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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Nicole Marie Drewitz-Crockett entitled "Angel on the Mountain: Homestead Heroism in Appalachian Fiction." I have examined the final paper copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Allison Ensor, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

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Angel on the Mountain:
Homestead Heroism in Appalachian Fiction

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Nicole Marie Drewitz-Crockett
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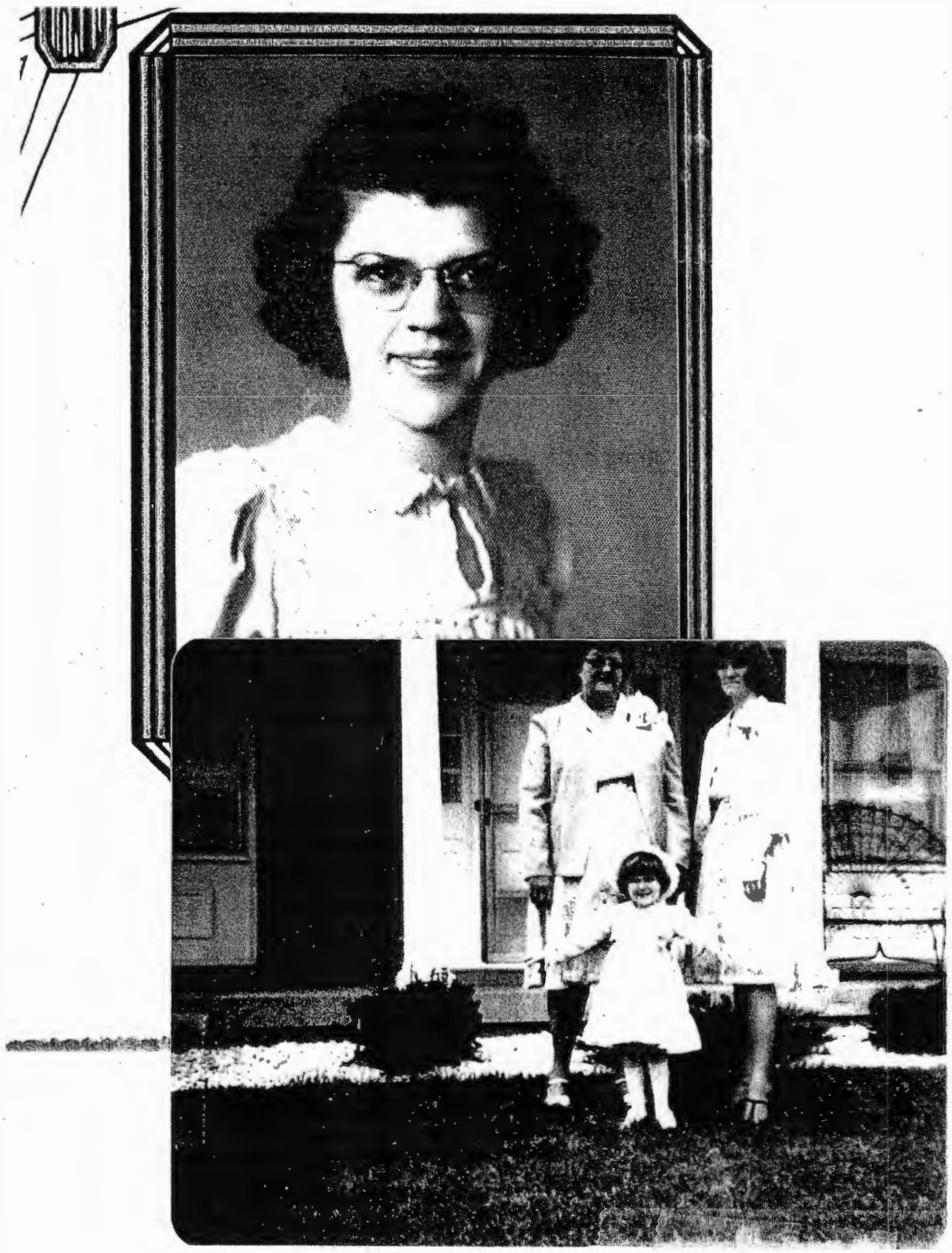
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, Rilla Gertrude Juett, and my mother, Ann Marie Juett Soult.



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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to offer homestead heroism as a model for analysis in Appalachian fiction. Homestead heroism provides specific criteria for evaluating images of women in Appalachian fiction. In contrast to long-standing stereotypes of mountain women, homestead heroes achieve economic equality, and thereby autonomy, through labor production. In order to offer homestead heroism as a viable means of critical study, I have traced its presence in Appalachian fiction from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century.

Table of Contents

Section		Page
Introduction	*Angel on the Mountain: Homestead Heroism in Appalachian Fiction*	1
Chapter One	*Insiders/Outsiders: History & Fiction in the Presentation of a Region*	12
Chapter Two	*Glimpses of Homestead Heroism: Strength Amidst Stereotype*	46
Chapter Three	*Models of Homestead Heroism Fully Realized*	76
Conclusion	*Angel on the Mountain: Homestead Heroism in Appalachian Fiction*	112
Bibliography		117
Vita		126

Introduction

Angel on the Mountain: Homestead Heroism in Appalachian Fiction

Renee Zellweger's 2004 Academy Award for best supporting actress in the film adaptation of Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* highlights her embodiment of a strong, outspoken, and highly skilled Appalachian woman whose abilities rescue Ada Monroe and Black Cove Farm from peril during the Civil War. Through Zellweger's portrayal Ruby's knowledge of the Blue Ridge Mountains and subsistence farming comes to life before national movie audiences. Upon her arrival at Black Cove Ruby takes an inventory, listing what must be accomplished in order to return the farm to working order and provide sustenance for the women throughout the upcoming winter, while society-bred Ada follows on her heels recording the tasks to be done in a notebook once reserved for genteel thoughts about art, literature, and politics. As Ruby and Ada go about completing the list, Ada finds herself building a fence and marvels that this is the first thing she has done which "might produce an actual result" (*Cold Mountain*). For Ada Monroe, building a fence is the first of many new experiences that will solidify her education in homestead production: she too evolves into an independent Appalachian woman as she and Ruby live successfully on Black Cove Farm without men. Ruby and Ada's partnership makes male labor unnecessary; they fulfill both gender roles through tasks performed both in the fields and within the home.

Although the film version of *Cold Mountain* focuses primarily on Ada and Inman's love story, the remarkable account of Ruby and Ada's survival is also clearly

reflected on the screen. The presence of such outstanding women in a story written by a contemporary Appalachian author warrants further investigation into the body of Appalachian literature in order to uncover precedents for women whose homestead production provides them with autonomy. Therefore, in this thesis I will analyze works of Appalachian fiction beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing to the publication of *Cold Mountain* (1997). I will argue that the female characters in these works that achieve economic equality, and thereby autonomy, through homestead production are homestead heroes. In order to do so, I will establish in this introduction that the natural environment of Appalachia is a shared space between genders, and itself a formidable agent in sustainability, which provides women's homestead production, in this case defined as work assigned to females both inside and outside the home, with significant value.

The role of a woman in the American South has long been stereotyped through traditional notions as the "angel in the house." Characters such as Edna Pontellier in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* are expected to be paragons of virtue who quietly raise their children and serve their husbands, due to their "natural aptitude for the domestic sphere" (Walker 4). This view of womanhood, however, does not hold up in Appalachia, often termed the "South within the South." Contrary to many of her southern sisters, the Appalachian woman, as represented through fiction, is often heroic in her domesticity.[1] Although these "angels on the mountain" certainly fulfill domestic roles traditionally assigned to females, they do not necessarily do so out of societal expectation, but rather

[1] It could certainly be argued that Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening* is heroic if we view her suicide as an ultimate rejection of the domestic role into which she is forced (Walker 5).

for survival itself. The mountainous landscape of Appalachia provides the impetus by which women's performances of and responses to domesticity assume greater meaning. Working both within the home and out-of-doors, a shared labor space with men, women's production becomes essential to successful homesteading. At times, Appalachian women must also assume the homestead roles traditionally performed by men. Recall, for instance, the change in work ethic and perspective Ada Monroe experiences in Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* once she must fend for herself in the North Carolina mountains with only Ruby at her side.

Thus, I use the term "heroism" purposefully to distinctly define women's homestead production in order to engage the masculine connotations of the heroic tradition. If we view heroism in its traditional sense as the male performance of extraordinary deeds, virtuosity, courage, endurance, and the ability to gain distinction, then we must also see as heroic a life which subjugates the everyday, hallmarked by focus on reproduction, maintenance, common routines, the sphere of women, receptivity and sociability in the quest of a higher purpose. Generally, the heroic life constitutes the "deliberate risking of life itself," as well as courage to struggle and achieve one's extraordinary goals (Featherstone 159 – 160). If, however, we evaluate the "everyday" as heroic, wherein the risking of life is essential to the goal of survival in an austere environment, then we can also define heroism as female when women assume a primary role in subsistence within a particular culture. Essentially, in such cases the female hero's achievement is to "affirm life": her "journey offers…the opportunity to develop qualities such as courage, skill, and independence…as responses to the demands and challenges of experience" (Pearson and Pope 8). Within the everyday, then, Appalachian women

become heroes when their labor production is indispensable to family welfare in a challenging environment that requires skill, courage, and independence in order to maintain livelihood.

As a result, homestead heroism as it is represented in Appalachian fiction is defined by the ways in which women gain autonomy through the homestead. In other words, their performance of home-based, gender-prescribed roles (male and female) amidst the conditions and circumstances produced by mountain living allows them a medium through which to gain an economic value equal to that of their male counterparts. Due to the value that homestead heroism assigns to women's production, Appalachian women in turn achieve autonomy, often disproving stereotypes and/or affecting societal change outside the home. As a matter of criteria, these heroes do most of the following: 1) fulfill homestead duties including childrearing, housekeeping, food cultivation and preparation, 2) provide a link to the past by preserving folkways, religious practice and/or storytelling, 3) exhibit survival mechanisms and skills in hard work that allow them to also assume male homestead roles as necessary, and 4) show a relationship to and/or longing for the Appalachian landscape, as well as a willingness to defend the Appalachian environment from destruction. Often, homestead heroes show a desire for community, partnering with other women in homestead production.

In order to view homestead heroism as a way in which Appalachian women may gain an economic value equal to that of men and thereby gain autonomy, I first offer ecological feminism as a critical model to unite ideas about women's homestead production with larger questions about the representation of female existence in a given community. As part of the feminist umbrella, ecological feminism encompasses several

differing viewpoints on how the basic tenets of theory may best be applied to provide a means of autonomy for women.[2] Theoretically, ecological feminism bases its critique on three central claims: 1) Empirically, environmental problems disproportionately affect women because they are generally responsible for the food and health of the family. Thus, as primary caregivers responsible for family subsistence women face greater burdens when the environment in which they provide sustenance deteriorates due to natural occurrences or human exploitation. 2) Pragmatically, women and nature are connected. Based on familiarity through labor, women possess a constructive relationship to the natural world.[3] 3) Epistemologically, women, since they are more directly affected by environmental conditions through work, may have an expertise, allowing them to more adequately confront environmental issues than men. Therefore, environmental experience, rather than an essential nature, provides women with the avenues through which to gain vital knowledge in agricultural and ecological matters (Eaton and Lorentzen 1 – 3). Redefining women's relationship to nature through these criteria is imperative as a response to mainstream feminism: since feminists have long sought to disentangle women from nature as the root of misogyny, they have distanced themselves not only from nature as problematic to women's representation, but also from its empowering potential through redefinition (Alaimo 2 – 4). Unfortunately, neglecting the

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[2] See Carolyn Merchant's *Earthcare: Women and the Environment*, particularly the introduction and chapter one, "Theory," for an overview of the connections between liberal, cultural, social, and socialist feminisms and ecological feminism.

[3] This connection has traditionally been part of the Euro-western worldview: men's domination of women is "natural," just as men are also able to control and subdue physical environment. This image leads to hierarchical dualisms identifying women with materialism, nature, and sexuality, rather than culture and reason (Merchant xvii). Through ecological feminism, however, we may understand environmental knowledge as work-related familiarity with nature, rather than an othering quality of womanhood.

environment as a means through which to gain autonomy, mainstream feminism has left many outstanding women unrecognized.

In Appalachia, for example, women's knowledge of the environment and the ability to work skillfully within it for subsistence despite difficult conditions also stipulates that humans are not superior to, nor completely separate from the nonhuman, or ecological, world. The nonhuman world itself has agency in the sense that it is an entity to be recognized, valued, and properly used, as important to the viability of an overall community that includes both humans and non-humans (Englehardt 3 – 4). Therefore, as women perform homestead tasks within the valued space of the Appalachian mountains their activity assumes a greater economic value than may generally be associated with female domestic production. Thus, homestead heroism is made most apparent in Appalachia due to the mountainous environment of the region: women must be skilled, courageous, and independent, particularly when men are absent from the home, in order to successfully contend with the mountain environment for subsistence.

Second, the absence of men in many fictional representations of homestead heroes serves to further highlight the capability of women in homestead production. Rather than turning away from mountain life when alone, Appalachian women use their knowledge of the homestead environment to fulfill both male and female gender roles when necessary. Women's ability to run a homestead without male labor is indicative of their shared labor space with men in the natural mountain environment. As an "undomesticated" space, the area of the homestead outside the walls of the home becomes gender neutral as both men and women work for subsistence within a valued environment (Alaimo 16). According to Stacey Alaimo, women have traditionally

looked to nature as a place unbound by domestic roles because it was not precisely theirs as common mythology might suggest. Instead, when nature has agency it is apart from the domestic, untamed, and applicable as a site of female insurgency (16).[4] Thus, not only do women in Appalachian fiction maintain a constructive relationship to the environment through practical knowledge as evidenced through ecological feminism, they also become equal economic partners with men. Ultimately, then, as women fulfill gender-prescribed duties within the home and share participation in subsistence outside the home with men, they achieve autonomy. This autonomy, in turn, allows women to subsist without men when necessary and attain an equal voice in the home community through which they may affect societal change if they so choose.

Finally, a woman's experience in Appalachia in the fictional representations I will discuss in this study, may even be seen as "deeper and more thoroughgoing" than a man's (Hartsock 234). If we highlight women's activities, rather than ignore them through masculine interpretations of labor experience, then we can begin to see an emphasis on reproduction (part of the everyday) rather than power over others (part of the traditionally heroic). Women, therefore, maintain greater use value than men through the repetition of duties and physical reproduction. As women in Appalachia continually fulfill domestic chores within the home and raise children, in addition to their interactions with the environment to provide for sustainability, their experience becomes tied to the value of the homestead: both are necessary, vital, and indispensable. Perhaps part of the difficulty of recognizing women's activity as primary to the homestead is renaming what may be seen as acts of love as acts of work (Hartsock 234 – 236). In cases where female

[4] See Stacy Alaimo's *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space.*

characters also work outside the homestead as grannywomen or to affect social change, their economic value increases, adding a social responsibility to the autonomy achieved through homestead production.

The heroic performance of fictional Appalachian women in the homestead tasks necessary to fulfill basic family needs has often been taken for granted, obscured by Appalachian stereotypes, or only loosely discussed as an important avenue of critical analysis. Patricia Gantt draws attention to stereotypical views of female Appalachian characters: "Local color presentations of mountain women offer a dichotomy of error – the shy beauty, a blank slate for the (usually outsider) male protagonist to inscribe his liking, or prematurely aged, wizened crone, a cackling granny with snuff dribbling from her mouth" (92).[5] These stereotypical views, created in the years following the Civil War, promote a one-sided, uneducated view of mountain life that has ignored the "rich female characters" also produced in the late nineteenth-century, as well as the twentieth century (93). Although Gantt sees heroism within the domestic production of characters created by contemporary writers, she offers a loose argument that places the control of image-making for an entire region within the hands of only a few female writers (101). She does not provide criteria by which we might measure homestead heroes, consider characters written by men, or explore the role of the Appalachian environment in creating a space in which these women can perform acts of homestead heroism as I will show in this study. Her view, however, does offer a space in which to begin to identify the problem of stereotyping in relationship to homestead heroism as a definitional concept.

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[5] See "Controlling the Image-Making: Domestic Traditions and Women's Identity in Appalachian Literature."

What I attempt in this thesis, then, is a more comprehensive look at the portrayal of women in Appalachian fiction as homestead heroes, so that a more specific image of mountain womanhood might be established as an alternative model to negative stereotyping for future discussions of Appalachian fiction. In order to expose homestead heroism as an important means of critical analysis in Appalachian fiction, I find it necessary to move historically through fictional works from the local color movement to the present, so that stereotypes can be assessed and confronted and the relationship between women, activity, and environment can be fully explored. I will consider works that are set in representative states touching the southern Appalachians: Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and North Carolina. The fictional representations I have chosen throughout Appalachian fiction function as either glimpses of homestead heroism, models of homestead heroism, or full realizations of homestead heroism. Through these categories I show the development of homestead heroism from a set of underlying qualities given to female characters to a modern and contemporary vision that defines images of mountain women as capable and autonomous.[6]

In chapter one "Insiders/Outsiders: The Presentation of a Region" I begin with a discussion about Appalachia as a physical locality, as well as an intellectual space that scholars define and redefine as they work through the perceptions of Appalachia created by writers and activists and the history of life in Appalachia. Discussions about the effects and validity of stereotyping in Appalachia have been uncovered in attempts to

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[6] I use the terms "modern" and "contemporary" as time period identifiers. I use "modern" to refer to works published between 1914 and 1945 and "contemporary" to refer to works published after 1945.

"talk back" in the national arena.[7] This critical debate is essential to viewing female Appalachian characters as separate from other southern women, since Appalachia itself must first be considered distinctive before the women portrayed in Appalachia can be evaluated as unique due to their performance of homestead duties within a mountainous landscape. I illustrate the importance of the Appalachia as fiction versus Appalachia as distinctive historical region dichotomy on the presentation of women as homestead heroes by exploring works by Mary Noailles Murfree and John Fox Jr. Notorious for the inception of the mountaineer stereotype, these works provide a starting point for understanding accepted notions about mountain females in both fiction and popular media at the turn of the last century.

In the second chapter, "Glimpses of Domestic Heroism: Strength Amidst Stereotype," I begin with a reassessment of Mary Noailles Murfree in order to show underlying heroic qualities, particularly in reference to women's relationship to environment, given to some female characters in her work. Using these examples as a base, I then look at fictional works by Emma Bell Miles and Sarah Barnwell Elliott as additional presentations of homestead heroism, at least in part, as a contrast to the aforementioned evaluation of Fox and Murfree.

In the third chapter, "Models of Domestic Heroism Fully Realized," I show how modern models of homestead heroism in the work of James Still and Mildred Haun become even more fully realized in the contemporary works of Wilma Dykeman, Lee Smith, and Charles Frazier. The portrayal of women as homestead heroes in modern, and

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[7] I use the terminology "talk back" here as an allusion to texts that have been published in an effort to combat Appalachian stereotyping evidenced in literary and scholarly texts. See *Confronting Appalachian Stereotypes: Back Talk from an American Region.*

perhaps more particularly, in contemporary works, allows these writers to reclaim women's homestead autonomy for both current Appalachian women and the unsung Appalachian women of the past. Their stories show us the empowering potential of women's work as it pertains to the Appalachian region.

Chapter One

Insiders/Outsiders: History & Fiction in the Presentation of a Region

In order to understand more clearly the presentation of women in Appalachian fiction we must start with the existence of Appalachia and Appalachians, in a literary sense, as well as an historical reality, since both have played major roles in the written presentation of the region from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries.[1] Pinpointing Appalachia, both as a physical location and a literary region for academic study, however, is difficult. According to the Appalachian Regional Commission, Appalachia is the mountainous areas of thirteen states stretching from Alabama to Pennsylvania.[2] Although this is the most inclusive definition, like most it is inadequate: within such a large physical geography scores of resident self-identifications and various cultures exist that cannot be easily classified (Englehardt 12 – 13). However, the inability to clearly define Appalachia does not suggest that the region is not a viable area for study.

On the contrary, Appalachia more than exists. It has become part of our American mythology: the Dukes of Hazzard, the Beverly Hillbillies (generally identified with Appalachia, even though they migrated from the Ozarks), and Hee Haw sketches all

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[1] In the pre-Civil War period alone at least one hundred travel accounts were offered as "accurate" descriptions of mountain life (Drake 120). Such travel accounts offer just one off many written avenues through which Appalachia has been portrayed.

[2] The ARC definition includes the mountainous areas of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

present images of Appalachians and their culture.[3] The task of writers, historians, scholars and residents of Appalachia is to question the validity of these images. To do so, they must be willing to redefine the physical location of Appalachia as it is pertinent to their discussions of imagery, reality, and presentation as a reflection of the region. In this study of Appalachian fiction, as I attempt to show the presence of an alternative imagery of mountain women as homestead heroes in contrast to long-held stereotypes, I classify Appalachia as eastern Kentucky, eastern Tennessee, western Virginia, and western North Carolina. I have chosen regions of these states as a representative "heart" of southern Appalachia, so that I may identify homestead heroism in places where the mountainous environment figures largely into fiction and stereotypes of women have perhaps been the most predominant. As I will show later in this chapter, eastern Tennessee and eastern Kentucky, locales Mary Noailles Murfree and John Fox Jr. targeted during the local color movement, could be seen as an arrhythmia to the beating of this heart: the waves these two writers sent forth initiated disconcerting responses from both their contemporary audience and scholars working today to assess their impact.

Beyond physical locale, "Appalachia" lies somewhere between history and fiction. Even current scholars working to refute stereotypes and present a historically relevant Appalachia add confusion to this dichotomy. In a seminal Appalachian studies work, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the*

[3] In "Where Did Hillbillies Come From? Tracing Sources of the Comic Hillbilly Fool in Literature" Sandra L. Ballard looks at instances of the hillbilly image from William Byrd II to contemporary media. She concludes "They are fools who hold up mirrors to us when they speak the truth. The hillbilly fool may get his way without trying because his actions are based on common sense and honesty, exposing the base ignorance and greed of someone with more power who considers himself superior" (147).

American Consciousness, 1870 – 1920 (1978) Henry D. Shapiro sets out to "examine the origins and consequences of the *idea* that the mountainous portions of eight or nine southern states form a coherent region inhabited by a homogenous population possessing a uniform culture" (ix, emphasis mine). In so doing Shapiro considers that "Appalachia" is a concept. Although this standpoint allows scholars to effectively argue the falsity of stereotypes in relation to publications printed as truthful accounts of mountain life, it also determines that "Appalachian *distinctiveness* thus results from a persistent way of writing about the mountain region rather than from the region's actual past" (Billings 12, emphasis mine).[4] Perhaps what we should deduce here is that there really is nothing unique about Appalachia at all; "Appalachia" is simply a term used to quantify a national fiction born in the minds of writers at the turn of the last century. Should we determine that what does exist, then, is a mountain culture that is just like the rest of the United States?

Certainly, we should not. Treating "Appalachia" as wholly non-distinct threatens to erase the unique qualities, both positive and negative, of the environment and people that have lived and continue to live in a region with a complex heritage physically marked by peaks and valleys and intellectually marked by stereotypes and reactions against those stereotypes: indeed, Ronald L. Lewis argues that Appalachia does not even have its own "formal history" (21). Viewing Appalachia solely as a myth in this way negates the lived, *distinctive* history of settlement, yeomanry, war, and industrialization

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[4] Consider for instance, the series of articles compiled for publication in *Confronting Stereotypes: Back Talk from an American Region* in 1999 as a response to Robert Schennkkan's Pulitzer Prize winning play *The Kentucky Cycle* (1993). In this volume noted scholars respond to representations of Appalachia as ethnically homogenous, completely pro-Union, and feud ravaged.

that make Appalachia, however varied, a coherent region. Richard B. Drake recognizes that Appalachian exceptionalism is a key to understanding Appalachia as a region. He states: "Appalachia represents a *significant* and *distinct* region within the larger American society. Appalachia is not merely a figment of reformist, mainline imagination in the nineteenth century…in fact a sense of separateness has been a historic reality for many years" (ix, emphasis mine). Through titles such as "backwoodsmen," "Cohees," "highlanders," "mountaineers," or "Appalachian" residents of Appalachia have set themselves apart (ix). Even the way in which one pronounces "Appalachia" as either "App-uh-lay-shuh" or "App-uh-latch-uh" can signify whether one is an outsider or an insider. In short, living in a mountainous area with a rich, complicated history necessitates some distinction in experience, belief, philosophy, and worldview from the rest of the south and/or nation. The ways in which residents have had to contend with the surrounding natural environment, as well as the cultural climate, both local and national in various time periods, make them unique.[5]

Even still, as Shapiro attests, we cannot overlook the gain many writers and activists acquired at the turn of the 20th century due to the descriptions of Appalachia they

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[5] Prior to and since Shapiro's landmark study, great efforts have been taken to display the complexity of Appalachia as a region. Most widely known, perhaps, is the 1975 anthology *Voices from the Hills: Selected Readings of Southern Appalachia.* In this book editors Robert J. Higgs and Ambrose N. Manning compile selections of Appalachian literature spanning three hundred years to showcase the richness of Appalachian history and literature in an effort to "illustrate the wide range of images in the hope that the recognition of this diversity will lead to a better understanding of the Southern mountaineer and his native land, both on the part of himself and others"(xvii – xviii). The sequel to this volume, *Appalachia Inside Out* (1995), continues to offer this goal: "to identify writing that both represents and reveals the culture of the Appalachian region" (xv).

set forth in fictional and "authoritative" non-fiction accounts. For the majority of Americans these representations defined and continue to define Appalachia as they know it. The job of current Appalachian scholars like Drake is to define Appalachia as Appalachians know it: to try and piece together the puzzle of Appalachian history from the time of the Cherokees to the eras of coal-mining and tourism and from this tangled story of yeomanry, stereotype, economic struggle, and inevitable industrialization to decipher the impact of such factors on the varying cultures of mountain people and places. What is most problematic are the ways in which the "sense of separateness" Drake discusses have become exploited to the point of inequality, exclusion, and subjugation (Eller viii). If typing Appalachia and its people keeps the region at arm's length, then it is important to investigate both Appalachia as a region with a distinct history and Appalachia as a fiction in any current attempt to understand topics, themes, or representations in Appalachian literature.

History and fiction are particularly imperative regarding the representation of women in southern Appalachia for two reasons: 1) women have been subject to varying images and paternalistic attitudes throughout American history and 2) additionally, in this case, women are a potentially exploited group within a larger culture that has been marginalized. Thus, in order to begin to analyze fictional accounts of women in Appalachia, I will engage the following questions in this chapter: What are the implications of Appalachia as an exceptional locale, one with its own distinct history? What are the implications of an fictional Appalachia, one created to entertain or to inspire activism? How do the answers to both of these questions affect the portrayal of women in Appalachia?

Historically, Appalachia cannot be discussed with the one-size-fits-all mentality that is present within much of the activist and local color writing from the late nineteenth century: to do so would be to neglect the range of experience in Appalachia and ignore strides made in Appalachian scholarship to understand and confront monolithic stereotyping.[6] As it is relevant to my particular topic in this study, I find the historical background Richard Drake provides for Appalachia important to understanding the presence of homestead heroism in contemporary presentations of Appalachian women, particularly by writers born in Appalachia; many of the characters they have created provide evidence for a new imagery that stands in stark contrast to the images first set forth by local color writers. At the core of this new vision of heroic mountain women, is highly valuable homestead production that necessitates interaction with the mountainous environment.

According to Drake, a yeomanesque mentality, "essentially an ideology of agriculture that approaches farming as a *largely* self-sustaining activity," has shown persistence in the area (x, emphasis mine).[7] Viewed as a family resource in this case, land

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[6] I do not mean to suggest that the historical analysis I am offering is the only legitimate presentation of Appalachian history. My aim is to show aspects of early Appalachian existence that have become reflected, and to a wide degree celebrated, in modern and contemporary fictional depictions of mountain women.

[7] Drake largely sees the persistence of the yeomanesque mentality through 1820 and declining in the 1830s. However, he also finds some examples of subsistence farming until WWII and after. He states, "...mountain folk can still be found speaking in the traditional way and even living the simple yeoman's life in the 1990s. Modernization has come to these mountains, but tradition has persisted as well" (129). Modern and contemporary writers who provide images of homestead heroism draw on this tradition, using yeomanesque aspects of pre-industrial Appalachian culture in their fiction.

is not a commodity, but rather the seat of subsistence.[8] Drake finds that the first settlers in Appalachia had no interest in capitalism, but rather found value in land as the source of life and well being, due to their former peasant status (Drake 19). Indeed, this outlook provided a common characteristic among the diverse groups of early settlers: "they had in common the view that one lived one's life best if one owned and controlled one's own land and worked it oneself" (Drake 14 – 15). Working one's land, however did not completely exclude capitalist exchange: even the earliest settlers came from areas where capitalism was practiced and therefore valued it as an alternative to, or in addition to farming.[9] For example, cattle drovers came out of the mountains and into the marketplace, returning with goods, cash, and ideas (Lewis 22). Generally, however, the subsistence farmer's engagement in the market economy found its basis in home production surplus, goods remaining after basic yearly needs had been met: economic gain was secondary to yearly subsistence and the long-run security of the family unit (Henretta 12 - 19). Therefore, as an exceptional locale with its own history, Appalachia begins with an intense desire for land, subsistence, and independence: settlers of various heritage, class, and traditions came into the region to claim what they were unable to access in Europe or other early American agricultural communities.

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[8] Unable to afford land controlled by the squirearchy, or subjected to lease and feudal fees in seventeenth century Europe, many "from these aggrieved classes" migrated to Pennsylvania and eventually into the mountains (Drake 16). Higgs, Manning, and Miller describe newcomers as "already on the fringe of their original cultures," having been displaced by "war, economic conditions, or ambition" (1). See Drake for an extended discussion of migration patterns into the Appalachian mountains in the 17th and 18th centuries.

[9] In many cases, tending livestock provided a good alternative to planting in particularly mountainous terrain (Pudup 68).

Ultimately, placing importance on land and survival, rather than the wealth, most pre-industrial Appalachians lived by a different outlook than other southern planters. Richard Drake explains: "Planter society was essentially aristocratic, and its aims and values were derivative of the way of life of the English country gentlemen. *Cohee* society, on the other hand, was much more democratic and took its cues from the yeoman tradition in Europe" (80 – 81, emphasis mine). As yeomen, Appalachians not only geared production to the needs of the home, rather than the world market, they also supported "dissenter" and "sectarian" churches (Baptists, Methodists, Brethren). As a result, by 1830 a different society from the rest of the nation, particularly the South, had developed along the Appalachian frontier.

Throughout his text Drake uses the term "Cohee" to identify Appalachia as a distinct region marked by early yeomanry. Since I find that it is this particular aspect of Appalachian history that Appalachian authors are invoking in order to present heroism in female characters, I will adopt the term Cohee throughout this study in order to maintain the sense that Appalachia as a distinct mountain region provides the base from which such women can emerge. It is this lived cultural distinction in relationship to the mountainous landscape that provides for contrasting images of mountain women. Where late nineteenth-century local color writers depict wizened crones, willowy creatures, exploited workers, and dirty housekeepers, modern and contemporary fiction writers celebrate strong, hard working, intelligent, and independent women. If we consider these contrasting visions as the opposite ends of the mythological spectrum, then perhaps the lived cultural experience of mountain women may fall somewhere in between. In any

case, we can begin to formulate a better understanding of imagery in Appalachian fiction as it represents the region.

Women in Cohee society performed complex roles. Sometimes referred to as the "Goody" or "Goodwife," women were often expected to bear children and see to their proper raising. Additionally, women performed gender-based work roles, such as "cooking, housework, spinning, weaving, washing, and usually the care of the garden and poultry." Drake quantifies this as "inside work," setting aside the "outside work" of "plowing, seeding the fields, harvesting, care of cattle and hogs," and long-range trading for men (71). Clearly, gardening and poultry tending take place outside. As I have argued in the introduction to this study, in reference to fictional accounts of Appalachian women's homestead production, since both men and women must contend with nature in the mountainous region of Appalachia for subsistence, nature is gender-neutral or "undomesticated." Furthermore, "Household production depended on family labor with tasks *generally, but not rigidly*, divided according to the age and sex of family members" (Pudup 67, emphasis mine). Assessing labor as defined by gender, but not rigidly, allows women a space through which to exhibit their skills in subsistence, often assuming male roles when necessary.

As history implies, if the Appalachian environment is of great value in pre-industrial Appalachia as the seat of family subsistence, then as men and women perform their homestead duties they interact with a recognizable entity vital to their long-range viability. In a preliminary discussion of yeoman mindset, James A. Henretta uses the behavior of the pre-industrial farm population as an indicator of values and aspirations. He states: "This epistemological assumption has an interpretive implication, for it focuses

attention on those activities that dominated the daily lives of the population – in the case of this particular society, on the productive tasks that provided food, clothing, and shelter" (20). Thus, this lived experience in Cohee society as it is represented in fiction places greater value on women's activity than may generally be associated with female domestic production. Therefore, as women fulfill their own gender-prescribed duties, as well as share participation in the natural world with men via a shared knowledge of landscape, they achieve agency as an equal voice in the home community.[10] Additionally, we may view such daily productive tasks as heroic since survival is the ultimate goal of the community.

The majority of activist and local color writings about Appalachia from the turn of the last century, however, do not see women's domesticity in Appalachia as liberating, as many modern and contemporary writers do, but rather as inadequate and exploitative. Before discussing such views of women and their work in order to contrast them with images of domestic heroes in subsequent chapters, it is important to note the seeming disappearance of Appalachia from the national stage in order to more fully understand its "discovery," since it is at this important historical crossroad that Appalachia as a distinct region within nineteenth-century American culture becomes Appalachia as a peculiar region in need of American cultural salvation.

Although the Civil War was difficult for the entire nation, and particularly overwhelming for the South, its conclusion marked a complete disruption of civilian life in Appalachia: schools had been destroyed, trade disrupted, grain and animals decimated

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[10] Drake also adds that "women on essentially subsistence farms were more equal to men simple because neither received a cash wage" (71).

by raiding parties. Whereas many counties in northern Appalachia, such as Pittsburgh, and some areas of southern Appalachia, such as Atlanta, participated in the industrial boom of the late nineteenth century, vast areas of southern and central Appalachia had fallen out of national awareness (Drake 132). Largely ending the Cohee period in Appalachia, due to farm and herd destruction, thin soil, and a collapse of authority, many residents pushed westward to become ranchers and cowboys. Those who stayed in the mountains became subject to bitterness left by the war and Reconstruction: as a result of strong Union support and Republicanism, the mountain South did not figure into the state and national politics of the New South (Drake 102 – 115). Consequently, Appalachia as a distinct region was largely forgotten.

As a result, "Appalachia" first entered American consciousness as a peculiar region and people in the decades immediately following the Civil War when writers began to publish accounts of Appalachia in popular periodicals, such as *Lippincott's Magazine*, *Harper's*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*. For example, in 1873 Will Wallace Harney described the "strange land and peculiar people" of the southern Appalachians. His characterization of "Appalachia as a place in, but not of, America," became representative of writings about the region for decades to follow (McNeil 45). By 1899 William Goodell Frost had declared that these people were indeed "our contemporary ancestors," and "Appalachian Americans," thereby coining the terminology we both use and debate today in reference to the region.[11] Billings, Pudup, and Waller offer us a quick synopsis of writings about Appalachia before the turn of the century: "Between 1870 and

[11] For reprintings of Harney's and Frost's publications on Appalachia see *Appalachian Images in Folk and Popular Culture*, edited by W.K. McNeil.

1900 *scores* of articles, both fiction and nonfiction, were published that pictured ways of life in the highland South as *vastly out of step*, culturally and economically, with the progressive trends of industrializing and urbanizing nineteenth century America" (1 – 2, emphasis mine). Ironically, the myth of Appalachia at the "height of local color writing" was growing alongside the "throes of a wrenching industrial transition" in many areas of the region (Lewis 32).

It is in many of these "non-fiction" accounts, as well as in fictional local color writings, that stereotypical images of mountain women begin to make their way onto the national stage. As observers from outside of the region, writers generally depict mountain women in the following way:

> ...she was pretty in youth, but married young, bore a household full of 'youngens,' led a life of endless drudgery often tinged with an 'unaccountable' melancholy, became old at thirty-five, and ended her life sitting on the front porch of her log cabin with a corncob pipe in her mouth and a black sunbonnet on her head (Miller 23).

As sad, overworked victims of culture such women are forgiven their ignorance in many of these accounts. As objects of pity, they are often viewed as completely subservient to men, lacking hopes and aspirations, and unaware of civilized cleaning techniques. As female specimens they become aged, toothless crones smoking corncob pipes if they are over fifty, worn images of faded beauty if adult women and mothers, or if young women or girls, romantic wildflowers whose beauty is soon lost after marriage. Ultimately, as images of beautiful savages, mountain women are often considered morally irresponsible, due to lack of intelligence, formal education, and high illegitimacy rates (Miller 24 – 29).

Elizabeth S. D. Englehardt provides a compelling evaluation of this type of imagery dating from the mid to late nineteenth century. She offers three categories of writers who present Appalachia and particularly Appalachian women to the nation during this time period: voyeurs, tourists, and social crusaders. According to Englehardt, voyeurs "trade on the idea that Appalachians were freaks and oddities to be used by superior outside readers, hallmarks of us-versus-them thinking" (5). In these examples neither nature nor characters have agency, since neither has value. Tourists, unlike voyeurs, do find value in female characters, but only in so much as they themselves may be liberated. In other words, they focus on their personal changes rather than the positive attributes of mountain women. Writers from both of these categories, voyeurs and tourists, champion capitalism and progress, ultimately offering images of America as superior to Appalachia. Finally, social crusaders, as the category implies, come into the area to help "needy" Appalachians. Thus, they describe unfavorable conditions alongside flora and fauna in order to justify their own reasons for being in the mountains (5 – 7). Although crusaders do become involved in Appalachian communities, they are so entrenched in mainstream, middle class ideas about women that their work supports the American status quo, rather than recognizing environmental and social issues important to Appalachia and Appalachian women (60).[12]

Even though each of the categories Englehardt presents adds to the myth of Appalachia in different and interesting ways, it is the literature of the voyeur that provides some of the most memorable and lasting images of mountain women and is

[12] See Elizabeth S.D. Englehardt's *The Tangled Roots of Feminism, Environmentalism, and Appalachian Literature.* In this study she provides an in-depth discussion of voyeurs, tourists, and crusaders, including examples of each.

therefore my area of focus here. As characters in short stories, serialized novels, poems, and sketches Appalachians are not part of the audience, but rather objects to which writers and readers could feel superior (Englehardt 33). They are depicted as "oddities," put on display for national judgment. Thus, fashion-conscious Americans' subscriptions to monthly magazines, such as *Harper's*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Century*, and *Lippincott's*, brought the people of the mountains, or rather stylized examples of them, into towns and cities. In these national periodicals Americans could read about the strange, backward women of Appalachia from comfortable armchairs at home.

Perhaps the most prolific creator of stereotypical visions of mountain women was Mary Noailles Murfree (1850 - 1922). A genteel native of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Murfree grew up geographically near Appalachia, yet far from it in terms of cultural mindset. Raised in a "cultivated, bookish environment," Murfree was well educated at home and at both the Nashville Female Academy and Chegary Institute in Philadelphia (Wright viii). According to Nathalia Wright, this environment encouraged Murfree's talent for "writing fiction of manners" (ix). This talent, however, was in need of a tantalizing subject: Murfree found a largely untapped resource on summer visits to Beersheba Springs, a resort area in the Cumberland mountains.[13] For fifteen summers from the time Murfree was six, the family visited the area due to Murfree's ill health from fever at age four. According to Murfree's sister, "she wanted to do for Tennessee what other writers had done for other regions, to make East Tennessee in particular well

[13] In the introduction to *In The Tennessee Mountains* Nathalia Wright attempts to trace works written about mountaineers prior to Murfree. Although she mentions some well-known representations (she leaves out Mark Twain's *The Gilded Age*), she concludes that Murfree was "unquestionably the first writer to bring both the state of Tennessee and the region of Southern Appalachia to widespread public attention through fiction" (vii).

known before the railroads penetrated it entirely" (Wright ix). Nathalia Wright explains what other writers had done for other regions during this time:

> ...numerous stories depicting the peculiarities of various regions of the country were published in magazines and some of them collected in single volumes, under the sponsorship of editors who were attuned to both the current vogue of realism in literature and the public curiosity after the Civil War about new and isolated regions (ix – x).[14]

Cratis D. Williams further elucidates the American desire for "local color": the standardization of American life following the Civil War spawned nostalgia for "older rural individualism" that could still be found in "backwaters" of civilization (135). For Murfree, East Tennessee would become the curious region she would expose to the country in terms of natural landscape, social behavior, dialect, dress, and custom.

Although Murfree had been previously published as R. Emmett Dembry, "three years later she struck the vein that was to make her reputation" as Charles Egbert Craddock (Carey 79).[15] In half a century she would produce eighteen novels and seven short story collections, in which she would "make East Tennessee in particular well-known." Cratis D. Williams marks the year 1884, the original publication date of Murfree's short story collection *In the Tennessee Mountains* as "the time at which the Southern mountain people had become generally recognized as a people possessing their

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[14] Wright asserts that Murfree had likely read Rebecca Harding Davis' "Yares of the Black Mountains." Prior to her use of the Tennessee mountaineer, Murfree had published two satires, one of which "Flirts," appeared in the same magazine issue with Davis' "Yares" (xiii).

[15] Murfree's success was likely enhanced by the mystery surround her pseudonym identity. That Craddock was actually Murfree was revealed in March 1885 (Wright xiii).

own idiosyncrasies, not to be confused with other Southern types" (134). The eight stories within the collection had been published in *Atlantic Monthly*, one on average per three to six-month period, between 1878 and 1884.[16] Thus, Murfree's stories had reached many at-home readers prior to the publication of her collected volume. Although Murfree would continue to write about the Tennessee mountains throughout her career, I will concentrate my discussion in this chapter and chapter two on the eight stories collected in *In the Tennessee Mountains*, since my focus here is on the establishment of mountain female types.

Mary Noailles Murfree's first group of stories about Tennessee provide a virtual parade of female mountain types: the overworked or abused and melancholy wife, the lovelorn, often sickly, and natural young waif, the superstitious, pipe-smoking crone of an old woman, the prattling mother, the over-burdened daughter, the materialist, and the coquette. In each story Murfree uses a narrator as an interpreter between the reader and the mountain characters and situations. The space created through this rhetorical strategy, in terms of dialect and analysis, allows the reader to join with the narrator in judgment of the mountaineers and their lives. The narrator views mountain women as oddities, but also as creatures for whom one may feel sympathy. As Mary aptly Nilles concludes, even a cursory look at this collection shows that these are not modern or liberated women. More often than not they are simple, uneducated, weak, and submissive foils for male characters, rather than characters of purpose (74).

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[16] See Reese M. Carleton's "Mary Noailles Murfree" for a listing of her works in order of publication month and year.

First to take places on the national stage in May of 1878 were two very different images: Mrs. Johns and Mandy Tyler in "The Dancin' Party at Harrison's Cove." A peach saleswoman, perhaps inspired by one of the mountaineers selling fruit at Beersheba Springs, Mrs. Johns is

> ...tall and lank, and with such a face as one never sees except in these mountains, - elongated, sallow, thin, with pathetic, deeply sunken eyes, and high cheekbones, and so settled an expression of hopeless melancholy that it must be that naught but care and suffering had been her lot; holding out wasted hands to the years as they pass, - holding them out always, and always empty (217).

A pitiful figure, Mrs. Johns appears as sad and worn, in her "shabby, faded calico" in contrast to the fresh, vivacious visitor Mrs. Darley. Yet, she piques Mrs. Darley's interest with her tale of Mandy Tyler's treatment of her escorts. "Mrs. Darley listened in *amused surprise*; that these mountain wilds could sustain a first-class coquette was an idea that had not hitherto entered her mind..." (223, emphasis mine). Thus, the narrator places distance between the mountain women and the "outsider" visitor through description and perception: not only is Mrs. Johns different from Mrs. Darley, both physically and in terms of life fulfillment, Mrs. Darley is taken aback by Mandy's capacity in flirting.

Such separation continues throughout the story (and throughout the collection) as the narrator interprets the importance of the dancing party for the reader, whom the narrator seems to assume is more like Mrs. Darley than Mandy. For example, since Mr. Harrison has four daughters of marriage age he realizes something must be done to attract

suitors, which causes the narrator to conclude "for, *strange as it may seem*, the prudent father exists even among the 'mounting folks"(226, emphasis mine). If it is indeed strange to the reader that a mountain father would want to see his daughters properly married, then it is likely that the reader will also find the lack of screaming when pistols are drawn at the dance to be remarkable (240 – 241). Perhaps, however, the reader will also conclude with the narrator that "even a 'mounting' woman is susceptible to the sting of wounded pride" (232).

"Electioneerin' on Big Injun Mounting" provides an outsider through whom the narrator offers an image of mountain womanhood. Rufus Chadd, a politician up for reelection, grew up the mountains where

> he had lived seventeen years in ignorance of the alphabet...From an almost primitive state he had overtaken the civilization of Ephesus and Colbury, - no great achievement, it might seem to a sophisticated imagination; but *the mountains were a hundred years behind* the progress of those centres" (163, emphasis mine).

Now an educated, worldly man, Rufus Chadd responds to domestic abuse much differently than the mountaineers who have remained stagnant. The storekeeper informs Chadd that "Isaac Boker's drunk again" :

> I'm powerful sorry fur his wife, 'kase he air mightly rough ter her when he air drunk; he cut her once a toler'ble bad slash. She hev had ter do all the work fur four year, - plowin', an' choppin' wood, an cookin', an washin', an' sech. It hev aged her some. An' all her chillen is gals, - little gals. Boys, now mought grow some help, but gals is more no 'count the bigger

they gits. She air a tried woman, surely. Isaac is drunk ez a constancy, - dancin' – drunk, mos'ly. Nuthin' kin stop him" (166).

The image of Boker's wife offered here is reminiscent of the overworked Mrs. Johns and the secondary figure of Mrs. Peel: Mrs. Boker takes care of everything for subsistence on her own while her no count, lazy husband drinks. Although the storekeeper feels sorry for Mrs. Boker, he concludes that "She air his wife...She could hev married other men; she didn't suffer with hevin' no ch'ice" (167).

Chadd, on the other hand, proclaims that Boker should be sent to prison, "a mightly pore favor to his wife," according to the storekeeper (168). After being attacked by Boker in the woods Chadd opens his eyes to "the face of a woman standing just within the door, - so drawn and piteous a face, with such lines of patient endurance burnt into it, with such a woful prophecy in the sunken, horror-stricken eyes, he turned his head that he might see it no more" (177). Suggestive of the face Chadd had seen inside Boker's door, Mrs. Boker is the living representation of the storekeeper's image. The tired, overworked wife, Mrs. Boker, according to Mary Nilles, "is likely modeled upon one of those Tennessee mountain wives whom Miss Murfree saw die early because of overwork. But though this woman is worn and exercises no rights as an individual, she chooses to remain with her husband" (76). Thus, in what may seem a curious twist to the reader, but perhaps in keeping with "mountain justice," rather than what outside society may see as best for Chadd, or Mrs. Boker, Chadd asks the bystanders not to prosecute Boker should he die.

In "The Romance of Sunrise Rock" a different type of outsider comes to the mountains: a society male. John Cleaver counts himself as unfortunate to be among the

mountaineers as his poor financial situation dictates: indeed, "The fact seemed a grotesque libel on likelihood" (184). However, Cleaver encounters a young woman who is more like nature than humanity. In contrast to the "old crone, leaning on a stick in the doorway" of the home at which he is invited to stop his horse, "a young girl s(at) on the rude porch, reeling yarn preparatory to weaving" (186). By way of description:

> Her cheek was flushed; her delicate crimson lips were slightly parted; the live gold of the sunbeams touched the dead-yellow lusterless masses of her hair. Here and there the clustering tendrils separated as they hung about her shoulders, and disclosed bright glimpses of a red cotton kerchief knotted around her throat; she wore a dark blue homespun dress, and despite the coarse texture of her attire *there was something of the mingled brilliance and softness of the autumn tints in her humble presence.* Her eyes reminded him of those deep, limpid mountain streams with golden-brown pebbles at the bottom (187, emphasis mine).

Not only does Selina's physical appearance remind Cleaver of nature, she interacts with it upon their return from the initial buggy ride: "Selina stood for a moment upon the cabin porch, her yellow hair gleaming like an aureola upon a background of crimson sumach leaves. A pet fawn came to the door and nibbled at her little sun-burned hands" (197). Selina Teake is a part of the natural surroundings to marvel at, rather than a woman to be pursued, as if her station in life would allow it. Thus, Cleaver scorns his impulse to give Selina ferns and berries he had gathered in the forest and finds it a "grotesque catastrophe" for his friend Trelawney to be in love with her. Ultimately, however, it is Cleaver who benefits from Selina's affection, building a career upon the sighting of her

ghost. Typical Craddock, according to Nilles, Selina Teake is the foil to the hero: she is long-suffering, innocent, and ignorant in contrast to Cleaver's educated, complex, and introspective personality (76).

Quite different from nature figure Selina Teake, but akin to Mandy Tyler, Melindy Price in "A-Playin' of Old Sledge at the Settlemint" marries Josiah Tate out of materialistic motivation. Her former beau, Budd Wray, sets out to beat Josiah at Old Sledge until he has captured all of the worldly possessions that caused Melindy to rebuff him for Josiah. Wray's success at gambling indeed "turn(s) [Josiah] out of house and land, homeless and penniless" (108). Wray confronts Melindy at the home that is now legally his: I don't keer nuthin' 'bout'n it now, 'ceptin' it riles me, an' I war bound ter spite ye fur it" (114). When Melindy responds that she had a right to make a choice, Wray replies "but, no gal hev got a right ter put a man on one eend o' the beam, an' a lot o' senseless critters an' house an' land on the t'other. Ye never keered nuthin fur me nor Josiah nuther, ef the truth war knowed; ye war all tuk up with the house an' land an'critters" (114). Thus, Melindy's true nature is exposed to the reader: she is "a little stalk o' cheat," deserving of the cruel fate Budd Wray ultimately fails to deliver (115 – 118).

Each of these images types mountain women as somehow pathetic and different from regular American society, rather than different due to the value of their homestead production as Drake's history of Cohee women suggests. It is particularly interesting that the chief variations within the mountaineers are among the women rather than the men: while the older women are generally "crone-like and inclined to garrulity," the young girls are "romantically appealing and terse – often memorably so" (Wright xviii). Such

gendered description highlights mountain women as particularly subjugated within a marginalized culture. In addition to the descriptions of the women, the interpretation Murfree's narrator provides cements the us-vs-them positioning enjoyed by readers of *Atlantic Monthly* in the late nineteenth century. Like Mrs. Darley, the readers are visitors to this unusual place wherein women look, speak, and behave in peculiar ways.

As a result, Nilles determines that "most females in this collection, and in the body of Miss Murfree's writing, lack psychological complexity, variety and the potential to sustain lasting interest. They represent a type of womanhood popular in Southern fiction during Miss Murfree's era..." (77). Even if Murfree's women do not sustain interest today, as types popular in Southern fiction in the late nineteenth century, Murfree's women were highly successful. As Harry R. Warfel explains, Murfree put together properly the elements of local color writing: she paints a picture of a unique geographic setting that cannot occur anywhere else, she offers characters with odd behavior appropriate to the geographical area, and she employs an appropriate speech for the locale (155). Related to the fictional representation of manners, local color focuses on "whimsical, semiliterate, willful, non-urban people whose often strange behavior gives rise to conflict with each other and with the law" (155). Characters are seen in contrast to rules of society; stress is placed on laziness, ignorance, superstition, and fighting with knives and firearms; the old women are gnarled gossips and the young women are bashful husband-seekers; and contrast at times is provided by bringing an outsider into the area. "Implicitly and explicity local color emphasizes the differentness of the native characters from the norms of society at large" (155 – 156).

Although Murfree's aim may not have been to specifically write "local color fiction" as Warfel suggests, her work is distinctly marked by an insider/outsider mentality through the narrator's voice and use of dialect. Rather than finding superior traits in the characters presented in most cases, Murfree passes judgment on character conduct via the narrator. Her presentation of and attitudes about behavior, particularly pertaining to the presentation of women, offer us more about the stories in *In The Tennessee Mountains* than any degree of versimilitude. Like other writers in the local color vein, Murfree assumes a superior, often aloof, role. It is likely that she made no effort to associate with mountaineers outside of Beersheba Springs, even though she visited the Great Smoky Mountains in 1885, or to accept their mode of living as socially adequate. For Murfree, the Tennessee mountaineers held solely a fictional value (Warfel 157). The fiction she created, however, marked Appalachia and Appalachian women in a very real and lasting way through the creation of myth. It seems appropriate to me, then, to begin reevaluating images of mountain women by reassessing Murfree's work in the next chapter. For although the majority of women she presents are obviously stereotypes, she also bestows upon some of them underlying qualities of homestead heroism.

In addition to a reevaluation of Murfree, an understanding of her legacy in the myth of Appalachia is also vital to viewing homestead heroism as an important alternate imagery to aforementioned views of mountain womanhood. The local color look at the Tennessee mountains Murfree began as fiction became perceived anthropological reality in the hands of Kentuckian John Fox Jr. (1863 – 1919). According to Darlene Wilson, Fox had some literary talent, but he also took advantage of excellent timing. He capitalized on the success of Mary Noailles Murfree and others to give "his self-

described 'scientific analysis' of Appalachian, or southern mountaineer, exceptionalism" (99). In addition to various writings, between 1894 and 1910 Fox gave many lectures throughout the country that included singing, banjo playing, mimicry, and dramatic staging. He also included 'true' anecdotes he pretended to have personally witnessed in his mountain travels, and a large repertoire of witty caricatures offered as interpretations or translations of southern upcountry speech, social stratification, and sexuality." Though most likely entertaining to the audience, these performances of mountain speech and feeling were also demeaning as a "sort of white-tie minstrel show" (Wilson 105). Wilson explains the impact of Fox's lectures:

> While Fox, solely on his own, did not invent the stereotypical 'hillbilly' that prevailed after the turn of this [the last] century,...he popularized, or situated in the emergent national consciousness, a 'docufictional' exposition of Appalachian culture that has had remarkable longevity (99).

Indeed, Wilson finds, through Jerry Williamson's work on southern mountaineer filmography, that at least thirteen movies from 1941 – 1961 attribute a plot, story, or title line to John Fox Jr. Other entries offer at least fifty more films inspired by Fox plots, particularly during the silent film years, a critical time period in the establishment of American stereotypes as images of class status (99).

As with Murfree, Fox's journey toward iconography began in his native state: Kentucky. Unlike Murfree, it also began with personal torment over issues of class and gender. Truthfully, and unbeknownst to his national audience, John Fox Jr. had little

personal experience in Appalachian Kentucky or any area of Appalachia for that matter.[17] What he did know of the southern mountains came out of Fox's family class struggles. Darlene Wilson explains:

> Fox was tormented by matters of class; along the themes that lurk in his private correspondence and within his literary efforts are the Fox family's chronic poverty, his failure to make good on their sacrifices in sending him to Harvard, his own poor health and mounting medical expenses, and the Panic of 1863 that for Fox, his father, and seven brothers came as no greater burden due to their long string of unsound financial ventures and social reverses (102).

While Fox was away at Harvard family efforts to gain riches in Appalachia turned toward coal.[18] Fox's eldest brother James became an on-site superintendent for the first major mining and railroad venture in Jellico, Tennessee. When the railroads had not materialized in 1885, Fox became a coal and land option salesman for James. By 1890, with James' efforts in Tennessee defunct, the Fox family had moved from Bourbon

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[17] It seems that belief in John Fox Jr. as an authoritative voice of interpretation in Appalachia has persisted throughout much of the twentieth century. For instance. in *A Literary History of Kentucky* William S. Ward describes Fox as "show(ing) a mastery of dialect, excellent insight into the ways and thoughts of the mountaineer, and an instinct for storytelling that seemed to be infalliable" (77). Also see Ed Pearce's forward to the 1984 reprinted edition of *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*. To my knowledge, Darlene Wilson is largely responsible for dispelling the idea of John Fox Jr. as a truthful and benevolent interpreter. Thus, I base my discussion of Fox largely on her research. See "A Judicious Combination of Incident and Psychology: John Fox Jr. and the Southern Mountaineer Motif" and "The Felicitious Convergence of Mythmaking and Capital Accumulation: John Fox Jr. and the Formation of An(Other) Almost-White American Underclass."

[18] Fox attended Harvard through the scholarship fund of the Garth Fund for Poor Boys in Bourbon County. According to Darlene Wilson, this is a fact Fox tried to cover all of his life.

County, Kentucky, into Gap number two in Wise County, Virginia. James and other Bluegrass entrepreneurs planned to build a 'corporate village' at the site in order to control coal resources and money in the area. This effort included a connection of the L & N Railroad, which necessitated the erasure of Three Forks, "an established community with a saw-mill, a grist-mill, a century-old Baptist congregation, and a local peace-keeping force." Yet, the new town, named Big Stone Gap by absentee landowners, still did not end the Fox family's hunger and poverty as the venture appeared doomed for failure (Wilson 16 – 23).

For both James and John remaking Three Forks for industry was thought to be a temporary situation until the Fox family could gain enough money to return to higher Bluegrass social circles. Their discomfort in the region is clearly marked by their desire to stay away from it. James turned his interest in the project over to his father, living in New York City as much as possible. John stayed anywhere else but Virginia. "In fact, Johnny would always despise their new mountain hometown as 'commonplace,' going to southwest Virginia only when he hadn't the funds to stay in New York, Louisville, or, when his funds were really low, Lexington" (Wilson 16). Thus, not only did Fox have little hands–on experience in Appalachia, a great irony considering the authority with which he painted his lecture tours, he, with his brother, also exploited the region. Regardless, John's literary future remained tied to James' coal dreams, as he adapted tales from his brother's accounts of the mountains. His first published short story "A Mountain Europa," printed in *Century* in September and October of 1892, was gleaned in much this way from James' story of a young girl riding a bull to the mill with a sack of corn (Ward 77).

Yet, Fox's first foray into publication did nothing to assuage his money problems, until lecture touring allowed him to reinvent himself.[19] Wilson explains:

> Out of this confluence of fortuitous timing, acute need, and well-placed connections...Fox, in a supreme act of self-creation, established himself as the 'interpreter' of southern Appalachian dialect and culture for the rest of the country, most of which was as yet unaware that there were any differences between mountain folk and their own rural relatives (24).

Praises for Fox in the press reported that he held audiences "spellbound by his banjo-playing, sweet singing, and quaint stories about a primitive people with bad manners, poor hygiene, and their own peculiar patois" (24).[20] Perhaps a telling factor in Fox's popularity was the 1890 Census Bureau's declaration that the American frontier was a thing of the past. Fox's stage presentation of Frost's ideal contemporary ancestors offered audiences a final chance to experience the American frontier. Part of this atmosphere also served Fox's class concerns: at the core of Fox's presentation was an invitation " to visit the strange world of the mountains, speculate in coal options and railroad expansion, harvest the timber, send relief packages and school books, mine the

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[19] Wilson states, "For Fox, the aim was money, lots of money" (24).

[20] Commentators from the southern mountains were much less approving than the national press. In one particular instance Fox appeared on stage with the Berea College choir in Cincinnati in 1896. After his readings, songs, and stories several members of the choir were upset enough to offer him a beating, adding tar and feathers for effect. As a result, Fox avoided the mountains for several years and continued to conceal his identity while traveling in the area, whenever possible, after that (Wilson 24).

coal..." (27).[21] Clearly, the Fox family could help interested parties accomplish those goals.

In addition to potential wealth, Fox's opportunity for self-invention also allowed him a platform from which to address his gender anxieties inasmuch as they were tied to his personal national identity. Largely influenced by James Lane Allen's idea of "the two Kentuckys" and born in Bourbon County, Kentucky, Fox self-identified with the Bluegrass aristocracy and thereby helped to create Appalachian otherness in order to marginalize native mountain culture in the name of "corporate hegemony" (Wilson 7).[22] Thus, Fox also put much of his writing and lecturing efforts into rescuing Bluegrass, or central Kentucky, manhood after the Civil War, particularly after his initial success in representing mountaineers; he wished to show the integrity of white Bluegrass gentlemen "who had suffered an emasculating loss of integrity among both Northerners and Southerners for their Civil War stance of neutrality" (Wilson 101- 102). As a result, Kentucky mountaineers, already marginalized through Fox's interpretation, also became responsible for the decline of southern, especially Kentucky, manhood (102). Additionally, since Fox, unlike Murfree, allowed people to believe that his stories about Appalachia were authoritative and thereby factual, based on personal experience and sociological, anthropological data (for example, case histories and scientific analysis), he

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[21] In addition to offering audiences an interesting attraction in Appalachia, Fox, according to Wilson, also suggested that speculators should "bring their own work force since the indigenous population could only be described as: 1) potentially hostile and violent; 2) unpredictable and unknowable; 3) religious fatalists who imbued any wrong with 'Holy War' overtones and denounced Law and Order; and 4) an oppositional culture susceptible to radical agitators bent on inflaming the war against Capital" (27).

[22] James Lane Allen was a close friend of Fox's eldest brother James. Fox came to know Allen largely through his brother and their business ventures together.

transformed Murfree's stereotypical images into perceived reality.[23] Thus, eastern Kentucky largely became the common location of Appalachian myth, thereby erasing diversity in Appalachian experience.

Fox's two great concerns, class and gender, directly inform the literature he produced after the success of his lecture touring provoked interest in his writing. Whether offered to the public as either fiction or non-fiction, Fox's mountaineers appear frozen in time without the benefits of industrialization (Ward 78). Within the many short stories Fox wrote about the mountaineers, he, like Murfree, offers us visions of "winsome women (in need of a good wash)" and plotlines in which a benevolent outsider or narrator "act(s) as a mediator or interpreter for the southern mountaineer" (Wilson 106 – 109).[24] However, Fox's seemingly non-fictional publications, such as *Bluegrass and Rhododendron*, add a greater meaning to his work in terms of mythical construction, and therefore his images of women literally leap off the page, as previously discussed. In his discussion of the Kentucky mountaineer in *Bluegrass and Rhododendron*, Fox himself, rather than the voice of a narrator, informs the reader that

> ...I can say that in the Kentucky mountains the pretty mountain girl is not always, as some people are inclined to believe, pure fiction. Pretty girls are, however, rare; for usually the women are stoop-shouldered and large-waisted from working in the fields and lifting heavy weights; for the same

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[23] Wilson notes that Fox's claims to have done research in Appalachia cannot be substantiated (118).

[24] *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* was published in 1903 and *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* was published in 1908. See Bill York's specific chronology of Fox's life in *John Fox, Jr., Appalachian Author*.

> reason their hands are large and so are their feet, for they go barefoot. But usually they have modest faces and sad, modest eyes, and in the rich river-bottoms, where the mountain farmers have tenants and do not send their daughters to the fields, the girls are apt to be erect and agile, small of hand and foot, and usually they have a wild shyness that is very attractive (33).

Within this description we find supposedly true-to-life visions reminiscent of Murfree's Mrs. Johns, Mrs. Boker, and Selina Teake. Additionally, as the frontispiece of the book an illustration of "Melissa" is provided. Surrounded by plants and trees Melissa is a woodland flower, practically absorbed by nature itself like Selina.

Finally, Fox's novels, in particular *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* and *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine,* are important to note for several reasons: they most clearly reveal Fox's efforts to revive Bluegrass masculinity, they show an important contrast between mountain womanhood and Bluegrass womanhood, and they are the works upon which much of his reputation depends today (Ward 78). Both novels engage roughly the same basic plot scheme in which a character leaves his or her native mountain environment to be bettered by the Bluegrass. June Tolliver, for instance, in *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* is in a hopeless feud situation until Jack Hale has her taken out of the mountains to be cleaned up, educated, and civilized in Louisville, Kentucky, and New York City. Upon her return, June is able to create a proper Bluegrass, and therefore American, household (Wilson 103).

Even more significant, at least to my discussion of female images in this study, *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* provides views of a young woman from the mountains and a young woman from the Bluegrass simultaneously as prospective love

interests to the main character Chad Buford (as he comes to discover). Like Mrs. Darley in "The Dancin' Party at Harrison's Cove" and the narrator of *In The Tennessee Mountains*, and thereby the at-home reader, Margaret Dean is the epitome of society riding her horse in velvet cap and plume as a child, being waited upon by slaves, and attending formal dances as a young woman, whereas Melissa Turner helps her mother with domestic chores in the home, risks her life to save Chad's, becomes sickly and dies. Melissa, however, in Chad's eyes, and perhaps Fox's, as per the aforementioned description from *Bluegrass and Rhododendron*, is given some redeeming characteristics as she is "the daughter of a valley-farmer, erect, agile, spirited, intelligent" (34).[25] Nevertheless, it is Margaret who wins Chad's adult affection. As a proper Bluegrass gentleman who has been spared from his life in the mountains first by chance and then cleared through "noble" blood, Chad must have a proper lady to return to after his foray to the West. Indeed, the narrator foreshadows Chad's salvation and the importance of the his union with Margaret at their first meeting:

> For that land it was the flowering time of the age and the people; and the bud that was about to open into the perfect flower had its living symbol in the little creature racing over the bluegrass fields on a black pony, with a black velvet cap and a white nodding plume above her shaking curls, just as the little stranger who had floated down into those Elysian fields – with

[25] The description given in the text right before the passage I have quoted about Melissa in the body of the paper almost exactly mirrors Fox's statement in *Bluegrass and Rhododendron.* "On one side were girls in linsey and homespun – some thin, undersized, underfed, and with weak, dispirited eyes and yellow tousled hair; others, round-faced, round-eyed, dark, and sturdy; most of them large-waisted and round-shouldered – especially the older ones – from work in the fields…" (34).

> better blood in his veins than he knew – was a reincarnation perhaps of the spirit of the old race that had lain dormant in the hills. The long way from log-cabin to Greek portico had marked the progress of the generations before her; and, on this same way, the boy had set his sturdy feet (88).

Perhaps, it is not particularly Fox's images of mountain women that are of utmost importance here, since they largely mirror the types set by Murfree, but rather the ways in which Fox's work cemented Appalachia as "other," and therefore Appalachian women as "others," within American culture and how that, in turn, affects our ability to uncover homestead heroes in Appalachian fiction. As Darlene Wilson accurately surmises, Fox's life and works show mythmaking and capital accumulation coming together, thus creating a use of Appalachia that appears more malevolent than a literary hopeful like Murfree (7). In fact, Fox cites Murfree as saving the southern mountaineer from complete obscurity:

> The war over, he went back to his cove and his cabin, and but for the wealth of his hills and the pen of one Southern woman, the world would have forgotten him again. Charles Egbert Craddock put him in the outer world of fiction, and in recent years railroads have been linking him with the outer world of fact (*Bluegrass and Rhododendron* 7).

Certainly, Murfree's works aided in the mythical discovery of Appalachia and provided Fox a model from which to begin his own writing career.

Yet, the implications of Appalachia as a distinct locale with its own history remind us that Appalachia was not completely isolated, even in the earliest days of settlement and that an important sense of separateness existed between mountaineers, or

Cohees and other Americans, particularly southern planters, from the earliest days of settlement. Largely associated with land value, this difference placed significance on a yeomanesque mentality and subsistence way of life. As a result, women's homestead work was highly valuable as it was necessary for family survival. Additionally, a woman's sphere in Cohee society included outside work in direct relationship to the environment, thereby providing women a shared, ungendered work space with men. However, the implications of Appalachia as an invention within American mythology obscure the value of regional history. In addition to perpetuating stereotypes associated with isolationism, the myth of Appalachia strips women's work of its liberating potential. Instead, through the work of writers such as Mary Noailles Murfree and John Fox Jr., women's domestic production and relationship to environment take on negative connotations as women appear as exploited workers or willowy creatures. Clearly, in these representations the sense of separateness in mountain culture that values homestead production becomes a corrupted othering quality for women.

The power of the myth of Appalachia to hold women in a subjugated position in fictionalized accounts of the region, even when contrasted with the history of Appalachia, is not surprising. As objects of oddity and pity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these women appear so far removed from mainstream American culture that any type of autonomy seems unfathomable, particularly in an era when all American women were viewed as second class citizens and writers such as John Fox Jr. cemented negative peculiarities of mountain culture as anthropological fact. Thus, it has largely been left to modern and contemporary Appalachian authors to revive the value of mountain women's homestead production. Although some of the characteristics of

homestead heroism these authors present appear to overlap qualities of stereotyping, they do so in ways that reclaim distinctiveness in mountain experience. Their stories show strong, independent, and intelligent women rather than Murfree's and Fox's nature creatures and old crones. In order to begin to uncover such images as alternate, more desirable representations of mountain women, I will expose, in the next chapter, glimpses of homestead heroism in fiction being produced during the same time period as local color; I will consider these examples as precursors to modern and contemporary efforts to reclaim agency for mountain women.

Chapter Two

Glimpses of Homestead Heroism: Strength Amidst Stereotype

Mary Noailles Murfree worked within the confines of the local color tradition and her own genteel upbringing to portray a unique geographic setting, speech appropriate to the locale, and regional characters that would certainly appear eccentric to a national audience, including many Appalachians, at the turn of the last century.[1] As a result, reactions to her work have rarely been moderate. Often critically portrayed as the creator of long-standing, inaccurate stereotypes, as I have shown in chapter one, Murfree is also recognized at times as a positive force for bringing Tennessee and its unique issues and environment, even if somewhat erroneous, into the national arena. Specifically, in reference to female characters, Murfree has been cited as a "role model for women's capabilities," as well for "celebrating passivity" (Englehardt 102). Certainly, as Mary Nilles suggests, "Miss Murfree was surely no feminist writer" (77). Even so, Mary

[1] Although Murfree presents glimpses of homestead heroism in the characters of Celia, Clarsie, and Cynthia, Murfree's impact on stereotypical perceptions of Appalachia, beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing in popular media and literature today, cannot be overstated. As Allison Ensor explains: "Most readers accepted her picture as *entirely authentic*, as the work of someone thoroughly familiar with the mountains and the mountaineers. Few suspected that the author's knowledge was limited to one or two small areas in the Cumberland Mountains and – at least after 1885 – to the area around Montvale Springs ("Geography" 199, emphasis mine). Murfree's widely accepted, yet limited view of Appalachia marked the area, and particularly its women, in very real and lasting ways through the creation of myth.

Noailles Murfree's short stories in *In the Tennessee Mountains* may yet provoke some interest from feminist scholars.[2]

The majority of the female types Murfree presents, as aforementioned, such as Mrs. Johns, Mrs. Boker, and Selina Teake, offer images of mountain womanhood in need of pity, help, or scorn. Perhaps, as Cratis D. Williams suggests, Murfree's biggest mistake was her "failure to become intimately acquainted with more mountaineers and their social history" (135). Furthermore, as Durwood Dunn proposes, Murfree offers readers the impression that Appalachian culture was and is, as in the myth of Appalachia, static and homogenous (202 – 203). Unaware of, or uninterested in, the influence of yeomanesque farming and the resulting role of labor in Appalachia, Murfree, and thereby her readers, generally find overworked crones, victims of abuse, and nature creatures in the mountains instead of strong, hard-working, intelligent women whose work and connection to mountainous landscape provide them a means of attaining autonomy.[3]

However, a few of Murfree's female characters display glimpses of homestead heroism through their actions, including homestead production, survival skill, and

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[2] In "What is the Place of Mary Noailles Murfree Today?" Allison Ensor considers whether there "are substantial reasons for feminists to be interested in Murfree's work" (202).

[3] In the first chapter of this study I have made an effort to show the contrast between the myth of Appalachia and the history of Appalachia. I established this relationship in order to show that lived experience in Appalachia, for many, but not all, has not been recognized by the stereotyping that largely belongs to the myth of Appalachia. Clearly, since my focus in this study is on fiction, the influence of reality is highly questionable. Therefore, I am offering examples of homestead heroes as alternate fictional images of mountain women in order to provide a new model for critical evaluation. Also, as I will show in chapter three, modern and contemporary authors appear to be reclaiming aspects of yeomanesque life in Appalachia in order to create female characters that stand in contrast to stereotypical images.

connection to the mountains. As Allison Ensor proposes, "What we do have here is a series of rather admirable young mountain women who exhibit individuality, courage, and strength in the face of male indifference and criticism" ("What is the Place..." 202). Perhaps, few have read her stories carefully enough, causing them to miss the "subtle" and "complex" ways she writes about women (Englehardt 103). Looking more closely at the short stories in *In The Tennessee Mountains* for glimpses of homestead heroism allows us to reassess Murfree's early fiction in new and interesting ways, as well as to begin to discern the presence of an alternate imagery of mountain women in Appalachian fiction beginning, however subtly, in the late nineteenth century.

Celia Shaw in "The Star in the Valley," Clarsie Giles in "The 'Harnt' that Walks Chilhowee" and Cynthia Ware in "Drifting Down Lost Creek" provide Murfree's readers with three capable young women. Although each fits easily into the stereotypical mold, as the nature-like blank slate for the outsider male, the overburdened daughter, and the pathetically lovelorn figure, respectively, these women also display traits associated with homestead heroism. The depiction of Celia, Clarsie, and Cynthia in Murfree's collection, highlights the importance of these characters in an otherwise troubling cast of females.

In "The Star in the Valley" Celia Shaw is a waif-like, beautiful girl whose association with nature makes her attractive to a visiting society male. Reginald Chevis becomes simultaneously interested in the face of the young mountain girl and a "red star, set like a jewel in the floating mists of the valley" (124). The association between Celia and nature grows throughout the story, particularly when it is revealed that the star in the valley is actually a light from Celia's home. Upon their first meeting Chevis recognizes that "the slight figure...its lithe, swaying beauty reminded him of the mountaineer's

comparison, - *a slip of willow*" (127, emphasis mine). The narrator continues the description of Celia through Chevis' eyes. She is a "creature" to whom "wild nature about her had been generous":

> There were opaline lights in her dreamy eyes which one sees nowhere save in sunset clouds that brood above dark hills; the golden sunbeams, all faded from the landscape, had left a perpetual reflection in her bronze hair; there was an affinity between her and other pliant, swaying, graceful young things, waving in the mountain breezes, fed by the rain and the dew. *She was hardly more human to Chevis than certain little woodland flowers*, the very names of which he did not know, - pure white, star shaped, with a faint green line threading its way through each of the five delicate petals (131 – 132, emphasis mine).

Although Celia, from Chevis' perspective, is unfortunate in her living situation, she is a beautiful nature creature, more like a flower than a human being. Yet, this endearing quality cannot bridge the "gulf between his station and hers," one that the narrator assumes is "so undreamed of by her" (132). Thus, she watches the light from his camp fire with " a heart full of pitiable unrealities" even as he "gaz(es) down on the ideal star in the valley" (136). For Chevis, Celia's status as a natural object elicits his, and likely the reader's, pity. He contemplates the injustice of her lot to those of "others her age in higher spheres (133).

Chevis' judgments of Celia, however, do not taint her traits of homestead heroism. Indeed, he finds her sensibilities pleasing. She sits at the spinning wheel working heartily at her domestic duty as the men discuss an act of revenge against the

Peel family. Unlike the other "uncouth" female figures around her, Celia speaks out against the raid, while her mother and grandmother sit "by the fire monotonously carding cotton" (147). She states: "I don't see no sense in shootin' folks down like they war nuthin' better nor bear, nor deer, nor suthin' wild" (146). It is not surprising then, when Celia encourages her father to drink, so that she may travel unknown through the snow to warn the Peel family. Acting of her own volition, Celia exhibits her ability to survive alone in the cold wilderness in order to travel on her "errand of deliverance" without even a proper prayer or "cultured sensibilities to sustain her" (149 – 150).

Consequently, the injustice of Celia's cultural situation appears even greater in contrast to her heroic actions when her own family rebuffs her, she dies from an illness brought on by her night in the snow, and Hi Bates reports to Chevis much later that she was "queer an' teched in the head" (151). As an outstanding female among mountain women Celia appears deserving of a better life than her mountain home can afford her. Unlike her own people, outsiders Chevis and Varney "[break] into enthusiastic commendation of the girl's high heroism and courage" when they hear of her deed posthumously (151). They experience a "keen thrill about their hearts sometimes felt in crowded theatres," or "in listening to a poet's mid-air song," or "in looking up some grand and ennobling phase of life translated on a great painter's canvas" (151 – 152). To the society males, Celia's rarity likens her to a work of art. Though displayed more positively than many of Murfree's women, Celia remains an object at which to marvel and limited in her heroism by her mountain home, rather than liberated by it.

Like Celia Shaw, Clarsie Giles in 'The 'Harnt' that Walks Chilhowee' is nature-like and desirable. In this case, however, Clarsie is pursued by mountaineers: widower

Simon Burney and young Tom Pratt. She is "a tall, lithe girl" with a "delicately transparent complexion" with "lusterless black hair" and "something in the *expression of her large eyes that suggested those of a deer*, - something free, untamable, yet gentle" (289, emphasis mine). In addition to being nature-like, Clarsie's father describes her as "mightly sot ter hevin' her own way" (286). Headstrong, she is also overburdened with homestead duties. Mrs. Giles, her mother, "had placed all her domestic cares upon the shapely shoulders of her willing daughter, and had betaken herself to the chimney corner and a pipe" (290). Clarsie does not complain or falter under the weight of her duties, but bears them willingly for the survival of her family like a homestead hero.

As an example of her self-determination and heroism, Celia, concerned with the prospect of old widowers putting spells on young ladies when her mother expresses a desire to see her marry Burney and "take keer of him," visits the fork in the road late at night to have her fortune told (291). Brought face to face with Reuben Crabb, the fugitive believed to be the "harnt" that walks Chilhowee, Clarsie thinks first of her home and family, realizing that no one will take care of the homestead duties if she dies from this encounter:

> ...when there would be no one left to feed the chickens; when no one would care if the pigs cried with the pangs of hunger, unless, indeed, it were time for them to be fattened before killing. The mare, - how often would she be taken from the plow, and shut up for the night in her shanty without a drop of water, after a hard day's work! Who would churn, spin, or weave? Clarsie could not understand how the machinery of the universe could go on without her" (311).

Clarsie's concerns make it clear that her work is imperative to family survival and that she recognizes it as such. In contrast to Celia Shaw, whose association with nature makes her an object at which outsiders may marvel, Clarsie's nature-like qualities and homestead experience allow her to have a greater understanding of the farm livestock. Thus, the value of Clarsie's homestead production does not appear despite the mountainous landscape, but rather within it. Simon Burney has taken notice of her work: "I hev seen enough, an' a deal more 'n enough, of her goin's-on, ter know that what she does ain't done fur herself. An' ef she will hev her way, it air fur the good of the whole tribe of ye. It 'pears to me ez thar ain't many gals like that thar Clarsie. An' she air a merciful critter" (287). Perhaps we should surmise here that Clarise's homestead capabilities make her attractive as a potential mate for Burney.

When she does not drop dead from her visit with the harnt, Clarsie remains true to her merciful nature, bringing food to it though Burney chides her for her efforts. Although her willingness to help both Reuben Crabb and her family might be praised by the narrator, and therefore the reader, Clarsie's accomplishments are overshadowed by the benevolent goodwill of a man: Simon Burney takes in the displaced, one-armed Crabb. According to the narrator, "The burden, however, had fallen in *his way*, and *he lifted it*" (320, emphasis mine). Additionally, "There was only a sluggish current of peasant blood in Simon Burney's veins, but a prince could not have dispensed hospitality with a more royal hand" (321). As a result of Burney's actions, rather than Clarsie's, the narrator concludes "The grace of culture is, in its way, a fine thing, but the best that art can do – the polish of a gentleman – is hardly equal to the best that Nature can do in her higher moods" (322). It is *his* willingness to help Reuben, rather than *hers*, or her

diligence in homestead duties, which inspire the narrator, and perhaps the reader, to find a quality of value amongst the mountaineers.

Finally, in "Drifting Down Lost Creek" Murfree depicts the female character closest to the representation of a homestead hero in *In the Tennessee Mountains* and perhaps all of her work. From the outset of the story young Cynthia Ware is clearly different from Celia Shaw or Clarsie Giles, even though she is subject to a "haggard, lean, and prematurely aged" match-making mother much like Clarise (19). Cynthia is not a nature figure; nature only highlights the ethereal fairness of her face and homespun dress through the shadows of the beech tree. Instead of being presented through nature, Cynthia observes it and finds value in it. While watching leaves in the creek she concludes "...her life was like them, worthless in itself and without a mission; drifting down Lost Creek, to vanish vaguely in the mountains" (2). In addition, when she returns home after helping Vander Price, Cynthia shows a great longing for the Appalachian landscape:

> For the moment *she felt the exaltation of the mountains.* It lifted her heart. And when a sudden fluctuating red glare shot out over the murky shades, and the dull sighing of the bellows reached her from the forge on the mountain's brink, and the air was presently vibrating with the clinking of the hand-hammer and the clanking of the sledge, and the crags clamored with the old familiar echoes, *she realized that she had done all she had sought to do*; that she had gone forth helpless but for her own brave spirit; that she had returned helpful, and hopeful, and that *here was her home and she loved it* (60 – 61).

Cynthia's return to the mountains allows her to realize exactly what she has accomplished. Enduring a "painful" trip to the valley, she had been barked at and stared at as she made her way from juror to juror and finally to the governor in order to secure a pardon for Vander. Still, upon returning home, the mountains themselves remain her solace; other mountaineers openly ridicule her, and her mother believes she will never get married.

Even Vander Price, who once found Cynthia to be the "genius of home," for her domestic work and for whom she has risked her reputation, forgets her. Cleared of the charges for the receiving of stolen goods and the attack on Jubal Tynes, Vander only visits briefly after his own marriage. Never realizing Cynthia's role in his freedom, Vander leaves her pathetically lovelorn. However, Cynthia does not allow Vander's absence to completely destroy her spirit. She relies on her labor to fill her days, "goin' ter weavin" to "expre(ss) her broken heart" (73). She becomes highly skilled as a "settled single woman" (73). Over time Cynthia's heart "adjust(s) itself anew" enabling her to temper somewhat her moments of reflection on the "floating leaves drifting down Lost Creek" with "the work nearest at hand" and "its influence in the lives of others" (78 – 79).[4]

Although Cynthia displays a desire for the mountains, a determined spirit, and skill in domestic production, her life is nonetheless encapsulated on both ends of the story as "valueless, purposeless, and vaguely vanishing in the mountains" (2 & 78 – 79). Cynthia Ware is a rare mountain specimen, evoking pity or awe from the reader, as do

[4] Henry Warfel sees Murfree as finishing "Drifting Down Lost Creek" with an affirmation that "spinsterhood can be filled with humanitarian service to others," in accord with Victorian moralizing at the time (161).

Celia Shaw and Clarsie Giles, rather than a full understanding of her character as a homestead hero. As Dunn explains, "The best, most admirable mountaineers in her fiction are neither real people nor are they meant to be typical of their class." Instead, women like Celia, Clarsie, and Cynthia are "almost metaphors...represent(ing) a single virtue or a cluster of similar virtues abstractly" that are "strikingly absent in the typical mountaineer" (202). These virtues, viewed through the criteria of homestead heroism, provide glimpses of an underlying alternate imagery of mountain women.

"Drifting Down Lost Creek" is also particularly interesting for its use of geography. Generally, Murfree's vague settings, such as the "settlemint" or "crossroads," provide a means by which she could lend more credibility to a given plot: she could "convey the impression that she knew wide areas of the mountains" even though she did not (Ensor "The Geography of..." 199).[5] According to Allison Ensor, however, in "Drifting Down Lost Creek" Murfree shows a specific knowledge of the areas of Sparta and eastern White County, Tennessee: "Instead of a vague, generalized locale, with place names either unspecified or fictitious, she provides a very specific setting, using at least five actual names readily recognizable by anyone from that area" ("Geography" 196).[6] Murfree's use of more accurate details in conjunction with a determined female character not only increases interest in her writing and potential knowledge of the area, but it also serves to emphasize the mountainous location as important to Cynthia's actions. Not only does Cynthia display a longing for her mountain

[5] This impression of knowledge, much like the myth of Appalachia itself, supplied her writing, and therefore her depictions of women, with a sense of authority. It is possible that Murfree visited the area (Ensor "Geography" 198).

[6] See Allison Ensor's "The Geography of Mary Noailles Murfree's *In the Tennessee Mountains*" 196 – 197.

home, nature itself becomes significant as Cynthia, though not a nature figure, measures her life's achievements through her environment.

The connectedness of the mountains to the mountaineers appears to have become increasingly important to Murfree. As her career progressed, her interest in the mountains overshadowed her portrayal of the mountaineers.[7] Nathalia Wright explains: "In her later stories and novels, Miss Murfree added little to the picture of the Tennessee mountains and mountaineers which she drew in her first book. The chief variation in the picture in those works is an imbalance between the two: the mountains tend to become more important than the mountaineers" (xxxii). Some critics, particularly Elizabeth S.D. Englehardt, have found this aspect of Murfree's work to be liberating, in the sense that Murfree herself, through her later writing, displays qualities of an ecological feminist, as the environment itself works in cooperation with the mountaineers.[8] Unfortunately, this connection often proves detrimental to Murfree's female characters, even if it is a step toward autonomy for Murfree. They often become either nature creatures or background figures absorbed by the landscape.

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[7] Nathalia Wright suggests, "The most significant relationship between Miss Murfree's mountains and mountaineers, however – and her most nearly original achievement – is the identity between them which is suggested" (xxviii). See particularly *The Young Mountaineers*. In this subsequent collection of short stories Murfree pushes female characters into the background, presents episodic, less developed plots, and highlights the mountains themselves above all else.

[8] See Englehardt's discussion of Murfree in *The Tangled Roots of Feminism, Environmentalism, and Appalachian Literature*. She finds that Murfree's novel *His Vanished Star* shows evidence that Murfree "gave nonhuman beings in her fictional community a language and acknowledged the active role they could play in Appalachia" (110). As a result the nonhuman inhabitants become just as real and important as the human inhabitants in warding off Kenniston's development. For Englehardt, this shows economic interdependency.

Although Mary Noailles Murfree had already claimed the Tennessee mountaineers as her subject, another Tennessee woman felt that she could "still do something original with the subject if it were handled deftly" (Mackenzie 97). Whereas Murfree had captured widespread attention through her 'stronger flavor' in dialect, strangeness of local manners, and local scenery (Wright xiv), Sarah Barnwell Elliott's treatment of the Tennessee mountains led her to explore social distinctions among mountaineers and outside communities, and thereby to depict strong female characters, particularly in the case of Hannah Warren and her grandmother in *The Durket Sperret.* According to Clara Childs Mackenzie, Elliott shows the insider's knowledge of the moutaineers' manners of living "which is lacking in Miss Murfree's accounts because the latter knew her mountaineers mainly though summer visits to the mountains of Tennessee rather than from continual experience" (97). Sarah Barnwell Elliott's contact with native mountaineers, primarily by living in the mountains herself, allowed her to draw images of mountain women informed by economic and social conditions of mountain life. As a result, she provides us with a clearer glimpse of homestead heroism than Murfree.[9]

To gain an inside perspective of mountain life, Elliott relied on the many years she spent as a resident of Sewanee, Tennessee. Born in Georgia, Sarah Barnwell Elliott (1848 – 1928) moved to Sewanee shortly after her father's death in 1886. Elliott and her mother depended on the kindness of relatives before moving with her brother to Sewanee in 1870

[9] When asked to comment on *The Durket Sperret* by *Book News*, Sarah Barnwell Elliott responded "Having lived most of my life at Sewanee, the people are well known to me, and no one can know them without being struck by the pride of family which goes down through every grade of life..." (qtd. in Mackenzie 101).

where he was to accept a position at the University of the South.[10] The extent of Elliott's formal education consisted of classes audited from professors at Sewanee and summer classes at Johns Hopkins University (Mackenzie 21 – 34). Yet, in 1895 she was supporting herself as a writer in New York (Gaskill 19). Though she would return to Sewanee "tired and discouraged" in 1902 as national interest in local color writing was waning, she would become active in the women's suffrage movement and raise two orphaned nephews in the family home (Gaskill 20).[11]

In the interim between her years in Sewanee as a young woman and her later years as a surrogate mother and suffragist, Sarah Barnwell Elliott offered national audiences a glimpse of homestead heroism in the character of Hannah Warren. Set in the coves surrounding Sewanee and at the University of the South, the *Durket Sperret* ran serially in *Scribner's* from September to November 1897 before being published as a novel in 1898 (Mackenzie 98). The sperret, or spirit, of the title, "refers to the pride and

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[10] There is an error in Elliott's location of birth in *American Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide.* Although Gayle Gaskill lists Elliott's birthplace as South Carolina, both Clara Childs Mackenzie, in her book-length study of Elliott (21), and Ballard and Hudson in their anthology of women writers, note Elliott's birthplace as Georgia (208). Elliott's birthplace is particularly important because her father, an Episcopal bishop, had moved the family from Savannah to take charge of the Georgia Episcopal Institute. Bishop Elliott's interest in improving education, particularly in the South, is even more apparent in his founding role at the University of the South in Sewanee. By 1858 Bishop Elliott had joined forces with two other bishops, obtained a charter, and helped to raise more than a half million dollars in endowments. In 1860 a cornerstone was laid on Sewanee Mountain, but by the end of the Civil War two of the bishops were dead, the pledged funds had evaporated, and the cornerstone had been blown up. In 1866 Bishop Elliott called the trustees together to locate land deeds and formulate a plan. Unfortunately, Elliott did not live to see the opening of classes in 1867 (Mackenzie 21 – 34).

[11] Elliott was elected president of the Tennessee Equal Suffrage Association in 1912 (Mackenzie 52). She never married or had children of her own.

stubbornness of a class-conscious cove family, the Durkets" (98). Hannah's grandmother, a Durket before marriage, is so spirited that she is likely to lash out when her pride is tested. It is the testing of this pride, as Hannah begins peddling in Sewanee, which brings into close competition the values of cove society and the new university people. Through Hannah's actions and reactions as a member of both communities Elliott reveals the underlying strength of a young mountain woman produced through the homestead responsibilities her culture values.

At the beginning of the novel we find young Hannah Warren painfully aware of the predicament in which her father's death and the passing of a hard winter have left her and her grandparents: they are "poor" for the first time because they cannot provide for their own subsistence. Hannah does all the homestead work she can to provide for the farm, bearing her "heavy responsibilities" as best she can: she milks, bakes cornbread, strains milk, and chops wood "with an ease and swiftness scarcely to be looked for from a woman" (6). Though Hannah is briefly described as beautiful like Murfree's young women, for her "grave, clear-cut face, waving brown hair...[and]...a full throat," her beauty is contextualized by her hands: even though they are "shapely," they are also "hard brown" from manual labor (8 – 9). Regardless of her skill in homestead efforts, spring planting is outside of Hannah's ability. With her grandfather held fast by rheumatism, she considers selling bacon, apples, and potatoes up on the mountain in Sewanee, in order to save funds to hire someone to plow the fields, but knows her overbearing grandmother "would far rather starve than [have Hannah] go on such an errand" (4 - 6).

Mrs. Warren's aversion to peddling results from her belief that the Warrens, as well as her own family, the Durkets, are "well-to-do," because they been have able to "mak(e) at home everything they needed" (5). Without a need for money, success among the cove people has been measured in terms of yeomanesque farming. Thus, the new university people on top of the mountain appear "strangely lackin'" for buying everything and saving nothing," in addition to "sittin' round with books in their hands" instead of providing for their needs through farm and household production (5 – 6). This economic tension informs the plot of the novel as Hannah and her grandmother disagree on how best to save their livelihood from peril: Hannah wishes to peddle as necessary, in order to hire neighbor Dock Wilson to perform the tasks she cannot do, while her grandmother wants her to marry her wealthy, albeit drunken and abusive, cousin, Si Durket.

As the title implies, it is the Durket Sperret within both Hannah and Mrs. Warren that further complicates the story, bringing the cove and university cultures into competition with one another. Peddling despite her grandmother's wishes, because it is the only way she can provide for her family's survival without succumbing to a treacherous marriage, Hannah's initial foray into Sewanee leaves her both amazed and "feeling light" (19 - 30). On one hand, Hannah becomes surprisingly aware of the class distinction, or lack thereof, with which the university people see her: she is equated to Lizer Wilson, a woman maligned among the yeomanesque cove people for her peddling. Though Hannah is offended by her association with Lizer and the counting of her apples before purchase, "her anger fad(es)" before the hope of more money" (23). For Hannah, peddling is a necessary sacrifice to sustain her family without the help of Si Durket. On the other hand, however, Hannah becomes naively impressed with the sensation of the

Sewanee culture, finding the university people different, but likable, particularly in the figure of Agnes Welling. The daughter of a university professor, Agnes is also impressed with Hannah, not for Hannah's own merits, but for her potential as a specimen in Agnes' educational crusades. Unaware of this intention, Hannah returns to the cove triumphant: "She had been dead, and now, in some strange way vigorous life had come to her" (33). As one who has had a new world opened to her and has become capable providing for her family, Hannah feels she will be able to defy her grandmother and Si. She smiles, thinking "All she kin do is to kill me" (35).

Mrs. Warren appears quite capable of harming her granddaughter as the novel progresses and Hannah's peddling becomes too much for her to bear; in Mrs. Warren's eyes Hannah not only trades produce, but also the integrity of her position as a well-to-do member of covite culture. The narrator describes Mrs. Warren's viewpoint: "Hannah's errand was a bitter pill to Mrs. Warren. She had never done such a thing in her life, nor was it customary with women of her station" (49).[12] As the talk of Hannah's peddling increases and her obstinacy toward Si persists, Mrs. Warren's attacks on Hannah provoke her desire "to go away and work, and send the money back" (77). Realizing "what awful things words could be" when her grandmother berates her following her refusal to visit Si's new home, a monument to Durket pride, Hannah hires herself out to Agnes in

[12] The narrator describes the source of Mrs. Warren's haughtiness: "The Warrens and the Durkets stood on the same social level, and as the two aristocratic lines met in Mrs. John Warren, she was regarded as a very important person, indeed; and, assisted by her temper and tongue, she kept people greater than Lizer Wilson in much awe" (85). As such, Mrs. Warren enjoys being treated with distinction. Thus, she relishes her trip over the mountain to visit her brother, even though he is dying, so that she can display her status over the rest of the family.

Sewanee (139 – 141). As a member of the university culture, however, Hannah becomes a servant rather than a peddler.

It is as Agnes' servant that Hannah fully realizes the scope of the distance between the covites and the university community. Initially, peddling in Sewanee had allowed Hannah to measure herself outside of her own sphere: "Until she had gone to Sewanee, she had thought herself the best – her grandmother had been mistaken" (82). Though she finds herself lacking in refinement and education, particularly in contrast to Agnes, Hannah's intrinsic worth and character are not questioned until she actually becomes a member of daily life in Sewanee. In her place as servant, the relations between her and Agnes immediately change: no longer a visitor with a value inherent in her own culture, Hannah now leaves through the back door, stands in the presence of a master or mistress, and only speaks when spoken to (143 - 151). Even though she learns a great deal intellectually from Agnes and adapts to new styles of clothing, in this new position Hannah's knowledge of homestead production is stripped of its former subsistence value.

It is from this state of displacement that Elliott offers the reader an additional glimpse of homestead heroism through the character of Hannah as she chooses the cove over Sewanee. Charged with compromising herself with Max Dudley, due to Si's rumors, Hannah's social position in Sewanee becomes abundantly clear: "I am only a thing, Hannah thought...She knew her class thoroughly...She had done nothing, and they knew it...Miss Agnes, who knew the truth, had turned from her; who would speak a word for her good name?" (165). Dismissed from her servant duties and disgraced, Hannah returns home unwelcomed since she is still unwilling to accept Si, even in her besmirched

state, until Max Dudley offers to marry her. Hannah, however, refuses Max Dudley in favor of covite farmer Dock Wilson. Although he is considered of lower class than Hannah, and is certainly not her grandparents first choice (Mrs. Warren dies from a fit when Hannah's intentions are announced), Hannah recognizes Dock for his work ethic and the potential of their cooperative work in subsistence; throughout Hannah's struggles to maintain the farm on her own, Dock has "worked for her and watched over her....asking no return" (187).[13] This final choice exhibits Hannah's strength as a young mountaineer. Presented with the option to accept Dudley and become a more viable member of Sewanee culture, Hannah instead picks a husband who understands and respects her role in homesteading. Through Hannah's tribulations Elliott shows that "no woman should have to enter a loveless marriage for economic reasons. Rather, the opportunity for mutual support and personal growth should be the goal in marriage, with the woman sharing in and contributing to the family finances" (Mackenzie 146). As Dock Wilson's wife and a member of covite culture, Hannah will be a partner in the family's livelihood.

Ironically, however, it is Max Dudley, unbeknownst to Hannah, who acts throughout the novel as a spokesperson for the nobility of the mountaineers. As readers

[13] I see Hannah's choice of Dock Wilson as her mate to be the start of a cooperative farming relationship based on their work together throughout the novel. Specifically, they work side-by-side, without regard to gender, to save the livestock from the flood: "Hannah did not move. She was tired out, and it seemed useless to fight any longer now the water had backed up. The kettle began to sing. Since dawn she had worked like a man – now she must work like a woman. If her father had lived, it would have been better...'Po' daddy, hit's youuns work I'm doin,' she said; 'an I'll do hit tell I draps.' See pages 122 – 126. Hannah has noticed Dock's helpfulness as she attempts to run the farm alone, knowing that she can never fully repay his kindness. Additionally, Hannah is not a nature object to Dock, even though nature reminds him of her (55 – 56).

we are privy to Dudley's observations of Hannah and her people throughout her time in Sewanee. For example, when Hannah reveals that in her estimation Lizer Wilson is poor during her first visit, we observe Max Dudley's response: "A smile flitted across the young man's face as the words reached him, and he wondered what Hannah's idea of wealth was! '*Quantity*,' would have been her answer, for, to her, this was the only difference" (29). Not only does Dudley recognize the importance of subsistence to the covites, he also defends the intellectual condition of the people. While Agnes equates the covites with moles who are 'in the blackness of intellectual darkness,' and therefore wants to "civilize" Hannah, Max finds that a mole would not see its condition as better or worse, or thank the squirrel, the representative of the high and lofty ideals of the university people, for changing the environment (71 - 72). The necessity of "civilizing" Hannah becomes a major theme of the novel, particularly through the different views held by Agnes Welling and Max Dudley, "posing the question whether in moral terms the better-educated group is any more worthy than the honest and level-headed but unlettered Hannah, and whether in fact 'civilizing' on their terms would improve her" (Mackenzie 100). Instead of looking down on the covites, Max Dudley, and perhaps Sarah Barnwell Elliott, likes the "people through this country, who have the habits and even the thoughts of eighty years ago and with it a sturdy independence of opinion" (72 - 73).

As a result, Dudley offers the means through which we more fully recognize the cultural sacrifice Hannah makes in becoming Agnes' servant in Sewanee: that she "should offer herself as a servant was an unknown thing in her grade of life" (142). Having met Hannah's father and grandfather, and after visiting in Lost Cove, Max appreciates the Warrens. He finds that "To her [Hannah], equality is a fact, not a theory"

(154). Therefore, he wonders how Hannah will handle her position as servant. He considers that "It would take *character* to stand such a test, and in his heart he added, 'blood'... Hannah might have hereditary right to her simple dignity and beauty" (146, emphasis mine). Ultimately, Hannah Warren shows great respect for herself and her community in her ability to provide for her family while maintaining the right to her own destiny, rather than submitting to an unhappy marriage (100). Although defying her grandmother's push toward marriage leaves Hannah vulnerable to Agnes' patronizing attitudes and Si's gossip (Gaskill 20), she eventually determines that refinement is no substitute for self worth (Elliott 167).

As a Tennessee writer Sarah Barnwell Elliott "trie(d) to lift the Tennessee mountaineer out of the realm of stereotype" so greatly evidenced in the work of Mary Noailles Murfree (Mackenzie 86). Rather than imitating Murfree's stylized stories, Elliott wished to "draw upon the Southern experience as she knew it...(84).[14] Her experience, as exhibited in *The Durket Sperret*, involved an appreciation for the mountaineers surrounding Sewanee and their way of life. As Mackenzie argues, most of the covite mountaineers in *The Durket Sperret* "are hardworking freehold farmers proud of their economic self-sufficiency and unwilling to be looked down upon by anyone, least of all the 'Varsity people...'" (100). As a member of this group Hannah Warren provides readers an image of a hardworking mountain woman whose traditional value as a homestead worker is tested and found significant.[15] Although Dock Wilson helps her as

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[14] A *Charleston News and Courier* reviewer said of *The Durket Sperret*: 'as a sketch of life in the Tennessee mountains it is far more truly realistic than are the highly colored pictures of Charles Egbert Craddock (M.N. Murfree)' (qtd. in Mackenzie 101).
[15] Also see Englehardt 98 – 99.

both an admirer and a hired hand, it is largely through Hannah's efforts that the Warren farm is maintained.

Much like Sarah Barnwell Elliott, Emma Bell Miles' writing about her experience as a resident in the Tennessee mountains exposes the value of cultural distinction in relation to women's homestead capabilities. Emma Bell Miles (1879 – 1919) moved to Tennessee with her parents from Evansville, Indiana, in 1890 in hopes of improving Emma's delicate health with the milder climate. Kept out of school due to illness, Emma became a "voracious" reader (Whisnant xviii). Settling first in Chattanooga, the family soon migrated to Walden's Ridge. Of her early life on the Ridge Miles reported "I drew, read, wrote a little....and lived with the people and in the woods a great deal" (qtd. in Whisnant xviii). Although she left Tennessee for art school in St. Louis for a year, she returned "homesick for the mountain and for Frank Miles, a handsome youth with dark hair and blue eyes," whom she would marry despite her parents' objections (Gaston 416). Miles' decision to marry Frank marks her commitment to Appalachia; her time in St. Louis could have been the start of a new, different life, but she "wanted to get back to the mountains and reality" (qtd. in Whisnant xviii).

Reality for Emma Bell Miles turned out to be both bicultural and difficult: even though Frank "embodied for her the authentic and concrete reality of mountain people," she was also in need of an outlet for her writing and painting (Whisnant xix). Indeed, Miles' writing and painting would become her family's source of income as Frank worked irregularly, suffered from poor health, and plunged the family into debt (xix). However, Miles continually embraced her mountain home and its people: "Chattanooga provided for her intellectually and financially; Walden's Ridge sustained her soul. Miles

lived out her forty years always an outsider and visitor in each, never fully happy, but happier than she would be exclusively in either place" (Brooks 161).[16] Emma Bell Miles' "juggled life" as a female writer from Appalachia in the nineteenth century allowed her to offer important cultural insights to the reader, particularly in relationship to women, through personal observation (Brooks 163). As Danny L. Miller aptly states, "...Miles was able to understand the subtleties and paradoxes in their lives, not the superficialities" (82). The unique qualities of the lives of mountain women that Miles become evident in *The Spirit of the Mountains.*

Miles' narrator in *The Spirit of the Mountains* (1905) shows glimpses of the homestead heroism of mountain women through a series of chapters that explore various aspects of mountain life. Although Miles' presents the uniqueness of mountain culture, she does not act as a judgmental interpreter like Murfree, or a promoter of anthropological stereotyping like Fox. Instead, Miles' narrator offers the reader a logical explanation of life in the mountains. (Englehardt 143). These explanations appear credible, since the narrator does not show separation between object and subject, joining

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[16] See Kay Baker Gaston's "Emma Bell Miles and the 'Fountain Square Conversations'" for a discussion of Miles's work as a writer for the society department of the *Chattanooga News* in 1914. Miles's time with the paper provides a good example of her divided life. She would spend the week in the city and return home with Frank to the mountains on the weekends. In the "Fountain Square Conversations" Miles personified the birds around the fountain near her boarding house, as well as the fireman atop the fountain. The birds debated the issues of the day and the fireman was their moderator. It is important also to note that Miles' "longing for the culture beyond the mountains stemmed from the perception that it was *different* (and therefore capable of serving different needs), *not that it was superior* in any absolute sense" (Whisnant xxviii, emphasis mine). According to Elizabeth S.D. Englehardt, "Miles self-identifi(ed) as a mountain woman, at one point writing that 'it is often hard for me to notice points of difference between our way of life and civilization, I am so used to the backwoods' (136).

mountaineers in their environment and, at times, referring to herself as a mountaineer using the pronoun "we" (138). Whether or not the narrator in *The Spirit of the Mountains* is Miles herself is debatable. The shifting perspective between the emphasis on women, on the environment, and on aspects of mountain life, causes critics to struggle with genre assignment. Some feel *The Spirit of the Mountains* is an autobiography, or a cultural study, while others find it to be a novel (Englehardt 141). Since it is the narrator's voice that holds the chapters together through various topics, and Miles does not clearly identify herself as the narrator, I will treat *The Spirit of the Mountains* as fiction. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Miles' bicultural experience "lent rare insight and subtlety to her analysis" (Whisnant xxvii). As a result, I will refer to the narrator as female.

The narrator's presentation of mountain women includes both generalities and specific character analysis, particularly in chapters two and three respectively: both provide glimpses of homestead heroism. In chapter two "Cabin Homes" the narrator describes appreciation for the mountainous environment, as well as homestead production. Riding with a grandmother, the narrator reports the woman's response to the landscape: "Now, ain't that finer than any picter you ever seed in your life? - and they call us pore mountaineers! We git more out o' life than anybody" (18). Clearly, the grandmother's idea of wealth is not determined by the materialism of the outside world, but rather through her connection to the environment. According to the narrator, "Only a superficial observer could fail to understand that the mountain people really love their wilderness – love it for its beauty, for its freedom" (17 – 18). Perhaps it is these same superficial observers who find mountain women to be dirty housekeepers and lacking

hygiene because they do not understand mountain life. Thus, the narrator provides a detailed description of women's production:

> When the mother of this household has to pick and dry wild fruits; wash the wool, card, spin and weave it; make soap, hominy, butter, lard and molasses; take care of the meat when the men have killed and cut it up – yes, and raise poultry, besides all the ordinary care of a household; when, moreover, it is a very fortunate wife, indeed who does not carry a considerable burden of duties properly *supposed to belong to masculine shoulders*, such as bringing wood and water, milking and raising garden – with all this, oh, dear! *How can she comb her hair every day?* (21, emphasis mine)

The narrator's presentation of women's homestead work in the mountains speaks to its value. The mother of a mountain household works both inside the home and outside with men, even overtaking masculine duties when necessary. The importance of her work for family subsistence leaves no time to worry about appearance, if indeed she would choose to worry about it.

More specifically, in chapter three "Grandmothers and Sons" the narrator spends time with Aunt Genevy Rogers who is one of the "old prophetesses" she has "learned to enjoy...almost more than any other" (37). The narrator describes her appreciation for older mountain women like Aunt Genevy: "The range of their experience is wonderful; they are, moreover, repositories of tribal lore – tradition and song, medical and religious learning. They are the nurses, the teachers of practical arts, the priestesses, and *their wisdom commands the respect of all*" (37, emphasis mine). It is through Aunt Genevy's

expertise that the narrator, as well as Mary Burns and Marilla, aunt Genevy's daughter-in-law, learn the practical art of setting a weaving pattern. As a teacher, Aunt Genevy passes her knowledge to the gathered community of women. In addition to instructing, Aunt Genevy does the "night work" of milking and cooking, and delivers Mary's baby when the time arises (50 & 60). Aunt Genevy's importance in mountain culture leads the narrator to describe her as "a Roman matron, mother to an emperor, which with the addition of a few lines deeply graven by suffering meekly borne, would pass for a portrait of Geneva Rogers" (46). The narrator also finds "something terrible" about Aunt Genevy, even though she is stately and respected. She has the "stern and awful patience of some grand, stubborn slave":

> At an age when the mothers of any but a wolf-race become lace-capped and felt-shod pets of the household, relegated to the safety of cushioned nooks and favorite rooms, she is yet able to toil almost as severely as ever. She takes wearisome journeys afoot, and is ready to do battle upon occasion to defend her own. *Her strength and endurance are beyond imagination to women of the sheltered life* (54, emphasis mine).

Long after her contemporaries in the outside world have retired, Aunt Genevy works with as much vivacity as possible, due to the value of her homestead labor. Her contribution to family subsistence simply cannot be easily dispensed with; she is a needed member of the community, even in old age, unlike the "pets" in non-mountainous areas who become household ornaments.

The homestead heroism present within the character of Aunt Genevy Rogers, or in the unspecified mountain mother whose work leaves her no time for grooming,

becomes even more evident in response to Mary Burns. A young mountain woman, Mary is ill-used by her husband. Though not a "drunkard" or "villain," Gideon Burns is "cruel to his wife beyond what is usual to mountain men" (43). Though Mary does not complain, "the sympathy of the neighbor women [is] with her, and the more experienced [hope] that the coming of the child [will] work a change" (43). As a community, the mountain women lend their support and experience to Mary. For example Aunt Genevy uses her sympathy as a means of instruction. She advises Mary: "Law, I know all about children, Mary, and work, too. Mine was never more'n two year apart. Don't you lose heart, Mary; there's better days a-comin' for ye whenever this is over" (42). As a "mountain matriarch" Aunt Genevy passes along her wisdom, as well as her practical arts, to the next generation of mountain women (Miller 82). After the birth of Mary's baby, the narrator observes "the old woman and the young; the one with her hardships and suffering like a lesson learned and mastered, the other with her eyes just open to its meaning" (64).

As a result of the labor of mountain women from one generation to the next, the narrator concludes in chapter three that "at twenty the mountain woman is old *in all that makes a woman old* – toil, sorrow, childbearing, loneliness, and pitiful want. She knows the weight not only of her own years; she has dwelt since childhood in the shadow of centuries gone" (64, emphasis mine). Made old, like all women, through her experiences, the mountain woman also finds a great meaning in her work that perhaps women outside the mountains do not. The mountain woman works in "a house with history" (64 – 65). She recognizes the fabric scraps from family dresses and she makes butter in a churn her grandfather made; she knows the stories of everything in the house, from roof beams to

bowls, including their tragedies, and these things "become her literature" (64 – 67). Consequently,

> in early childhood she grows into a dim consciousness of the vastness of human experience and the nobility of it. She learns to look upon the common human lot as a high calling. She gains the courage of the fatalist; the surety that nothing can happen which has not happened before; that, whatever she may be called upon to endure, she will yet know that others have undergone its like over and over again. Her lot is inevitably one of service and of suffering, and refines only as it is meekly and sweetly borne. For this reason *she is never quite commonplace*. To her mind nothing is trivial, all things being great with a meaning of divine purpose (66, emphasis mine).

Although the life's work of a mountain woman is not easy, it is of such value to her culture that she bears it heroically. She is aware of the importance of her place in a long line of mountain women and families who struggled and worked and believed. It is this awareness, according to the narrator, that separates women from men: the mountain woman's experience is deep; she preserves tradition and watches the sick, whereas the mountain man provides the "breadth of outlook" through fights, journeys, trades, and hunts (68 – 70). Ultimately, the man's "ambition leads him to make drain after drain on the strength of his wingless mate" (70). The woman is the stalwart of mountain culture and thus "her position means sacrifice, sacrifice, and ever sacrifice, for her man first, and then for her sons" (70). It is through this sacrifice, inherent in domestic production, that mountain women exhibit the qualities of homestead heroes. Perhaps, then, as Englehardt

suggests, mountain women are the spirit of the mountains (140): Their lives include "dignity, nobility, courage, suffering, service, meekness, endurance, patience and an awareness of the 'immanent supernatural' that brings [them] into close contact with the world around [them]. It is a life lived in harmony with the 'vastness of human experience' (Miller 87).

In the conclusion of *The Spirit of the Mountains* the narrator brings forth a profound concern that the way of life in the mountains, of which the "old prophetesses" are a dynamic part, is on the "thin edge of the wedge" (191). As tourism comes in, the old ways go out. Traditional music, fine manners, hospitality, homespuns, even moonshine, give way to cheap Sunday-school song books, store bought dresses, and barrel-house liquor. Dances become rowdy and the old religion passes by. The mountaineers, who know no servant class become "inferior" to newcomers and "fall into servility," much like Hannah Warren. Eventually, as a "day-laborer, with nothing better in store" the mountaineer can give his children "no heritage but the prospect of working by the day." Women, who might weave patterns like Aunt Genevy Rogers or piece quilt patterns, "brea(k) health and spirit over a thankless tub of suds" (191 – 195). The nobility of the way of life described throughout the narrator's chapters about the mountains is lost. In closing, the narrator calls "the mountaineers to ...awaken to [the] consciousness of themselves as a people," so that they might give to the nation great thinkers, writers, religious leaders, and statesmen (200). She insists that the mountaineers reach a potential far beyond national stereotypes (Whisnant xxxiii).

Even when treated as a fictional account of mountain life, *The Spirit of the Mountains* is a manifesto for the nobility and preservation of mountain culture,

particularly in reference to the roles of women (Englehardt 139). Perhaps Emma Bell's life between Walden's Ridge and Chattanooga provided her the impetus by which to defend her beloved mountains against the misconceptions projected onto mountain life by superficial observers like Fox and Murfree and the destruction brought on by the encroaching tourist industry. David Whisnant reports that at the opening of the twentieth century "Walden's Ridge was rapidly being turned into a haven of summer hotels and second homes for the wealthy who bought the land at bargain rates and hired the displaced mountain people as maids, janitors, caretakers, stable boys, and gardeners" (xxxi). As a witness to this change Emma Bell Miles took up a pen to "talk back" long before Dwight Billings, Gurney Norman, and Katherine Ledford. That her book was not widely read in her own time is not surprising. Since it is "one of the few books about Appalachia and its people which neither romanticizes nor condescends and which does not depend for its analysis upon the unconscious acceptance of middle-class, mainstream values," it does not turn mountaineers into oddities or reinforce us-versus-them thinking. (Whisnant xv). Thus, Miles' descriptions of mountain women and their work remained only glimpses of homestead heroism still largely unknown to readers of Appalachian fiction today.

That neither Miles nor Elliott attained Mary Noailles Murfree's level of success or longevity at the turn of the last century, speaks to both national literary tastes in the late nineteenth century and the strength of the myth of Appalachia.[17] It would be left up to later writers to turn the glimpses of homestead heroism in the writings of Mary Noailles Murfree, Sarah Barnwell Elliott, and Emma Bell Miles into models for a larger audience.

[17] However, Murfree is rarely recognized outside of Appalachian Studies today.

Not until the 1920s and 1930s would native Appalachians begin writing about the mountains on a significant level.[18] According to Danny Miller, native authors "wrote with a deeper understanding of the Appalachian culture and people than any writers had hitherto exhibited in fiction" (Miller 78). Their understanding, as I will show in chapter three, would more effectively begin subverting stereotypes firmly established in the late nineteenth century.

[18] I do not use the term "significant" to indicate that there were no native Appalachian writers producing exemplary literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Certainly, writers like Effie Waller Smith were producing pieces of writing that clearly display both strong female characters and an appreciation for Appalachia. The writings of these native authors, however, were largely unnoticed at the turn of the century. Contemporary scholarship, however, is now reclaiming some of these voices.

Chapter Three

Models of Homestead Heroism Fully Realized

The 1920s and 1930s marked a significant time period in the body of Appalachian literature: according to H.R. Stoneback, "a hitherto unacknowledged awakening, ... occurred, appropriately enough, at a tiny college at the Cumberland Gap on the Kentucky-Tennessee border" (qtd. in Miller 79). This renaissance, at Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tennessee, brought together aspiring writers, namely James Still and Jesse Stuart, among others, who also happened to be native Appalachians. Having been "born into the life they wr(ote) about," Still and Stuart were able to provide readers with images of Appalachia more significant than Murfree, Fox, Elliott, and Miles (Kohler qtd. in Miller 79). Although Sarah Barnwell Elliott and Emma Bell Miles were residents of Appalachia by choice, and thereby depicted important glimpses of homestead heroism, it was the work of native authors that would add the viewpoint important to reclaiming mountain literature from local color and pushing it in new directions (79). As exemplars of these new directions, in this chapter I will explore how images of mountain women in works by James Still and Mildred Haun provide models of homestead heroism that become fully realized in the contemporary works of writers Wilma Dykeman, Lee Smith, and Charles Frazier, all of whom are native Appalachians.[1]

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[1] It should be noted that James Still was born in the foothills of Appalachian Alabama, rather than the eastern Kentucky he writes about in *River of Earth.*

That the second "discovery" of Appalachia in the first half of the twentieth century was led by native writers, allows for a shift in depictions of mountaineers: although they often use the same materials as local colorists, they infuse those materials with "a sense of identity with a place and its people," rather than a separation between viewer and subject (Kohler qtd. in Miller 79). While it is true that Emma Bell Miles provided somewhat of an inside viewpoint, at times identifying with the residents of Walden's Ridge, and advocating the preservation of mountain life in *The Spirit of the Mountains*, her narrator is also an observer, often advocating life *for* the people rather than *with* the people. The native writers I will discuss here, however, create a sense of identity in fiction, often through first person narration, that provides a voice infused with the author's portrayal of mountain life. In other words, since both the author and narrator, or main character, are born into the Appalachian experience, his or her descriptions of mountain life become more valuable the reader than those offered by non-native residents.[2] As a result, the portrayal of mountain women becomes more fully realized as the value of their roles, particularly in reference to homestead production, is portrayed in relevance to Appalachian experience as created through the eyes of a native Appalachian. While mountain women may still have lives filled with cooking, childrearing, weaving, gardening, and service in these depictions, they also often become homestead heroes.

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[2] Danny Miller states "Many of the features of this world that were presented in previous literature are still found in works by native writers: the patriarchal society; the mountain woman's hard life of work, her many children and subservience to her husband; moonshining, feuding, and shiftlessness, for example. However, native writers perceived this world in a markedly different way. Their perceptions are 'truer,' more than one-dimensional, and provide a needed balance to the excesses of the writers who emphasized the worst aspects of mountain life and to the romanticization of the local colorists"(80).

The year 1940 provides a landmark for the second "discovery" of Appalachia and the writings of native Appalachian authors, due, in part, to the publication of James Still's *River of Earth,* just as 1884 marks the first "discovery" of Appalachian mountaineers as others in American consciousness.[3] It is at this point in the history of Appalachian literature that we begin to see a rejuvenation in the "stagnated hillfolk tradition," which, according to H.R. Stoneback had been "at a dead-end since the work of John Fox Jr., and remained so in the work of hundreds of 'picnic' regionalists and local colorists" (qtd. in Miller 80).[4] If we take "picnic" here to refer to writers whose writing about the region only offered glimpses of life in Appalachia or whose work was largely unrecognized for its depiction of mountain life in contrast to the efforts of local colorists, then we can see more clearly the shift from a body of literature marked by stereotyping to a regional literature embraced by native writers and thereby offered to a national audience as an alternative to myth. This does not mean, however, that native Appalachian literature was warmly or widely received on a national scale, particularly in the modern period.

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[3] Jesse Stuart also published a landmark novel, *Trees of Heaven*, in the same year. Stuart and Still are often compared due to similar life and career paths; however the volume of their literary work, its style, and its viewpoint is quite different. For a comparison of Stuart and Still see Danny L. Miller's *Wingless Flights: Appalachian Women in Fiction.* I have chosen to discuss Still rather than Stuart in this study due to an emphasis on the thoughts and actions of Alpha Baldridge in *River of Earth.* It is important, however, to note that Jesse Stuart also portrayed strong mountain women in his work. See, for instance, the poem "Martha Hylton Stuart" written for his mother. An expanded version of this study would likely include both Still and Stuart

[4] "Whatever the excesses of the authenticists of Lincoln Memorial, the awakening which occurred there could have had only a salutary effect...it did produce very real results, happily, in the work of Still and Stuart. Thus it is not too much to claim that, along with the publication of three hillfolk novels by three major authors in 1926, the awakening at Lincoln Memorial to native materials constituted a redirection and rejuvenation of the hillfolk tradition that might well be called a 'renascence' (Stoneback qtd. in Miller 80).

Regardless, its presence in the twentieth century provides constructive images of the Appalachian region as a locale with its own history and distinct culture, rather than simply a region imagined through nineteenth-century writers. This is particularly important in the depiction of women's homestead production as native writers depict women's roles as suggestive of Cohee society, perhaps in an effort to reclaim the lived experience overshadowed by local color writing; it is through these depictions that homestead heroism becomes most evident as models and fully realized examples. Although these contemporary works may involve different time periods, ranging from the height of the Cohee era to the rare family farm, and other issues pertinent to life in Appalachia, such as industrialization, coal mining, and the devastation caused by the Civil War, the value associated with women's homestead production in a subsistence environment remains constant.

In James Still's *River of Earth* (1940) we are presented with "Mother" Alpha Baldridge. Told from the viewpoint of her seven-year-old son, Alpha's story becomes one of industry and desire: she works continuously for her family's well-being, wishing to continue subsistence living while her husband chases elusive employment in coal mining. Indeed, the first time the young narrator describes his mother is through her work: "...Mother carried a fourth [child] balanced on one hip as she worked over the rusty stove in the shedroom..." (3). Alpha's desire to provide for her family, however, is overshadowed by her husband and his relatives. As Harl, Tibb, and Uncle Samp take from the family portions, Alpha becomes uneasy, eating just enough to provide milk for the baby and covertly feeding her children between meals. She asserts her voice to her husband: "I'd rather live in this smokehouse than stay down there with them" (7). Brack,

the narrator's father, however, does not share Alpha's concern or agree with her that the family needs to "live small": he is unwilling to turn his "kin" away despite the cost to his immediate family (8). Alpha's willingness to express her opinion to her husband, despite his refusal, reflects the importance of her homestead production. She works to make sure the family is provided for and when that well-being is threatened she cannot keep her concerns silent.

Brack's unwillingness to change his mind causes Alpha to take family matters into her own hands while he is away. She sets the family cabin on fire and stands among the scattered furnishings in the yard "calm and triumphant" (11). As a homestead hero, Alpha does what she must, despite her husband's wishes, to provide for her family's survival. Life in the smokehouse allows Alpha to "live small" and a new garden begins to flourish. The young narrator finds that "We believed that we fared well, and did not complain" (12). Faring well continues to denote Alpha's personal sacrifice. She grows lean, eating as little as possible, so that the family will not feel she is "taking more than her share" (13). Alpha's efforts, however, are continually undercut by her husband's generosity (he allows men from Blackjack to take their beans) and longing for the coal mines. Brack believes that "it won't be long" until the mines are open again. As a result, he finds there is 'No use stirring the top of the ground if you're going to dig your bread underside'(35) and admits 'I never tuck natural to growing things' (47). In the meantime, however, it is Alpha's desire for subsistence that keeps the family alive.

The continual struggle between Alpha and Brack regarding the family's livelihood reveals a tension between subsistence living and industrialization in the Kentucky mountains during the Depression of the early twentieth century. Brack's work

is erratic, forcing the family to move from camp to camp and unable to provide the means by which he might consistently care for basic family needs. Alpha's desire to farm and take care of the family through the land at least enables her to offer basic sustenance on a more regular basis. Thus, Alpha's desire to "set us down in a lone spot, a place certain and enduring, with room to swing arm and elbow, a garden-piece for fresh victuals, and a cow to furnish milk for the baby," provides a better means by which the family can survive (51). Alpha's ability to provide for her family through homesteading is most clearly revealed when the camps close yet again and Brack rents a farm for his family on Little Angus. The family works the cornfields, they raise chickens, and the garden produces more vegetables than they can preserve. Alpha's son reports:

> Tomatoes ripened faster than they could be canned. The old apple trees in the bottom were burdened. We peeled and sulphured three bushels of McIntoshes. Fall beans were strung and hung with peppers and onions on the porch. The cushaws were a wonder to see, bloated with yellow flesh. The crook-neck gourds on the lot fence grew too large for water dippers (170).

Left for an extended period of time outside of the coal camps, Alpha's desire to provide for her family through the land materializes: they have more than enough for survival. She tells Brack 'It's the nighest heaven I've been on this earth' (176). Nevertheless, Alpha does not become a fully realized homestead hero. She remains subject to her husband's will, even though she is able to assert her opinion, and moves into the coal camp when the mines reopen. As might be expected, Harl, Tibb, and Uncle Samp appear at the new Baldridge dinner table almost immediately.

Grandmother Middleton, Alpha's mother, however, provides a more well-rounded picture of homestead heroism. Since Still devotes the middle third of *River of Earth* to the young narrator's experience with his grandmother, she becomes an outstanding figure to the reader. Sent to provide company and help for the elderly woman, the narrator observes her abilities despite her seventy-eight years. She has already "patched two acres of corn" before his arrival (101). Although the planting plagues her with rheumatism, she goes back into the field with her "grapevine walking stick" and her young grandson to harvest the corn when help does not arrive in a timely fashion. Doctoring her rheumatism with herbs and tea, grandma goes out again to dig potatoes on her hands and knees. Even though the extent of this labor leaves her resting in bed, her knowledge of farming and prior ability in homesteading are quite clear.

As the narrator assumes much of the domestic work during the winter months, due to grandma's rheumatism, and Uncle Jolly arrives to help, grandma reveals her role in preserving tradition through storytelling. She tells her son and grandson about her homestead partnership with her deceased husband, and the birds that signified the birth of her first child (115 - 119). She shows her grandson her trunk of family keepsakes, telling how each one holds a memory, including the red coat she gives him to wear (120 – 125). She even relates the story of Brack and Alpha's courtship (126 – 131), as well as the legend of Walking John Gay and his visit to the Middleton home (139 – 141). Upon her recovery, grandma becomes a "traipsing fool" unwilling to give up her independence; she figures to "walk a few more miles" on her eighty-seven year old legs (138). Indeed, it is revealed at the end of the novel that the mischief caused to Aus Coggins' farm in retaliation for Boone's death is actually grandma's doing, rather than Uncle Jolly's.

Perhaps we can surmise here that if given the opportunity to more fully reflect her potential as a homestead hero, rather than be subjected to a life in the coal camps of eastern Kentucky, Alpha would become a wellspring of survival skill and tradition like her mother.

Much like Alpha Baldridge, Mary Dorthula White, the narrator in Mildred Haun's *The Hawk's Done Gone* (1940), provides a model of homestead heroism that is not fully realized. A granny woman by trade Mary Dorthula has seen "every youngon born in this district for nigh sixty years now." She has "tied the navel cords of all the saints and sinners who have seen their first daylight in Hoot Owl District" (7) This district, near Cocke County, Tennessee, provides Mary Dorthula with comfort. She states, "There's something restful about being fenced in by the hills up here at the end of the hollow. They make me feel safe from the wind and from everything else in the world..." (6). Although the mountains cannot keep the "antique hunters" away since her husband welcomes them, the mountains otherwise provide Mary Dorthula with a shelter in which she feels secure despite Ad's treatment. She finds that she is "naturalized to the place" and therefore does not get "lonesome'; she keeps company with "little chickens," "jay birds," "calico bushes," and "piedy colored leaves" (7). According to Carole Ganim, women's naturalization "is what the feminist perspective of Appalachian literature is all about." Throughout Appalachian fiction women either find themselves "at one or at odds with their place or home, because "A woman born in the closely-clustered hills of the Appalachians is surrounded, if not almost suffocated, by symbols of herself from birth" (258 - 259). These symbols of self, if considered in conjunction with women's homestead production, allow women to develop a deep respect for the mountains, often

viewing them as protection, sources of strength, and/or a means of obtaining sustenance. It is within Mary Dorthula's mountain haven that tales of signs, incest, murder, sickness, tainted love, and patriarchal control unfold.

Although it may appear difficult to find homestead heroism in a novel burdened with such audacious themes, the homestead hero in *The Hawk's Done Gone* is the narrator herself, Mary Dorthula White, rather than the women in the stories she tells. As a storyteller who is providing a link to folkways, as well as the past, Mary Dorthula passes to the reader shocking tales of fantastic realism from the Appalachian mountains. In the prologue she positions herself as an authority, both through her work as a granny woman and her opening words to the reader. Reflecting on the names in the family Bible, she begins with a story, the tale of Letitia Edes Mountain, relating its growth from a woman who "wanted, worse than a hungry dog wants a rabbit, to grow bigger than any mountain she ever saw" (5). Both the mountain and the Bible cause Mary Dorthula to recall the tales of her family (9).

Despite her old age, Mary Dorthula recognizes the value of her domestic work as a granny woman. She has been teaching Amy, her oldest daughter, the tradition of being a granny, but believes she will "have to go on for a while yet anyhow." She does not want to "think about not being anymore use," perhaps like Miles' Aunt Genevy who goes on working in contrast to the retirement of her city-dwelling contemporaries or Still's Grandma Middleton. Mary Dorthula continues, "It is *my place*, seems like, to doctor sick folks and bring babies into the world, and lay out the dead" (7, emphasis mine). Not only does Mary Dorthula White find refuge in her mountain home, but she also knows the importance of her position in reference to the community: her work is necessary for

survival. From the start, then, Mary Dorthula is a reliable storyteller, a woman who values the mountainous environment, whose work is vital to the mountain people, and who knows the stories of the community. Thus, as readers, we both learn about the mountain culture of Cocke County and experience an exercise in oral storytelling as Mary Dorthula's words speak directly to us through the page, her conversational language reminding us throughout the stories that we are her direct audience.

As the stories in *The Hawk's Done Gone* progress, we learn about Mary Dorthula's children and the circumstances surrounding their lives, and in many cases, their deaths. Through each tale she notes signs and superstitions and records her inability to act on her children's or her own behalf against her husband Ad. She admits "I've been like a checker on a checker board. I've just moved when pushed" (30). For example, in "The Pit of Death" Mary Dorthula sits "like a bump on a log," not thinking or batting an eye while Ad and Old Man Brock kill her first-born son Joe (24). After Joe's death, the men, Ad and his sons, "loaf all day and tell yarns" (31). Indeed, they are greatly non-existent in the stories except to cause trouble: Ad exploits his wife through adultery and thievery. He sells her prized possessions to "antique hunters" and spends what little money she earns through egg and butter production on liquor, and ultimately tears down her home. In addition to Ad's abuse of Mary Dorthula, Barshia forces Mary Dorthula and Amy to work on his flying horse under threat of abuse and Linus forces himself sexually upon his half-sister Effena. Although she is unable to stop the poor treatment brought upon herself and her daughters, Mary Dorthula does the best she can to provide for her family through homestead production: she doctors Bessie sickness with teas, lays out Tiny's corpse, prepares the family's food, spins and weaves, and cares for the livestock,

in addition to caring for the community as a granny woman. That Mary Dorthula is able to support her family, even the ungrateful members, despite the abuse she suffers, is certainly heroic; she does not achieve a level of agency during her lifetime through which to affect change, but she does use her voice to tell the stories. Mary Dorthula's eventual confrontation of Ad after her death, as told through her daughter Amy, forces him, at least, to "[go] back over his whole life, how he had treated Ma and all" (196). Ultimately, perhaps, Mary Dorthula's storytelling is a means of recognition for many unrecognized mountain women who struggle between work and abuse.

Although they do not effect change in their communities, Alpha Baldridge and Mary Dorthula White provide important models of homestead heroism. As models, these female characters provide acts of heroism through homestead labor, storytelling, and appreciation for the mountainous environment. Alpha and Mary Dorthula, though viable parts of the home community, whose labor provides for family subsistence, remain bound to their husband's desires. Therefore, in order to find fully realized examples of homestead heroism, in which mountain women's homestead production provides an avenue through which they may affect societal change outside the home and/or disprove stereotyping on a national scale, we must look at the contemporary works of native Appalachian authors.

Wilma Dykeman's *The Tall Woman* (1962), provides both the first of these contemporary examples and a link between the models of homestead heroism published in the first half of twentieth century, during the "renaissance" of Appalachian literature, and the contemporary models of homestead heroism that reclaim the value of women's production in a mountainous environment for a large national audience. In *The Tall*

Woman, the reader follows the life story of Lydia McQueen, a hardworking daughter, wife, and mother whose efforts bring a permanent school to Thickety Creek, North Carolina. It is clear from the large gathering of caretakers and well-wishers, and their comments regarding Lydia's affect on their lives during Lydia's losing battle with typhoid fever, that she is valued throughout the community (312 – 313). Lydia's ability to become an active agent for change in Thickety, however, is dependent first upon her homestead production as a mountain woman.

As the story opens we find Lydia McQueen in bed alone; she is a pregnant newlywed whose young husband has gone off to fight in the Civil War. Lying in bed and listening to the wind, Lydia recalls her transition from child to wife. She measures the potential of her new marriage through livestock: "...they might be a beginning couple, but they were beginners of *substance*...There, tied behind the wagon, was the beginning of their farm, the plenty and promise that they would make for themselves, Mark and Lydia, and their children" (20, emphasis mine). The cow, a wedding present from Mark, particularly signifies her role in subsistence as Mark tells her "She's all yours" (20). With a cow and the Virginia clock her mother passes on to her from her grandmother, Lydia finds herself surrounded with family history and future promise. Her new home *is her home* such that she will not stay with her mother and brother and sisters during the war. She states, 'I can't do anything else, Mama...I've got to stay where Mark fixed for me...I've got to tend our fields and our cow---' (24). Equally responsible with her husband for their prosperity, Lydia is committed to fulfilling both male and female roles while her husband is away.

It is no surprise that Lydia also takes over the responsibility for her mother's household when outliers plunder it. Rousted from her bed, Lydia finds her parents' livestock stolen, her brother and sisters frantic, and her mother unconsciously hanging from fencing as if in the stocks. Yet, Lydia must remain strong: "Outwardly she must remain calm. She was the oldest. She was a woman married now, steady and knowing. At least she must appear so to the little ones who had no one else on whom to lean" (31). Appearing strong also means restoring order. Lydia resolves that she must "bring her cow out here...feed the children and restore order and help her mother get well" (34). With the household thrust back into working order due to Lydia's efforts, the Moore family pushes through the end of the war, with the help of Aunt Tildy, herself a homestead hero, who knows the medicinal properties of roots and herbs, acts as a midwife, passes down family stories and superstitions and has noted skill in farming. Like Aunt Genevy Rogers, Aunt Tildy is an older woman who "needed to be needed, and used" (140).[5] Likewise, Mark, and likely many others, recognize Aunt Tildy's value. Though she angers him with her bossiness, he knows her "worth" (146). Lydia and Aunt Tildy working together creates a community of women who run the farm in the men's' absence in conjunction with Sarah Moore, Lydia's victimized mother, who they must nurse back to health.

It is after the war and the return of Lydia's husband Mark, her father Jesse Moore, and her brother Paul, however, that we see Lydia become a fully realized homestead hero

[5] Matilda MacIntosh, Aunt Tildy, is described as a young lady who "saw ahead to what the farm might be someday, when tree roots were finally burned and rotted out and the stump-pocked fields were clear." As a result, Tildy worked "shoulder to shoulder with her father." Her skill in farm work causes her father to describe her as 'the best man I got around the place' (40). Tildy is a formidable force on the farm.

who fulfills homestead duties, exhibits survival skills, shows a relationship to the mountainous landscape, and, in turn, effects societal change outside the home. Deeply scarred by the trauma of the Civil War, Mark McQueen establishes a home for his family, now including baby David, on top of a mountain outside Thickety Creek.[6] At first wondering if "a man wounded in spirit, and a woman and a baby [could] make their mark on this domain," Lydia helps Mark build their home when her father and brother are not available: "Lydia tried hard to help in their places. Her hands were torn and mashed and hardened by handling heavy rocks and rough logs" (83). Working outdoors beside her husband on their home, Lydia is already a partner in the family subsistence that will take place there, rather than just a domestic worker. She concludes "...it was her own. Hers and Mark's built by *their labor*" (86, emphasis mine). Quickly, the new McQueen home is filled with children, the direct result of Lydia's reproductive ability. Children, Lydia tells Dr. Hornsby, who should be in school. Lydia's desire to see her children "amount to something" through education foreshadows the voice Lydia will take out into the community based on her role as a homestead hero.

As life on the mountain becomes routine, Lydia settles into her homestead production. The narrator makes a distinction within her work as both "in the fields" and

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[6] Lydia notes the important work she must complete in giving birth to her first son while Mark is away at war. The narrator reveals to us Lydia's thoughts: "She had work to do, hard work. But it was something only she could do – she and the little body here within hers. Together they must bring forth life" (53). Lydia also recognizes Aunt Tildy's role in helping her give birth to David. "If Aunt Tildy had not been with them, Lydia knew she would have died, and the baby, too" (53). Lydia finds Mark's return to be a relief: "After the weary months of loneliness and responsibility, how sweet it would seem *to share* the burden with his broad shoulders, to follow his long, sure footsteps" (59, emphasis mine).

within the house." In the fields Lydia helps Mark in the fields "plant(ing) and hoe(ing), pick(ing) and harvest(ing), pil(ing) stones and dug out roots from acres newly cleared," while watching the children play on a blanket. Within the house, Lydia "work(s) from before-sun till after dark":

> The daily routine of making fire, fetching water, milking, cooking, sweeping, cleaning, sewing, caring for the babies, was augmented by other regular chores: churning, washing, and boiling clothes in the big black kettle in the yard, ironing, making soap from ashes collected in the hopper Mark had built for her at one end of the house – and caring for baby chickens, ducks, pig, kitten, or pet squirrel someone had given her or she had found (101).

Clearly, the family farm cannot subsist without Lydia's homestead production. She tends to both work in the field alongside her husband and work within and around the cabin in her daily routines. As a result of her labors, the narrator describes her role on the homestead as a partnership with Mark, much like the building of the house: "*They* were young and strong, *they* drove *their bodies* to labor to the limit of endurance..." (102, emphasis mine).[7]

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[7] The hard physical labor she and Mark drive themselves through becomes a comfort to Lydia when David's poor mental capacity is revealed. "Work went on. Sometimes it seemed to Lydia that work was the only certainty, the only lasting truth in a human world of fitful change. Work and mountains remained" (119). Lydia drives herself to fatigue, helping Mark with the haying and stacking of fodder in an attempt to cure her inner chill (119 – 120). For both Lydia herself and her eventual agency within the home and mountain communities, work itself is indispensable; it provides constancy in an often unpredictable mountain setting.

Although Lydia and Mark each fulfill gender-based roles, they both work outdoors, an ungendered space, in order to make subsistence farming possible.

A woman whose work on the homestead brings her partnership with her husband, Lydia also appreciates her mountain environment. As a child, Lydia had explored the woods with her brother Robert (78); as a married woman, however, Lydia finds deep solace born of working in her mountain home.

> ...Lydia had found in this rocky crag a deep source of comfort and inspiration. Its effect on her was something she could not explain and therefore she had kept it secret to herself...There, standing with its hard firmness beneath her feet, her head and face bared to the wind that swept up from the deep valley below and broke in torrents against this ledge, she regained an inner quiet, a stillness she could not name or identify. It was essential to her existence, however – had been even when she was a child – as water or food itself (207).

Although she works the land for her family's prosperity, Lydia also appreciates the value of the mountainous environment for its own beauty and potential: retreating to the wilderness allows Lydia to recharge her spirits and continue her work. She finds that she is tied to the place, confessing to Mark 'I don't rightly know could I ever leave these mountains' (146). Mark's trip to the West, then, causes Lydia concern for his post-war mental state rather than fear of being left along to tend the farm. She tells Mark that she can 'do whatever has to be done' while he is away (127), Although she wonders how the corn will be planted on time and the work is difficult to complete on her own, she presses

on unable to remain downhearted because "it [is] June." The promise of spring in the mountains allows Lydia to feel

> as small as an insect curled in the leaf at her foot, knowing that all of this went forward without knowledge of her. And yet she felt large, too, as great and grand as the green peak of the mountain looming above her because she was part of it all. She was here and now and alive!...Come what would, she would remember that spring, too, would always come again (151).

Lydia draws comfort from being engaged with the mountain environment. She is both insignificant in the scheme of it all as a human surrounded by a mountain and formidable as a subsistence farmer who can control the fields. Although the mountains can be harsh, the environment becomes new in the spring and revives her spirit to work. Lydia even marvels at her own growth as a "mountain mother" (137) when she stalks the bear who is killing her pigs. "A year ago you couldn't a-told me I'd go out in the black-dark and try to kill me a bear," she giggled softly (153). Driven to protect her family's livelihood despite Mark's absence, Lydia does what must be done, once again fulfilling male and female homestead roles when necessary.

Even though Lydia provides the majority of the homestead labor while Mark is away, she is once again working within a community of women since Aunt Tildy has come to stay with her and the children. Tildy shows Lydia ways to improve her domestic work, such as carding and weaving, new dyes, and old medicinal remedies (161). Aunt Tildy also "dip(s) into her fund of stories and t(ells) of spirits from another world or people from her memory world." Thus, "Family history repeat(s) itself..." as Lydia

remembers the nights at her father's home after she and Tildy's first effort to run a farm together in the absence of men (161). It is also largely Aunt Tildy's knowledge of natural plants that helps Lydia to get the farm through the winter by selling herbs from the mountain to a dealer in the county seat. Tildy becomes a natural scholar, teaching Lydia and the children "her knowledge of all that lived and grew there." To Lydia "she's as much a scholar here...as every Papa was with his books" (170). Tildy's knowledge allows Lydia to buy a wagonload of hay for the winter. As a result of Lydia and Tildy's combined efforts, and some plowing by a neighbor, "everything flourished" (171). Lydia finds herself confident about the harsh season to come: "With hay in the barn, corn in the crib, meat in the smokehouse, and the knowledge of how she could earn a little cash along, Lydia met the winter with *more satisfaction* than she had known in a long while" (175, emphasis mine). Lydia's success as a homestead hero without her husband causes her to see the ability of her own work to provide for her family.

Mark's return from the West, however, removes the awe from Lydia's evaluation of her abilities, turning her feeling toward one of knowing thankfulness. Caring for her now six children, garden, and home "everyday [is] filled to overflowing with demands on her attention and patience and stout muscles." The responsibility leaves Lydia "thank(ing) God that she was strong" and resolving that she must "stay strong for a long time for her children" (204). Lydia understands her value as a homestead hero; the livelihood of her family is greatly dependent upon her. Likewise, Lydia enjoys the results of a hard day's work completed within the mountains: "She enjoyed working out of doors and seeing clearly the results of her labor" (219). She feels satisfied to do the wash with the blue jays screaming and the doves calling from the pasture. Thus, Lydia's

work and environment are united to bring her a sense of fulfillment as a strong mountain woman.

In the meantime between her homestead duties, Lydia becomes a midwife, first bringing her illegitimate nephew into the world and then many others through the knowledge and medicines she acquires through Aunt Tildy. As a result, Lydia not only becomes heroic in her homestead production, but she also becomes indispensable to the community, much like Mary Dorthula White, as a granny woman after Dr. Hornsby's suicide. In addition to this capacity, Lydia becomes instrumental in bringing a school into Thickety, along with her father and the money Dr. Hornsby had left to the "wellsprings" of life within her (200). Her importance in this task is clearly evident when Mark cannot deny her a role in investigating the fire that destroys the building. Although Mark at first believes that questioning the Bledsoes is not "woman's business," he determines that he cannot keep Lydia from accompanying him. She is his partner, his equal in homestead production and through her work has achieved a voice in the community as a midwife and founder of the school: she has a right to know what has occurred.

The true guilty party, Hamilton Nelson, however, cannot be brought to justice since he controls the jobs of many community members and has a strong hold on county officials. Lydia and Mark try to work through the county in order to rebuild the school, but their efforts are unrealized until a church revival brings about a confession of haunting proportions: Gentry Caldwell, the preacher, directed the outliers to Lydia's parents farm near the close of the war. Again Lydia asserts her autonomy to be admitted to the group of men confronting Gentry. When Mark speaks of the occasion as "men's

affairs" Lydia retorts 'I'm the only *one of you* was here that night' (284, emphasis mine). Thus, Lydia recognizes, as does Mark, her capability to fulfill a man's role when necessary as a homestead hero. She had to perform like a man that night to protect her family from further harm. As the party, including Lydia, her father and brother, and Mark ride to confront Caldwell, each is described as locked in "*his* own memory and thought" (284). Lydia is cast like one of the men, equally endowed with the ability to bring about justice. Indeed, it is Lydia who provides the voice of reason that brings their confrontation to a peaceful end; she describes the happenings of their lives as a way to "help [them] find a way to live together, whether by law or knowledge or instinct or the love of God" (290). Ultimately, it is Lydia McQueen who confronts Hamilton Nelson for his part in the raid as the buyer and seller of the stolen livestock from her parents' property. She pushes Ham to provide support from county officials, as well as proper land, so that a permanent school can be brought to the community. A symbol of achievement both for the community of Thickety and women's agency, the school stands as a visible reminder of Lydia McQueen's role as a homestead hero.

Like Lydia McQueen, Ivy Rowe in Lee Smith's *Fair and Tender Ladies* (1988) effects change in her community. Instead of bringing a school into her community, she fights to keep coal miners out. Told in epistolary form, Ivy's first hand accounting of her life as a mountain girl, woman, and grandmother becomes an exercise in storytelling, as in *The Hawk's Done Gone.* Ivy records for the reader a lifetime of mountain experiences and through her personal tales, as she writes to friends and family members, both living and dead, reveals herself to be a homestead hero of contemporary proportions: Ivy loves her mountain home as a child, yet seeks a life beyond it only to return to Sugar Fork to

find fulfillment. Since Ivy's journey through mountain womanhood ends in the 1970s and begins with her retelling of her parents' story in 1886, we become privy to experiences of both life and work in the mountains and the effects of industrialization upon this life and work, as in Still's *River of Earth*; as Ivy charts her course through the stages of life amidst rapid change in the mountains, we come to understand the immense value of homestead heroes, as well as the effect of modernization on their presence.

As a child in Sugar Fork, Ivy Rowe writes to a "pen friend," Hanneke, telling her of Blue Star Mountain. Ivy begins her description with the story of her parents and her mother's flight from Rich Valley, where she had been well off, to Sugar Fork with her father. She imagines that her mother "saw Sugar Fork sparkle in the sun like a ladys dimond necklace." Ivy's romantic interpretation of her parents' elopement leads her to find that her mountain home is "the prettest place in the world" (13). Amidst this beauty, Ivy tells of her role in subsistence as a young girl:

> We grow nearabout all we can eat, and mostly the corn wich will work you to death. So I cant go to school sometimes in the spring when we plant it or later on you have to get out there and hoe it to beat the band...And we grow cabbages and sweet taters and white taters both and shucky beans...But we raise what we need, we dont go to the store for nothing but coffee and shoes and nails and to get the mail (16).

Ivy works alongside her parents, specifically her mother since her father is bedridden, and other brothers and sisters to provide for family survival. She reports that "Victor runs the farm, and Momma, the bestest they can, and I will get up in the morning before full ligt and milk Bessie, and Beulah she will start in cooking and Ethel will dress the

youguns and Silvaney looks for eggs" (19). Even after this work is completed, however, Ivy must still strain the milk for the churn or go out to hoe the corn. She concludes that there is "always something to do on a farm" (19). Even though she is constantly working, and sharing with her brother and sisters, Ivy Rowe's connection to the Sugar Fork of Blue Star Mountain allows her to feel like the "onliest person" who had every looked upon the world. From her vantage point on the mountain she observes the hills and trees, and the mountain itself. The mountain home she shares with her family is hers alone; she states, "It belonged to me" (26). Thus, Ivy does not measure her childhood by what she does not have, but rather through her sense of place and belonging.

Ivy's appreciation for her mountain home is greatly influenced by her dying father. She recalls his belief that "Farming is pretty work" and his reminder to stop and taste the spring (42). Indeed, when she must leave the mountain due to her mother's failed determination to run the farm for herself after her father's death, she writes to him: "I feel we have come to the end of all things. We are picking up and moving on, Momma says we have got to. I gess she is rigt but it pains me so, *for all I have loved is here*....But Daddy I don't know as I will like it ther. May be I am like you, and need the pure high air, and a mountain to lay my eyes ainst" (81). Moving from the Sugar Fork of Blue Star Mountain to the town of Majestic forces young Ivy Rowe to leave her sense of fulfillment through the mountains. Not only has she assigned great value to her mountain home, and worked heartily to maintain her parents' homestead, but she has also enjoyed the delights of mountain childhood through chestnut gathering, berry picking (where she receives her first kiss from Oakley Fox), storytelling and the influence of her great aunt, Granny Rowe. Quite literally, everything she loves is associated with Blue Star Mountain.

However, Ivy's love for Sugar Fork as a child wavers as she grows into a young, independent woman in Majestic. Living in Geneva Hunt's boarding house allows Ivy to maintain material possessions of her own for the first time: she has her own room with a bed, table, chest of drawers, and a rug, all of which she takes time to list in a letter to Silvaney. Although Ivy now looks upon Majestic as "mine," her sense of ownership is tied to material possessions, rather than homestead labor and mountain environment (87 – 88). As a result, Ivy's daily work also changes: she becomes a server in the boarding house, somewhat like Hannah Warren in Sewanee. Even though she is not necessarily treated as a servant, Ivy waits upon the boarders and cleans up after them, rather than directly contributing to family farm labor. For Ivy, this new role is initially freeing: "when it is done I can go into the kitchen and hang up my apron and come and go as I please for the rest of the day, for ther is so many people coming and going in a bordinghouse that a girl can slip away to come and go all over town, and see what there is to see!" (91). Thus, we see Ivy embracing the chance to go to a new school, wishing to go along with the loggers to Kentucky, encouraging her mother's sale of mineral rights, and becoming involved with Lonnie Rash while staunchly refusing to marry him (91 – 115). Eventually, Ivy describes herself as "a town girl, a smart girl, and almost a lady" (105). Her relatives from the mountain now appear peculiar: "here was Granny smoking her pipe and wearing her old mans hat, and Tenessee behind her giggling and clutching that filthy dirty crazy bead purse. I drew back. For all of a sudden they seemed to me strange people out of another time, I could not breth" (107). Although Ivy feels ashamed for her reaction, and recognizes the mountain as indicative of her family, she agrees to go with Miss Torrington to Boston, the "world beyond this town" to which she "would love

to go" (101). Ivy has become enamored with something beyond, outside of Virginia. No longer tied to the mountains through labor, she can pursue something new.

Ivy's pregnancy, however, curtails her chance to leave Majestic. Instead, Ivy begins her return to Sugar Fork as a guest in her sister Beulah's home in the company town of the Diamond Mining Company on Diamond Mountain. She finds herself caught between the two phases of her life: "I will be glad to get back to the mountains myself even if it is not Sugar Fork. I have grown so sad here. But now, although I am glad to go, I am sad to leave. I am just a mess, I reckon" (129). Ivy quickly becomes enamored with Diamond; she is amazed by the houses on Company Hill, the easy access of products in the company store: "you dont have to put in a garden, you can get what you want in a can from the store" (139). With life "so orderly and everything done for you," Ivy believes that Diamond is "paradise" (139). The façade of paradise, however, does not last. Now a single mother, who embraces her status as a "ruint" woman, Ivy works as a store clerk, seeing first hand that "some of them owe so much to the store it looks like they will never pay it off." In fact, "it is a far cry from Paradise":

> Now that they are laying men off left and right, and working part weeks, and taking off shifts, and people don't know what to do with themselves. They have given up their land, those hardscrabble places we all came from, and they have forgot how to garden anyway, or put up food, or trade for goods, or anything about how they used to live. So they have got nothing now (159).

Unlike Beulah, who "hates Sugar Fork and all the old ways," Ivy recognizes the value of her childhood and the skills of subsistence farming in contrast to the difficult lives of the

mining families she witnesses in the store (134). She finds "it is no good to raise kids here...they don't know no better kind of life" – the kind of life she had on Blue Star Mountain (159). Ivy relates the poor upbringing of children in the coal town directly to women's homestead labor: "their mamas don't know any better themselves, who never see their men except to send them off in the pitch black morning to the mine, and try to get the coal dust out of the house and keep up with the kids all day long, this kind of a life will make you crazy" (160). As a result of coal town life, it is not a surprise to Ivy that a great number of wives drink and marriages dissolve, since "every man [is] for himself and all "neighborness is gone"(160). Many live in fear of the accident whistle and turn to religion for comfort. Indeed, it is a mining accident that sends Ivy, with new husband Oakely, back to Sugar Fork and a life as a homestead hero, rather than as a company store clerk or a coal miner's wife.

Back in her childhood home on Sugar Fork, Ivy is "back where I have longed to be, where I belong," even though she "work(s) her fingers to the bone" (182). Almost the "happiest [she] ha(s) ever been," she lives "hand to mouth," but happily with Oakley, especially in the spring. Like her father before her, Ivy enjoys the beauty of her surroundings. She describes her home to Beulah: "The apple trees behind the house were like a rolling sea of sweet pink clouds. The rosybush by the front porch steps is still in bloom, and the lilac by the back door never had so many flowers. It is beautiful up here" (184). Back at home on the mountain, Ivy and Oakley create a lifestyle much different from what they might have had in the coal town. They plow the field, fix up the house, plant potatoes in the dark of the moon, and sleep under her mother's crazy quilt. As welcoming as the change is, Ivy soon finds herself overrun with homestead production;

she is "so tired" from "hard work and babies." She feels herself go from a young lady to an old woman "with no inbetween" as she becomes "caught up ...in a great soft darkness, a blackness so deep and so soft that you can fall in there and get comfortable and never know you are falling in at all..."(194 - 195). Though she has returned home, and still finds Blue Star Mountain beautiful, Ivy has lost the connection to the mountain she held as a child, due to the difficulty of her work. Rather than believing that the mountain is hers, Ivy notes that "Oakley gets a deal of pleasure from this land, moreso than me, for when his work is done of an evening then it is done, for he don't have to mend the clothes or can the corn or feed the baby" (201). Ivy's deep experience of a woman's role in homesteading without a deep connection to the land, from which she may draw strength as Lydia McQueen does, leaves her depressed.

In her depression, Ivy's memories become like statues: Granny Rowe teaching her to find and boil bitters; taking Joli to the old Cline Sisters' place and passing down family stories. Ivy becomes so disenchanted with the mountains and farming that her ability to "remember everything" (197) appears burdensome and she wishes to "reach out and rip [the mountains] all away" (213). However, Ivy's belief that "this too will pass" comes to her like an "electric shock." She comes "tingling" back to life through Honey Breeding (210). Although their rendezvous on top of the mountain prompts Ivy to reconnect with her mountain home, it is really in spite of him that her transformation takes place. She considers "It's like he is me, some way, or I am him" (218). As representative of the missing natural part of Ivy, Honey leads her back to a sense of wholeness in which her homestead production and appreciation for the mountains can coincide to bring her fulfillment. As she climbs the mountain with Honey, Ivy recalls

childhood memories and drops years. She "fe(els) again like [she] had as a girl, light-headed, light-footed, running all over town" (224). At the top Ivy looks out for miles, looking over Bethel Mountain and enjoying the "famous endless wind," once again resting her eyes against the mountain (226). After her love-making and storytelling with Honey, Ivy suddenly realizes "I could of climbed up here by myself, anytime! But I had not" (233). Ivy did not necessarily need Honey Breeding to understand her connection to the mountains; she needed only to seek it for herself (Ogle ASAC). If Honey is representative of the lost part of Ivy's self, the aspect of her overshadowed by homestead production, then her interaction with him signifies her return to an appreciation for Blue Star Mountain.

Now whole, Ivy becomes "glad I was me" and recalls the gourds of seeds in the cabin attic reaching back to her mother's and Granny Rowe's heritage as homestead heroes (237). Aware of her place, both through her location and her labor, Ivy tries again to provide for her family. Although it is "winter in [her] heart" for a time she has the "*best honey yet*" around the dinner table with her husband and children in the cabin on Sugar Fork (244 – 249, emphasis mine). On Martha's wedding day Ivy finally determines "A person cannot afford to forget who they are or where they came from, or so I think, even when the remembering brings pain" (265). Through the pain of forgetting and remembering Ivy becomes a proud "old mountain woman" (279), who stays on the mountain until her death, taking in troubled grandchildren and passing on bits of information to Joli: Ivy finds she "need(s) to be up here on this mountain" (301).

Ivy's willingness to reconcile her homestead production with Blue Star Mountain ultimately leads her to fight those who seek to destroy her way of life, so that it can be

preserved for her grandson David. Watching the encroaching industrialization of logging and coal, Ivy concludes "We are like a kingdom unto our own selves. Everybody has took everything out of here now – first the trees, then the coal, then the children. We have been robbed and left for dead" (295). Unwilling to give way to "progress" without a fight, Ivy determines that she "ha(s) things to think on, and letters to write (303). Not only does Ivy write letters to the Peabody Coal Company that is flooding her creek, she becomes a crusader, drawing press attention to the situation through her attempts to stop the bulldozing. Ivy Rowe's willingness to assert her voice to stop the destruction, much like Lydia McQueen's ability to rebuild the school, arises out of her role as a homestead hero whose labor is connected to her mountain home.

Although the examples of Lydia McQueen and Ivy Rowe offer more fully realized examples of homestead heroism than Alpha Baldridge and Mary Dorthula White, they do not confront stereotyping on a national level. In other words, it is likely that the works of Wilma Dykeman and Lee Smith have yet to reach a large national audience. However, Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* (1997), the most recent fictional work by a native Appalachian author included in this study, provides a vital step in exposing homestead heroism as an important means of evaluation in Appalachian and perhaps national fiction. Recognized as a National Book Award winner, a national bestseller, and adapted for the screen, *Cold Mountain* has provided an avenue through which we can search out the roots of strong mountain women, as particularly evidenced through their homestead production, as I have done in this study. Although the film, as with so many adaptations, is not "true" to the novel and certainly highlights the love story between Ada and Inman for commercial profit, it does nevertheless present the unique relationship

between Ada and Ruby that fosters the homestead heroism necessary to subsist through the Civil War. The film is not primarily my focus here, except to offer the pairing between Appalachian literature and popular media as important to confronting stereotyping as it particularly relates to the presentation of mountain women.

Although Ruby and Ada do not necessarily effect change in their North Carolina community, Frazier's portrayal of heroism through their characters clearly confronts the stereotyping of mountain women on a scale large enough to directly combat stereotypes Murfree and Fox established in the late nineteenth century and popular media presentations, such as the *Dukes of Hazzard* derived from those types. The way in which Ada and Ruby work together as a community of women offers us a clear presentation of homestead heroism and the way in which it contrasts to ideal womanhood in the nineteenth century.

Upon his return to Cold Mountain Inman immediately notices something different about Ada. He sees her "fine face atop some strange trousered figure, like a mannish boy" (403). Ada's attire, including trousers, a man's hat, and a shotgun, is a far cry from her previous look in fine dresses and fashionable hairstyles. Although Ada's appearance near the end of the novel is the outward manifestation of a more vital inner change, it is an important marker of her transformation from an angel in the house to an angel on the mountain. Her skin has become firmer and darker from working in the sun; she has gained muscle and her hands are rough. These physical characteristics are visible markers that Ada has gained abilities other than playing the piano, reading, and drawing: indeed, she kills a turkey for the first time just before Inman's arrival – her first time both shooting a gun and hunting wild game. Since Inman's departure Ada has become a

homestead hero. With Ruby's help she has learned the tasks necessary for homestead production (both male and female), due to the absence of men during the war, as well as gained an appreciation for her mountain home at Black Cove. Ada's new perspective through these experiences leads her to agree with Ruby's feelings about Inman.

> It's that we can do without him. You might think we can't, but we can. We're just starting. I've got a vision in my mind of how the cove needs to be. And I know what needs doing to get there. The crops and animals. Land and buildings. It will take a long time. But I know how to get there. War or peace, there's not a thing we can't do ourselves. You don't need him (409 – 410).

Ada, who early in the novel finds herself hungry, dirty, and wounded from a rooster attack, responds with "I know *I don't need him*...But I think I want him" (410, emphasis mine). The movement from needing to wanting clearly shows the difference in Ada's character, as well as the importance of her partnership with Ruby. It is Ruby's influence that makes Ada's autonomy possible and Ada's landownership and lack of survival skill that allows Ruby to share her heroism. As a community of women, Ruby and Ada have the ability to subsist without the work of men if they so choose.

The partnership between Ada and Ruby provides a remarkable example of homestead heroism as we witness Ada's alteration from a southern belle to a hardy mountain woman. After her father's death Ada comes to realize the inadequacy of her preparation for "the demands of an exposed life," as she sits within a boxwood scrounging for an egg (30). Raised near the apex of Charleston society, Ada has been "educated to the point considered wise for females," to become a suitable companion for

her minister father. Of her skills, the narrator offers the following: "A fair command of French and Latin. A hint of Greek. A passable hand at fine needlework. A competency at the piano, though no brilliance. The ability to render landscape and still life with accuracy in either pencil or watercolor. And she was well read" (30). In addition to her aptitude in language and art, Ada has been at the height of fashion, so much so that the mountaineers had initially ridiculed her (77 – 78). Ada's skills for navigating Charleston society certainly do not provide her with the means necessary to run a farm. Although she has been living in Black Cove for sometime before the beginning of the war and her father's death, she has not engaged in subsistence. Monroe "never intended to be self-sufficient" (60), running the farm "rather as an idea than a livelihood" (31). As a result, Ada has lived in the mountains with hired help, purchased goods, and brought in sheep "for the atmosphere" (32). Subsequently, she is ill-prepared to survive on the farm alone; she looms about the Swangers' home hoping for a dinner invitation, cannot fill her craving for chicken and dumplings and peach pie, or tend to her neglected fields. Likewise, she has not felt particularly connected to her mountain home. Arriving in an "odd" country with strange vegetation, poor roads, and people who lived by "their own light," Ada finds that "Liking this clouded, humped land...was an altogether more difficult and subtler thing than appreciating the calm voice of Charleston..." (35). Utterly helpless in skill and mindset, Ada envisions her future "as an old woman, awash in solitude and the feeling of diminishing capabilities" (41). Fortunately, her prediction does not materialize due to Ruby's influence.

Ruby arrives at Black Cove as an experienced homestead hero. Growing up with an uninvolved father, Ruby has had to fend for herself in the mountains for most of her

life. Her ramblings and meager provisions have forced her to learn survival skills. When Ada admits her envy of Ruby's knowledge of "how the world runs," Ruby replies "A lot of it was grandmother knowledge, got from wandering around the settlement talking to any old woman who would talk back, watching them work and asking questions...It was mostly a matter of being attentive" (138). Ruby has learned a great deal from women in the community, as well as from her own observation. As a result, she brings both the knowledge of a community of women and the mountains themselves into her partnership with Ada. In particular, Ruby recounts her experience of being trapped in the woods as a four year old: a voice in the dark comforts her. The narrator states: "It seemed some tender force of landscape or sky, an animal sprite, a guardian that took her under its wing and concerned itself with her well-being from that moment on" (107). Ruby is directly comforted by her surroundings – the Blue Ridge Mountains. Thus, when she comes to Ada's aid, she is both skilled in homestead production and appreciative of her surroundings. She is a striking opposite to the society-bred Ada. She has much to teach Ada, even from their initial meeting. Ruby proclaims herself "as capable of any and all farm tasks" and therefore as good as any "man-hand" Ada might think she needs (67). Ruby is capable of both male and female labor: she can "plow all day," and cook the rooster she kills for its attack on Ada (67 – 68). Ruby and Ada strike a deal in which they both empty their "own slops" (68). Both have been motherless children and determined to survive in their own ways: Ruby learned to homestead, Ada refused marriage proposals.

As partners in subsistence, Ruby and Ada are described through the homestead labor necessary on the farm. Ruby first leads Ada through an inventory. Ada's notebook,

usually preserved for "her bits of poetry, her sentiments on life and large issues of the day" is instead filled with tasks, such as "*Lay out a garden for cool season crops...*" (92 – 93). According to Ada's estimations Ruby "never seem(s) to stop." (93). Before dawn Ruby feds the horse, milks the cow, and makes breakfast, requiring that Ada join her in the early morning (103). Ruby's requirements of Ada are "composed mainly of verbs, all of them tiring. Plow, plant, how, cut, can, feed, kill" (104). Ruby acquaints Ada with subsistence: "...all the actual facts and processes connected with food and clothing and shelter were unpleasantly concrete, falling immediately and directly to hand and every one of them calling for exertion" (104). Although Ada has difficulty assimilating to physical labor, she believes that "Ruby would not let her fail" (105). Eventually, the narrator's descriptions of their work become signs of growing equality. "Ada and Ruby hoed and pulled weeds among the rows of young cabbages and turnips, collards and onions...Some weeks earlier they had prepared the garden carefully, plowing and sweetening the dirt...Ruby driving the horse while Ada rode the drag to add weight" (133). In addition to working the farm together, Ruby and Ada engage in storytelling. During moments of rest Ada and Ruby sit on the porch while Ada reads. "Books and their contents were a great novelty to Ruby, and so Ada had reckoned that the place to begin was near the beginning....They usually covered fifteen or twenty pages of an evening...Ada would close the book and solicit stories from Ruby..." (105). Thus, the two women form a partnership, each enhancing the other's role as a homestead hero through storytelling.

Eventually, Ada begins to feel that her knowledge of subsistence is solidifying: "Ada did not yet have those answers, but she could felt them coming, and Ruby was her

principal text" (137). Ruby's instruction of Ada is not only in farm labor, but also in appreciating Cold Mountain itself. She knows the names of animals and vegetables, as well as the characteristics of their lives. Down to salamanders and ragweed, Ruby is acquainted with the workings of the flora and fauna of the mountain; certainly this intimate knowledge helps her to doctor Stobrod with herbs after his encounter with the home guard. According to the narrator, Ruby sees "Each life with a story behind it. Every little gesture nature made to suggest a mind making its life as its own..." (137). Included in the life cycle of nature on the mountain is the livelihood of Ruby and Ada: as a homestead hero Ruby is able to make a life for herself and pass that life on to Ada. As Ada learns to homestead she also gains a deep appreciation for Cold Mountain. Staring lethargically at the flowers and insects within the mountainous landscape she realizes that "On such a day as this, despite the looming war and all the work she knew the cove required of her, she could not see how she could improve her world. It seemed so fine she doubted it could be done" (139). Not only is her existence "fine," but the mountains are no longer a "token," once seeming "strange" to both her and Monroe. Indeed, as she looks down from her porch after Ruby's influence she sees "all the life there is" (144). This new life for Ada, one of homestead production in the mountains, rather than society in Charleston, brings her resolve. "Waldo bawled at the gate, impatient, needing – as so much did in the cove – the *things Ada was learning to do*, so she took her hands from the ground and stood" (146, emphasis mine). Symbolically, Ada stands as a new woman: a homestead hero. Ada and Ruby's partnership continues to be successful; as readers we can surmise that they will subsist sufficiently throughout the war's duration whether or

not Inman returns. As a result, Inman's death is perhaps more acceptable to the reader, since it is clear that Ada will be able to care for herself.

Although the partnership between Ada and Ruby is central to the novel, other potential homestead heroes are also apparent. Ruby names Sally Swanger as one of the women from whom she gained her homestead knowledge (138). Ada notices the fecundity of the Swanger home when she visits in the hope of being offered a meal: "The house smelled of dried herbs and strings of peppers that hung in rows down the long central hall, ready to spice the various relishes and sauces and pickles and chutneys Sally was famous for making" (50). Not only is Sally skilled in her domestic production, but she also appears to enjoy a solid partnership with her husband. While breaking beans "Esco and Sally worked together comfortably, hands sometimes touching as they simultaneously reached into the bean basket" (44). In addition to Sally, the goat woman who provides for Inman's needs could be considered a near homestead hero. Living alone, she subsists on what she can hunt and gather in the mountains, goats, and a bit of money made from selling pamphlets. Described as a "crone" by Inman, the goat woman is much different from the stereotyped versions of old mountain women in Murfree's tales. She is independent, living a hermit's life in a cart, having fled a husband who would have made her "fourth in a row of headstones" from overwork. Her knowledge of herbs keeps Inman alive during a critical portion of his journey home (272). Adding these strong women into the text with Ada and Ruby clearly marks *Cold Mountain* as important to the study of homestead heroes.

The concentration on women's homestead production throughout the story is imperative: it clearly shows women operating like men. Working together, Ada and

Ruby assume male roles to such a degree that they even appear as men by the end of the novel. Though they do not effect change in the community, Ruby and Ada confront stereotyping on a national level as yet unattained by Dykeman's Lydia McQueen or Smith's Ivy Rowe. Frazier's *Cold Mountain*, through both text and film, offers a wide national audience some remarkable mountain women for whom we can find a great deal of precedence in Appalachian literature.

Conclusion

Angel on the Mountain: Homestead Heroism in Appalachian Fiction

Female characters in Appalachian literature have long been a source of vivid imagery. First offered to readers as wizened crones or young natural objects through the local color writing that helped to bring Appalachia as other into American consciousness, mountain women have also been presented as homestead heroes in lesser-known writings from the late nineteenth-century, regional writings of the twentieth century, and most recently in Charles Frazier's national bestseller *Cold Mountain.* Not insignificantly, efforts to define Appalachia and navigate the impact of myth on the region have complicated our ability to determine how presentations of women as homestead heroes may be most useful in providing a contrast to long-standing stereotypes.

W.H. Ward, in an effort to critique the emergence of a distinct body of literature defining itself regionally as Appalachian in the 1970s, argues that strong mountain women in this new regional literature, such as Wilma Dykeman's Lydia McQueen, mark a "veritable Cult of the Mountain Female."[1] Characters like McQueen, therefore, exist stereotypically within a "favorite mythic American figure, the Pioneer Woman" as representative of Appalachia as the old frontier (332). Although the robust pioneer woman is certainly a part of American lore, much like the western cowboy, wholly dismissing the distinctiveness of her presence in Appalachia removes the critical potential

[1] Ward's discussion is a direct response to Robert J. Higgs and Ambrose N. Manning's *Voices from the Hills.*

of such characters. Thus, the purpose of the chronological analysis in this thesis has been to identify homestead heroism as an important concept for the study of women's roles in Appalachian literature, rather than to simply dismiss the strong mountain woman as another form of typing. I do not mean to suggest, however, that homestead heroism is not an alternate mythology. Certainly, it is. However, to more clearly understand women's roles in Appalachian fiction, I have attempted to analyze how this mythology works and to consider the ways in which authors have used it to depict homestead heroes as they are particularly relevant to the Appalachian region. Thus, the criteria for homestead heroism, as I have used it in this study, seek to pinpoint the qualities of female characters in Appalachian fiction that identify them as strong, capable mountain women who achieve autonomy. Clearly, the traits of homestead heroes are revealed through women's subsistence roles in Appalachian literature, as reflective of distinctive Cohee society in the mountainous Appalachian region.

Unfortunately, the potential for observers of the "complex realities" of the region who "see more or less what they expect to see," such as W.H. Ward, threatens to negate the unique qualities of Appalachian history and culture as they are portrayed in fiction (Whisnant xxvi). Applying homestead heroism as a concept in Appalachian literature provides an avenue through which we can discuss images of women with greater attention to specific qualities of life in Appalachia as represented in fiction. The women in the works I have investigated in this study are not just mythological pioneer women; they are Appalachian women whose experience in the mountains greatly informs their capabilities in homestead production and thereby their autonomy. Applying criteria to imagery in a regional culture, as I have done here, allows us to understand more

specifically how authors in a given area portray character types as appropriate to that region. Through this type of analysis, we develop a discourse through which we can compare various images in order to question the validity of representation.

Certainly, it could be argued that homestead heroism as it specifically defined in this study no longer exists on a large scale as a means through which most women can gain autonomy in Appalachia due to tourism, industrialization, and overall capitalistic production. Perhaps, as families in Appalachia have moved away from subsistence farming, either by choice or necessity, most women have lost the aptitude in homestead production, survival skills, and connection to the environment that makes autonomy through economic equality possible. However, it is more likely that female heroism in Appalachia today has been redefined through a new set of criteria concerning important environmental issues, such as mountain top removal, currently plaguing the region. In any case, the fictional works I have explored in this study offer glimpses, models, and fully realized examples of homestead heroism in an effort to reclaim or celebrate the existence of female heroes in Appalachia. In this way homestead heroism remains alive through storytelling. Elliott, Miles, Still, Haun, Dykeman, Smith, and Frazier all provide us with a very important link to the past and therefore a significant means of critical analysis for the future.

The study I present here is not fully inclusive. Effie Waller Smith, Jesse Stuart, and Silas House, among many others, have also portrayed homestead heroes in Appalachian fiction. Likewise, some female characters in areas of American literature outside Appalachia may be considered homestead heroes. Women who helped push America westward or kept factories working during the World Wars are also heroic,

perhaps via a different set of criteria from the ones I have established here, particularly the relation of environment to labor production. In the future, this type of study may be broadened to a wider American literature so that autonomy may be reclaimed for many unsung female heroes whose homestead work provided for family survival.

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