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Jonathan Peter Spiro. *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant.* Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2009. xvi + 487 pp. $39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-58465-715-6.

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How Green Were My Racists: The Life and Thought of Madison Grant

A biography of Madison Grant would seem useful, for he was the great American theorist of racism in the early twentieth century, but difficult, for he worked behind the scenes, left no personal papers, and became such an embarrassment that friends and archivists destroyed or locked up his letters. Nevertheless, Jonathan Spiro has turned his 1,208 page-dissertation into a 487-page study. It has its uses but also major flaws. The accounts of Grant, his circle, their thought, and their campaigns add to our knowledge, but the lack of grounding in secondary literature on conservation and game management makes some of his conclusions suspect. He connects Grant's conservation and his racism in far too simple a manner, and he makes claims for Grant's importance that make sense from within Grant's circle but cannot stand when we take the larger world into account.

The argument comes in three parts. Six chapters on "The Evolution of Scientific Racism" move from Grant's interest in game management to eugenics, a path Grant saw as the straightforward application of ideas about animal populations to human ones. This is the least useful, for Spiro does not adequately consider the conservation movement or the development of game management. Five more chapters deal with "Conserving the Nordics," the writing and reception of *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), the 1920s battle for immigration restriction, the subsequent movement to sterilize the unfit and, finally, a chapter on the Save-the-Redwoods League that ties conservation back into eugenics. It has the only, or at least most accessible, description of Grant's racial ideas and their development and reception in upper-crust America. "Part Three: Extinction" deals with Grant's battles with Franz Boaz and the newly professionalized anthropologists, the fading popularity of scientific racism, and the Nazis' enthusiastic application of those doctrines in Europe. This has much of interest but, written from within the context of Grant's circle, requires other material for a full picture.

Spiro has managed–a considerable feat–to describe the life and convey the contradictions of a racist who was, within his circle, a gentleman and even, among his own set, a gentle man, and he presents Grant's racial theories in an admirably evenhanded fashion, but stays too close to Grant to give an adequate idea of his influence and contributions–as distinct from what Grant thought his contributions were. Key works in the history of science and environmental history do not appear even in the bibliography, for instance, and Spiro overlooks contributions by those beyond Grant's circle, takes Grant's name on organizational charts and stray comments in obituaries as influence, and inflates rhetorical phrases into research programs. The discussion of Grant's battles with Franz Boaz make it seem almost a battle between two scientific schools, a serious distortion of the situation, and while the Nazis certainly appealed to Grant, they also read others, and it is never clear how far Grant or others shaped the Nazi view or just gave them intellectual ammunition. Historians can mine this book for information on Grant and scientific racism but should treat its conclusions cautiously.

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