicans" (Limon, Dancing 59), as Jose Limon points out, Dobie grew impatient with the "pedantic demands of literary scholarship" (46), a robust and practical attitude toward learning that is shared by Williamson, whose style of writing eschews what he seems to view as the latest fads in theory and postmodern style. Indeed, in their need to study "masculine" subjects, whether cowboys or frontier "hillbillies," to avoid the appearance of effeminacy (46-49), Dobie and Williamson again find common ground. Even more importantly, perhaps, both Dobie and Williamson are acutely conscious of the ways in which "powerful and "aggressive" economic interests of "late capitalism" have enabled the domination of particular regions in the United States, including both Appalachia and the "brush country" that Dobie loved so fervently (50).

If Dobie wrote about Mexicans with condescension and prejudice, the Texan Williamson has eluded this problem by writing as an Appalachian scholar. Williamson, that is, simply avoids writing about Mexicans. In his examination of Davy Crockett and other western frontiersmen, however, Williamson subtly pushes against the racial walls that surround Appalachia. While he avoids historicizing the relationship between cowboys, Mexicans, and mountain people in Hillbillyland, Williamson performs a heroic feat in challenging Appalachians to confront their own racialization as white people.

Conclusion

As a devoted teacher, William drew from the insights of his Appalachian students in order to write Hillbillyland. In his acknowledgments, he thanks the "many students who have taken my 'Hollywood Appalachia' class over the years" (xii).

Reflecting on students' eager promotion of the Appalachian State mascot, the hillbilly Yosef, Williamson writes that these young people recognized "they were the hillbillies in the structure of a larger power" (29). For just such mountain students, Williamson's attempts to come to terms with Davy Crockett and the Alamo will be useful life lessons.

For Texas Mexicans and Appalachians, the Alamo possesses very different meanings. For Anglos, as Richard R. Flores has commented, the Alamo "serves as a symbol of rebirth, the coming-of-age for a state and, eventually, a nation in the modern period" (11). Thus, for Anglos, the Alamo represents "patriotism" (11). Because its symbolic associations are inextricably connected with their own cultural and economic domination, however, the meaning of the Alamo for Mexicans is "not quite the same. . . . For them, the Alamo reverberates with ambivalence. It serves as a reminder, a memorial to a stigmatized identity" (11). Thus, the "radical difference" between Anglos and Mexicans that is perpetuated in the symbolism of the Alamo is the difference between self-assured confidence in one's own worldview and conflicted ambivalence. "The symbolic work accomplished through 'remembering the Alamo,'" according to Flores, "consists of signifying a radical difference between 'Anglos' and 'Mexicans'" (Remembering xvi). While I agree with Flores that we must acknowledge the historical

reality of the "Anglo" and "Mexican" binary, this essay attempts to explore the ways in which Anglos, especially Appalachians, also experience ambivalence toward this socially constructed racial difference.

As we have seen, learning to "remember the Alamo" is especially brutal for Mexican American children. As a young boy, for example, Flores learned the significance of this "radical difference." During a third-grade field trip to the Alamo, his Anglo best friend blamed him for the deaths of the Alamo defenders. "You killed them! You and the other 'mes'kins'" (xii), his friend exclaimed. Such animus against Mexicans in Texas functions to establish an economy and social order based upon a particular racial hierarchy. Thus, as Flores says, his "usage of 'Anglo' and 'Mexican' is a necessary one . . . since" he is "undertaking . . . a historical ethnography of the formation of 'Angloness' and 'Mexicanness' as categories of difference and power constructed through the making of the Alamo itself" (xviii). In this essay, I have explored the ways in which "Angloness" and "Mexicanness" also exist as a racial dichotomy within the region of Appalachia. Unless acknowledged and deconstructed in every environment, including the classroom, this racial binary can cause tremendous conflict and pain for Anglos and Latinos alike.

While examining the ways in which narratives about Davy Crockett and the Alamo have contributed to racial privilege for white Appalachian young people, this essay also assumes that Appalachians occupy a separate subject position from Anglo-Texans due both to the intense economic exploitation of the Appalachian region and the construction of Appalachians as ethnically Other in popular culture. Reflecting upon the working class residents of Knoxville, Tennessee, Chicano scholar Limon aptly characterizes the predicament of poor white Appalachians when he describes them as "a

particular white working class, in its own oppression prone to racism and violence but also struggling with the emotional profundities of human existence and historical memory amidst such contradictions" (Encounters 205). Despite the brevity of Limon's description, the modifying particular manages to differentiate this East Tennessee working class from other, similar populations. Through this simple gesture, Limon manages to acknowledge the whiteness (and tendency to racism) among poor white Appalachians while also acknowledging their regional and cultural specificity.

Unfortunately, in his efforts to universalize Davy Crockett as the archetype of wild, unfettered freedom, Williamson fails to be equally concrete in establishing the historical and cultural linkages between Appalachia, West Tennessee, and Texas. Similarly, in positing the term hillbilly as a metaphysical construction, Williamson removes the word from its historical, geographical, and racial context. As Williamson correctly suggests, the term hillbilly has been used to describe more than one population of poor whites in the United States. Each of these groups of poor whites, however, possesses a unique history in regard to class mobility, oppression, cultural expression, and racism toward other groups. In Hillbillyland, Williamson, aka Jesse Aquillah Jones, insightfully suggests that the hillbilly stereotype can be liberating and empowering. To the extent that Appalachians have taken the term in hand for their own cultural and rhetorical uses, many in the Appalachian region will be in agreement with Williamson. Unlike Williamson, however, most Appalachians are cognizant that the term hillbilly is not a term that can or will be willingly adopted by "freedom-loving" Americans of all income levels, regional backgrounds, and ethnic identities. Perhaps especially for Appalachian people, the term hillbilly conjures up demeaning images of Snuffy Smith

and L'il Abner. A violent epithet in many contexts, the term has been foisted at urban Appalachian students in midwestern classrooms to convey their status as unwanted aliens. In this sense, the subalternity of Appalachian students resembles the subject position of Mexican American students in South Texas classrooms. Again, though, one must respect the fundamentally different historical experiences of these two populations. In this regard, Williamson's own experience with Davy Crockett as an eleven-year-old in the Texas Panhandle is certainly relevant for Appalachian children, also. In a way not possible for Mexican American students, white Appalachians can feel culturally (and racially) empowered by Davy Crockett, the "original American hillbilly."

[1] I use the term greater Appalachia to include Appalachian populations in both the Appalachian region and in the urban Appalachian neighborhoods of the midwest. This term derives from Americo Paredes' conception of "greater Mexico."

[2] As Leticia M. Garza-Falcon reminds us, an elaborate system of segregated schools and classrooms "remained in place up until the late 1960s, despite the 1954 desegregation law" (242). Throughout the Chicano Movement, which lasted into the mid-1970s, efforts were made to combat educational discrimination, which included the discouragement of Mexican-American students from taking college preparatory courses or even completing high school, the banning of Spanish in schools, and derogatory depictions of Mexican Americans in the curriculum. Currently, students are now legally permitted to speak Spanish; also, a marginally more multicultural curriculum has been provided. Nevertheless, Mexican American children still experience neglect from culturally unprepared teachers and disrespectful attitudes toward their culture and history.

[3] Mexicanos often use the word Americano to refer to Anglos, just as Anglos themselves use the word American. Suggesting that only Anglos are Americans, of course, the use of the word in this manner underscores the alienation that Mexican Americans experience.

[4] Historically, Dickenson was not the sheltered and "innocent" woman depicted in popular legends. "Illiterate, without family, and only twenty-two years old" after her husband died at the Alamo, she unsuccessfully petitioned the Texan government for a pension. A victim of spouse abuse, she married five times and possibly worked as a prostitute (Henson).

[5] According to Art Leatherwood in The Handbook of Texas, the Ramirez family left Live Oak County in 1813, more than twenty years before the Texas Revolution and about sixty years before Dobie's ancestors settled in Live Oak County ("Fort Ramirez"). Left unexplained in Dobie's account, however, is how his family came into possession of this land that had previously been settled by Mexicans. Since the structure was reputed in local Anglo folklore, including Dobie's own writings, to be the site of buried treasure, one would expect him to evince some curiosity concerning its origins. This local treasure tale itself, perhaps, suggests a repressed understanding that the material wealth usurped by Anglos lies forever beyond what even they would view as legitimate claims to ownership. Limon's point, therefore, remains valid. Over the course of the nineteenth century, most of the old Mexican landowning families "disappeared," yet Anglo-Texans collectively repressed the memory of this violence and thievery. For the most part, Mexicans were welcome in the region only as cheap labor.

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