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“Quare” Fiction: Symbiosis in Lucy Furman’s Settlement School Novels

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I. Introduction

Lucy Furman, 1870-1958, was a Kentucky writer and Appalachian settlement school worker. At the age of thirty-seven, Furman arrived at Hindman Settlement School in the rural Appalachian Mountains of eastern Kentucky, where she lived and worked as a housemother for approximately two decades¹. While working at Hindman, Furman wrote many stories inspired by her experiences and those of her colleagues, many of which were published in *Century* magazine starting in 1910. She also published four novels set at the settlement school: *Mothering On Perilous* (1913), *Sight to the Blind* (1914), *The Quare Women*² (1923), and *The Glass Window* (1925). A fifth novel, *The Lonesome Road*, about the experience of one of her students at Hindman as he left his community in eastern Kentucky for advanced education, was published in 1927.

Of Furman's settlement school novels, only one, *Mothering On Perilous*, is based in her own experience at the school as housemother. The remaining three are inspired by the experiences of her colleagues at Hindman. Many Appalachian outsiders who wrote about the region and its population have been charged with misleading readers by stereotyping and exaggerating their experiences. However, Furman presents her characters in a way that enables her readers—unfamiliar with the region—to identify with the Appalachian culture, which was at that time likened to a foreign or antiquated culture and not “of America.” Furman's main

¹ Reports differ as to the length of time Furman spent at Hindman. References to Furman in *Listen Here: Women Writing in Appalachia*, edited by Sandra L. Ballard and Patricia L. Hudson, and *A Literary History of Kentucky* by William S. Ward state that Furman worked at Hindman for seventeen years: 1907 to 1924. However, Jess Stoddart, a specialist on Hindman Settlement School, writes in *The Quare Women's Journals* that Furman “joined the staff in 1907 and spent more than twenty years as a housemother” (37).

² “Quare” is a commonly-used phonetic spelling of “queer,” used to reference the nickname “the queer women” that was given to the women who worked at the Appalachian settlement schools by the local community. The phonetic spelling mimics the accent of the mountain people. The mountaineers believed that the ways and traditions of the settlement school women were “queer,” pronounced “quare,” and this nickname stuck and is still used by scholars to refer to this group of women.

characters are not Appalachian people, but teachers and administrators who have traveled into the most rural of Southern Appalachian mountain communities to work in settlement schools. Furman presents these main characters in a manner that her audience can relate to, allowing mainstream America a point of view into this “other” culture of Appalachia. Equally as important, Furman asserts that the experience of the women who worked in the settlement schools and the children who attended the schools is mutually beneficial. Many women who were involved with the settlement schools wrote of their experiences, but Furman’s work has been acknowledged as the most authentic representation of the interaction between settlement workers and Appalachian citizens (Lanier 311, Ward 86).

Analysis of authentic representation in textual prose poses some of the same questions presented in the analysis of contemporary documentary film. With any documentary, one must ask what exists just outside the frame; with any artifact one must ask of the context. What has been left out, and what has been forgotten? Were details left out intentionally, to create a selective history? Such questions should also be applied to the writings of the settlement school workers who aimed to capture their worlds by writing stories, journaling, and sending letters home to friends and family. If no other record exists, history becomes skewed, biased. One person’s truthful experience does not necessarily reflect that of her neighbors’.

Young, educated women left their well-to-do Victorian families in New England, Cincinnati, and even the urban centers of central Kentucky’s Bluegrass Region to do social service work in the eastern Kentucky mountains of rural Southern Appalachia. The residents of rural Southern Appalachia had been branded America’s “contemporary ancestors” by William Goodell Frost in his article “Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains,” which appeared in *Atlantic Monthly* in March 1899, and this was America’s view of the region.

The work of the settlement schools was to educate the rural population as to the modern American ways of life—dressing a table, sewing, singing, even how to properly celebrate Christmas—while building a new sense of community and teaching basic subjects. The goal for instructors at Hindman Settlement School was to learn about traditions and history from the mountain population while teaching them the ways of modern America. Their methodic approach to education, however, had the potential to change Appalachian culture. While certain mountain customs were deemed to be wholesome and unaltered traditions from centuries past, and continued preservation was encouraged, many of the daily doings of the mountain people were considered out of date and thought to be damaging, dangerous, or immoral (Whisnant 20).

Perhaps the women who came to Appalachia to work in the settlement schools aimed to create histories and accounts that reflected the best combination of the truths they encountered, in order to help promote their work. Many of these writings were used to advertise and fundraise for the schools and often asserted one or all of the following as reason for the schools' existence—that the mountaineers had been neglected by America; that the mountain people were eager to learn; that the mountains were lawless and the communities were in need of repair; and that the wholesome and antiquated traditions of the mountain culture that remained were worth preserving. Writers asserted that the settlement school workers volunteered purely out of their sense of duty to their fellow countrymen, that they asked for nothing in return, and in no way felt disrespect or condescension towards the mountaineers. How this sentiment was expressed varies greatly by writer, but I have yet to come across a self-imposed question of the right to interfere in this established culture, or any doubt that the modern ways the settlement school workers taught were far superior to the mountaineers, or that the mountaineers' opinions differed from those of the settlement workers in these regards.

The settlement school movement—born out of Progressive Era social work and education reform—provided a professional arena for educated women in the late nineteenth century to step into. Educated women of this era created their own opportunities through social service and newly created civic clubs, such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, which sponsored the first settlement school in Appalachia. Women from as far away as New England and as near as the Bluegrass Region of Kentucky traveled to work at the schools. Viewed as outsiders from “the level land,” the women aimed to bring modern health practices, basic education, and a sense of community to the region. The mission and history of the schools was chronicled through the writings of the women who worked there as well as school publications for advertising and fundraising. The target audience for such writing was always outside the rural region of Southern Appalachia that the schools served, and was often directed at philanthropists, as the school depended on contributions from outside the region for financial backing.

Scholars such as Henry D. Shapiro and David E. Whisnant have scrutinized social work in Appalachia at the turn of the twentieth century and its impacts on that culture. Two phenomena have received much attention in this debate: the establishment of schools in Appalachia by outsiders of the region and writings on Appalachia by these outsiders. Yet, Lucy Furman has largely been ignored by scholars despite the fact that her writing focused on the settlement school in which she worked.

It is important to clearly note that the settlement school movement was focused on only a small region within Appalachia – the rural communities that were isolated in the most isolated areas of the Southern Appalachian Mountains of Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia. Furman’s work was specific to the Hindman Settlement School in Hindman, Kentucky. References in this paper are specific to this community unless otherwise noted.

Additionally, the terms “outsider” and “visitor” will be used to reference those who traveled to these communities from other regions of the state and country. The vast majority of the teachers and administrators at settlement schools were outsiders to the region. Similarly, the writers who brought these communities into the American consciousness were magazine and newspaper writers from outside the region who were seeking out local color features. Therefore, these terms will be used in this paper to refer to anyone coming into the rural Appalachian region from other parts of the country, including those traveling from other regions of Kentucky, as all were seen to be outsiders by the Appalachian community itself.

II. Historical Context

“To Learn All We Can and Teach All We Can”: Introduction to the Settlement School Idea

Nearly two hundred schools were founded in the rural Southern Appalachian mountains, including settlement schools, folk schools, mission schools, and private academies, between the 1890s and 1920s (Greene 4). This boom of educational development in the rural mountains represented a larger social reform movement in the United States at the time. Whisnant writes, “By 1891 there were six social settlements in the United States; six years later there were seventy-four. There were more than a hundred by 1900, and the number doubled in each of the next five-year periods, to more than four hundred by 1910” (22). Social settlement houses were being founded in major urban centers in America, with the mission of assisting new immigrants, and more importantly, providing an education on how to be “American.”

In the newly-founded mountain schools, nearly all of the teachers came from outside Appalachia, and eighty percent were women, more than half of them in their twenties and two-thirds from New England, specifically (Whisnant 9). This influx of social workers from New England is important to note as it speaks to the culture shock that the Appalachian citizens were

forced to reckon with and emphasizes that those involved with the settlement work were not only outsiders to the region, they were unfamiliar with the traditions and culture as well.

In considering the migration of young, well-educated women to teaching positions in settlement schools in the rural Southern Appalachian Mountains, two important factors must be considered: the romanticized and mythologized view of Southern Appalachia that permeated popular culture and the context of the social conditions and expectations for those young women. The rural region of the Southern Appalachian Mountains had been “discovered” by journalists and writers after the construction of the railroads to nearby cities in the late nineteenth century. Embellished and stereotypical “local color” articles in popular national magazines describing the population in rural Southern Appalachia led readers to believe that these citizens of the Southern Appalachian Mountains needed to be educated and Americanized. These writers reported that the citizens in this previously isolated area were stuck in a way of life that dated back a hundred years or more, and the stereotype of the Appalachian mountaineer as “contemporary ancestor” was created. Widely-read articles appearing in national magazines prior to 1900 include Will Wallace Harney’s 1873 article, “A Strange Land and a Peculiar People,” first published in *Lippincott’s Magazine*; James Lane Allen’s “Through Cumberland Gap on Horseback,” published in *Vanity Fair* in 1886; *Cosmopolitan’s* 1899 article “Romance and Tragedy of Kentucky Feuds,” by Josiah Stoddard Johnston; and *Atlantic Monthly’s* March 1899 article, “Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains,” by William Goodell Frost (McNeil 18-19). These articles had great influence on how Americans outside of Appalachia viewed this region (19). In their articles, writers called on the educated public to bring aid to the region in the form of education, industrialization, and Americanization. The mission was to help the citizens help themselves while introducing them to contemporary American ways of life. While the intent

was not to erase the traditions and culture of the mountain communities, these systematic revisions had an impact on the whole region.

In order to understand what drew young women to work in the settlement schools of Southern Appalachia, one must consider the then-popular understandings of what Southern Appalachia was, and what it was believed to have needed. W.K. McNeil provides glimpses into this reality in an anthology of popular magazine articles that date 1860 to 1987, entitled *Appalachian Images in Folk and Popular Culture*. Included in this anthology is Will Wallace Harney's previously cited 1873 article, "A Strange Land and a Peculiar People." McNeil states that Harney was a frequent contributor to popular magazines, such as *Lippincott's*, during the years following the Civil War (45). Harney's article reads like a travel memoir as he and his female travel companion make their way through the Cumberland Gap in Kentucky, traveling from their "level-land" Kentucky home to make a new one over the mountains. Harney includes some information on the dialect he encounters, but most of the article is an anecdote that illustrates the then-common stereotype of the dishonest and immoral rural mountaineer. McNeil notes that Harney characterizes Appalachia as a place that is in America, but not "of America" (45). That is to say, Harney views the people of the Southern Appalachian Mountains as having a completely separate identity from Americans. McNeil writes that this claim was repeated countless times, setting up a semi-permanent view of Appalachian people as alien from contemporary America (45).

James Lane Allen presents the Appalachian people in a similar travel-memoir style in his *Harper's Magazine* article, "Through Cumberland Gap on Horseback," published in 1886 and reprinted in his collection *The Blue-Grass Region of Kentucky and Other Kentucky Articles* in 1892. Allen was a novelist and short story writer, regarded as the writer who brought the

Bluegrass Region of Kentucky into the American consciousness (McNeil 60). Allen's article suggests that there are two separate Kentuckys: the Kentucky of the Bluegrass Region—such as Lexington, which kept up to speed with the rest of America in terms of education, industrialization, and progress—and the Southern Appalachian region, which was “arrested” in early English civilization because of its isolation (60). McNeil points out that this notion was repeated by many authors who followed Allen (60).

In “Romance and Tragedy of Kentucky Feuds,” Josiah Stoddard Johnston argues that the “Rip Van Winkle sleep” of Southern Appalachia can be attributed to its environment (McNeil 107). Appearing in *Cosmopolitan* in September 1899, this article seems to be the first to use the strictly environmental determinist notion to defend the old fashioned ways of the rural Southern mountaineers. Though much of his article focuses on feuding between families in the rural Kentucky mountains, the argument that the physical landscape explains the difference between the isolated population and the rest of Kentucky is important. During this time, a popular belief was that the poor were to blame for their status because they were lazy or immoral. Not only does this argument defend the rural poor for their status, but it provides a possible solution: railroads. Stoddard offers that the remedy exists simply in bringing advancement to the people – a call to duty.

The most famous and widely cited article on the Southern Appalachian people was Frost's “Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains” (McNeil 19). Frost was the president of Berea College in Kentucky from 1892 to 1920. Frost's account is a condescending and patriarchal assessment of the rural residents of his state, and calls for action from educated Americans to assist his “contemporary ancestors,” who have been isolated from progress and education in the Southern mountains. Jane S. Becker offers a modern analysis of Frost's article

in *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940*, published by UNC Press in 1998. Becker discusses the question posed by Frost, “how might Americans ‘enlighten’ their ‘contemporary ancestors’ in Southern Appalachia?” (41). Frost’s question seems to reflect a then common-held notion that “civilized” Americans were responsible for educating the “simple people” of Southern Appalachia who had been left behind the times due to regional isolation. Becker speaks to the propaganda of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that at once stereotyped the Southern Appalachian people as ignorant and at the same time praised them for preserving tradition that was exalted by the Arts and Crafts Movement.

Betty Parker Duff also discusses the romanticism and mythology that infused the average American’s view of the rural Southern Appalachian people in the early 1900s in “The ‘Quare’ Women: Reformers and Settlement Workers in the Kentucky Mountains.” She suggests that the founders and backers of these settlement schools believed that the people of the rural mountains in Appalachia were seen as sheltering, pure Anglo Saxon communities that had been spared the “contamination” that urban dwellers had been exposed to in industrial cities (Duff 4). The author states that it was believed that, free from outside influences, the mountain population would best take to the newest education reforms from Europe (4).

At the same time that these local color articles were being published on the urgent need for assistance in the rural Southern Appalachian Mountains, all-women’s colleges were producing the first generation of college-educated women, again, mostly in New England. These women were caught between the confines of few marriage prospects and even fewer professional opportunities. Duff considers the problem that the first generation of college-educated women faced: no longer seen as “fit” for marriage, yet very few professional opportunities were

available to them. The author suggests that many of these women came to teaching not only because it was seen as a respectable occupation for a woman, but also because women were able to create their own schools in these rural areas, re-creating the “woman-controlled environment of the women’s college” (Duff 4). These women often worked either through larger women’s organizations, such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union that founded Hindman Settlement School, or along with patriarchs from the rural areas, such as William Creech, who requested help with founding a school and donated the land for Pine Mountain Settlement School in Harlan County, Kentucky. The author writes that although these women were able to create lives for themselves that were free from male domination, they did not teach this in their schools. Duff discusses the concept of “noblesse oblige, the belief that the privileged had an obligation to intervene on behalf of those less fortunate than themselves” as the driving force in women’s involvement in the larger Progressive Era movement as well as the educational missions in the Kentucky mountains (3). Similarly, Jess Stoddart, historian on Hindman Settlement School, writes:

A wave of organizations had been created by and for women, epitomized by groups such as the Federation and the Women’s Christian Temperance Movement. They brought together women who previously had known few public outlets for their energies and ideals beyond church and charity work. The social settlement movement, in particular, acquired much of its enthusiasm and human resources from the graduates of the new women’s colleges in the Northeast. (35)

Jane Addams, founder of the famous Hull House Settlement in Chicago, provided an example to the founders of the early settlement schools in rural Appalachia, and many women from prominent families, urban centers, and college campuses migrated to the mountains with

the mission of educating the isolated citizens of the region (Whisnant 22). The settlement school movement applied the model of the settlement house to a boarding school structure—a practice particular to the Southern Appalachian region. Whereas settlement houses were designed for immigrant adults, the settlement schools of the rural Southern Appalachian Mountains targeted rural children and occasionally held classes for women. Stoddart writes:

Part of the transformation that American society was undergoing was a revolution in basic notions about women's role in American culture. The languid, sheltered, submissive, genteel "Victorian" lady who was often held up for emulation in mid-century America gave way to a new ideal of women as vigorous, capable, participants in public life. Leaders such as Addams often justified women's new activism as 'social housekeeping' and the widespread entrance into the ranks of Progressive reform by young, well educated females cemented this cultural transformation. (36)

Before the Progressive education models were introduced to Appalachia, many Protestant denominations had set up religious mission schools across the rural mountain towns (Greene 4). The name "mission school era" is perhaps used because the majority of the schools founded during this Appalachian "era" were religious mission schools. James S. Greene, in *Progressives in the Kentucky Mountains: The Formative Years of Pine Mountain Settlement School, 1913-1930*, writes "to these [religious] reformers, education was the principal method of ameliorating mountain life and bringing the people into the American mainstream" by rescuing the mountain child from the problems of the region (4). While the religious education reformers had good intentions, their schools ultimately used urban education to erase what outsiders saw as the "backward" ways of the mountains; in other words, their mission was to save the mountain folk

from their own culture and traditions (Greene 4). Katherine Pettit, a graduate from Sayre Institute in Lexington, Kentucky, was outraged by the practice of many mission schools to educate the mountain youth using the same models and curriculum from urban schools (56). Pettit felt that this practice not only alienated the youth from their own culture, but also did not adequately prepare them for the occupational opportunities that would be open to them in their home towns and counties (56).

Pettit was born in Lexington, and, after attending the Sayre Institute— where she met Lucy Furman—joined the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in her twenties (Engelhardt 19). Stoddart writes of Pettit, “Her interest in the mountain region is said to have been piqued first by the stories of the feuds in the area which were prominently reported in the Bluegrass area newspapers and other sources in the 1880s” (32). In 1895, the Kentucky Federation of Women’s Clubs sponsored a trip to Hazard, Kentucky, to investigate the need for schools. Pettit toured the area with this group and recommended a traveling library for the region, which was developed the following year with Pettit as superintendent (*Settlement Schools of Appalachia*). From this platform Pettit began summer educational initiatives and, in 1899, presented a need for a permanent school in Hazard, Kentucky, to the members of the WCTU. The money was raised for a six week summer institution in Hazard, with Pettit in charge. The following year she and May Stone set up an additional summer camp, Camp Industrial, in Hindman, Kentucky. Camp Industrial would be the basis for the Hindman Settlement School. Pettit would go on to found a second settlement school, Pine Mountain Settlement School, near Hazard, Kentucky in 1913 with Ethel DeLong.

Born in 1897 to Henry Stone and Patricia Bourne Stone, May Stone was raised in the Bluegrass Region of Kentucky (“DAR Members”). She attended Wellesley, a women’s college

in Massachusetts, in 1884—just nine years after the college opened (Engelhardt 20). “There, Stone gained entrance into the group of socially conscious, educated women looking for careers. Some of her friends went to Chicago to help with Jane Addams’s Hull House; other Wellesley students became doctors, lawyers, nurses, and teachers. Stone found her career in ‘mountain work’ in eastern Kentucky” (Engelhardt 20). The relationships Stone developed at Wellesley translated to strength for developing Hindman, as she had a large network of civic-minded young women (20). Stone remained affiliated with the school until her death in 1946 (“DAR Members”).

Pettit and Stone were two of many young women in the Bluegrass Region to be inspired by the models of urban settlements elsewhere in the country, and felt compelled to adapt the model to benefit the rural areas in Kentucky (*Settlement Schools of Appalachia*). “For Appalachia, Pettit and others had to modify the settlement house model, which was usually an urban phenomenon, to fit the rural, mountain communities they served” (Engelhardt 18). From the success of Camp Industrial, Pettit and Stone left for a fundraising tour. The pair visited Jane Addams at Hull House, seeking her advice and guidance on financial support and recruiting volunteer teachers (Stoddart 33). In 1902, Pettit and Stone founded the first settlement school in Appalachia: the Women’s Christian Temperance Union Settlement School, later renamed Hindman Settlement School in 1915 once gaining independent status (“About Us”).

Hindman Settlement School’s current website offers, “The ‘settlement idea,’ was ‘for the social classes to know each other, to educate each other and to work together for the improvement of the neighborhood.’ Katherine Pettit clearly endorsed this idea, stating their goal at Hindman was ‘To learn all we can and teach all we can.’” (“History”). Rather than teaching the children to reject the traditions they were raised with, as mission schools were reputed to do,

settlement schools sought to build upon the mountain culture by infusing modern education exercises and practicing, teaching, and encouraging the traditional handicrafts and occupations that would truly benefit the children's lives (Greene 4). Schools were founded along the progressive guidelines that the goal of school should be to develop well-rounded individuals who could thrive in their environments and deal with the real life problems that would be presented to them (Greene 4). In other words, the aim was to encourage and educate the students to be well prepared to live in the world around them, and definitely not to encourage them to move away from the area. Greene writes, "Like many other progressive leaders, [Pine Mountain Settlement School founders Katherine Pettit and Ethel de Long] firmly believed that by properly educating the child, one could change society to make it more humane, and that was their ultimate goal"

(3). In addition to a core academic curriculum, skills such as sewing, cooking, weaving, furniture making, as well as various skills within agriculture and forestry were taught regularly (Hinkle). Chores were folded into the curriculum as well, in order to teach the students the skills they would need to diligently keep their own households (Hinkle). The goal was not to teach the children that a bigger and better world existed outside of their community. The objective was to teach them the ways of the world so that they could enable the change that would bring the mountain region up to speed with contemporary America while also recognizing the strength of wholesome mountain traditions such as ballads and weavings which the Arts and Crafts Movement strived to protect.

A rich narration of the goals and intentions of the women involved in Hindman Settlement School, as well as other settlement schools, are available through the writings of the women who founded and worked at these schools³, though this was not America's first

³ An accurate history of the founding of Hindman Settlement School is hard to come by, as "virtually all early records of [Hindman Settlement School] were destroyed in fires in 1905 and 1910" (Whisnant 29). The history,

impression of the region. As early as the 1870s, accounts by traveling writers of the first-hand experience with Southern Appalachia's rural mountain population were widely circulated through popular publications such as *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Scribner's Magazine*, *Lippincott's* and *Cosmopolitan*. Writers portrayed the Southern mountaineers as so isolated from contemporary America that they exhibited Elizabethan virtue and spoke in Elizabethan dialect. Yet, they were also said to be without grammar, morals, or laws. William Aspenwall Bradley's article "The Women on Troublesome"⁴ claimed that the mountaineers themselves had begged the writer to ask the American public to come to their assistance by providing formal education and instructing them in the ways of contemporary America (323).

Written in 1918, "The Women on Troublesome" is essentially a fundraising piece for Hindman Settlement School. The author, from Connecticut, was educated at Columbia University, and lived in New York as a writer and literary critic (William A. Bradley Literary Agency). He was introduced to Kentucky through the War Camp Community Service in 1917, and wrote about his short experience in Kentucky through the rest of his life (William A. Bradley Literary Agency Records). The article begins with a startling discussion of the extreme need for formal education in rural Kentucky and concludes with a description of the founding of Hindman Settlement School. Stone and Pettit are held up in the article as answering the call for assistance in this area, and the author expands on the need for more donations and volunteers to extend this opportunity to the many children being turned away due to lack of funding.

Appalachia was also a common setting for regional literature in the early 1900s (Engelhardt 29). Interest in the people of the region maintained its popularity through the 1920s. "Rather than the audience, Appalachians were most frequently the characters in the magazines'

therefore, must have been recreated by Pettit, Stone, and others, creating the potential for a very selective institutional memory for the school.

⁴ "Troublesome" refers to Troublesome Creek, on the banks of which Hindman Settlement School was built.

sketches, as well as the novels, short stories, and poems published in the United States about Appalachia” (Engelhardt 33). These writers did not aim to capture Appalachians as they saw themselves, but instead aimed to create stories that readers across the country could become engrossed in from their living rooms. The market was so strong for Appalachian stories that publishers began stretching the region in order to be able to apply the label of Appalachian literature more liberally (33-34).

To understand Furman’s reasons for committing her experience and those of her colleagues at Hindman Settlement School to paper, one must consider the evolving attitudes toward women writers at that time. Elizabeth S. D. Engelhardt considers this subject in *The Tangled Roots of Feminism, Environmentalism, and Appalachian Literature*. Engelhardt writes that subscriptions to monthly magazines such as *Century*, *Lippincott’s*, *Harper’s*, and *The Atlantic Monthly* had become a mainstay in many households, and Appalachia had become the backdrop for many of the novels, stories, and poems that were featured in such magazines (33).

Additionally, writing had become an increasingly acceptable vocation for women, and women’s writings were selling very well at the turn of the century (Engelhardt 29). Engelhardt suggests this “meant that across the country, people were participating – even if only from their armchairs – in women’s conversations” (29). She suggests that this participation led women to write privately but with a tone intended for an audience (29). “Many political, Progressive, college, modern, and environmental club women coupled their activities with writing. With that choice, made possible by trailblazing women earlier in the century, they participated in a popular trend for women at the time” (Engelhardt 29). Though these women, including Pettit and Stone, may not have meant for their writing to be published, this tone Engelhardt refers to was likely mimicked from reading women’s stories in monthly lifestyle magazines. This may have also led

to another phenomenon Engelhardt mentions: “Just as public and private blurred in the minds of writing women at the turn of the last century, so did the lines between fiction and fact” (30-31). Engelhardt’s observation suggests that many writing women fell into the practice of comparing their real experiences to those they read about in magazines (30-31).

The Quare Mother: Introduction to Lucy Furman

Lucy Furman was born June 7, 1870 in Henderson, Kentucky. Orphaned at a young age, Furman spent time living with her aunt, Rosalie Allan Collins, as well as her grandparents (Ballard and Hudson, 227). Furman attended the Sayre Institute in Lexington, Kentucky, where she was classmates with Pettit. Furman then enrolled in secretarial school in Evansville, Indiana (on the western Kentucky border), where she became employed as a court stenographer (Ward 86). Furman began publishing short stories on small-town life and communities nearly fifteen years before arriving at Hindman. She first had a story published in *Century Magazine* at the age of twenty-three and *Stories of a Sanctified Town*, a collection of stories about life in a small town in western Kentucky, was published by The Century Company in 1896 (Ward 86). A display advertisement for The Century Company’s “Latest Books,” appearing in *The New York Times* on December 11, 1897, offered the following description: “A dozen delightful stories of a Kentucky community over which a wave of religious emotion has swept with a potent and lasting effect. ‘One of the best, if not the best, volume of American short stories lately published.’ – Literary World” (“Display Ad 25”). Though the stories included in this volume focus on a community in western Kentucky, not in the Appalachian Mountain region, Furman had already become known as a writer of community life in Kentucky nearly fifteen years before her first settlement school novel would appear. A reader of *The New York Times Saturday Review* wrote a letter to the

newspaper which was published in *The New York Times* on February 10, 1900, commenting on the lack of mention of Furman in a piece on “women as humorists” which had been published in the *Review* on January 27, 1900. Reader E.G.W. wrote from Richmond, Indiana, “I was surprised not to see mentioned the names of two writers of the day whom I should think might rank very near the front in this particular, John Oliver Hobbes (Mrs. Craigie) and Miss Lucy Furman. Miss Furman’s ‘Stories of a Sanctified Town’ contain humor of a delightful quality” (E.G.W.). Both the act of writing the letter and the actual publishing of the letter speak to Furman’s early reputation as a writer – before her settlement school novels were published.

In the years that followed Furman suffered from poor health but managed to move to Hindman Settlement School to assist Pettit in 1907, at the age of thirty-seven (Ward 86). Working as both a housemother and a teacher, Furman stayed at Hindman significantly longer than the month she signed on for. Furman left Hindman in 1924, but stayed in her home state of Kentucky. She continued to write, but became known for her activism against cruelty to animals (Ward 88). Furman was awarded the 1932 George Fort Milton Award “as the woman writer in the South who has accomplished most for her sex, not necessarily in the calendar year alone” (I.A.). The description in *The New York Times* continues, “The amount of the award, \$200, is of less importance than the honor which is attached to it throughout the South” (I.A.). According to the March 14, 1933 announcement in *The New York Times*, “the award was created in 1924 by the will of the owner of the Chattanooga News, and was announced by the University of Tennessee” on March 13 (“Lucy Furman Wins Milton Award”).

Furman moved to Cranford, New Jersey in 1953 to live with her nephew, where she lived until her death in 1958 (Ward 88). Furman’s obituary in the *New York Times* read:

CRANFORD, N.J., Aug. 25 – Miss Lucy Furman of 26 Holly Street, a freelance writer, died yesterday at her home after a short illness. She was 89 years old.

A native of Henderson, Ky., Miss Furman first worked as a court reporter in Evansville, Ind. Her first stories on Kentucky mountain folk were published in the *Century* magazine in the late Eighteen Nineties. Others were published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Ladies Home Journal* and *Reader's Digest*. Some later were published in book form. ("Miss Lucy Furman")

I include this obituary in full because much of the work currently published on Furman cites *The New York Times* obituaries and book reviews as main sources, so the information included in this short obituary are key to understanding what information was available on Lucy Furman at this time. More telling than what is included in Furman's obituary is what is not included – the number and titles of her six published books. It is interesting that the names of magazines that published her short stories are included, but her longer works are glossed over and summarized in the bland description "Some later were published in book form." This sentence downplays the importance – not to mention the popularity – of her books, and is a sign of the lack of interest in Appalachia in the late 1950s.

Arriving at Hindman in 1907, Furman began publishing short stories on her experience as early as 1910. By this time, Appalachian people and culture had moved into the limelight of many magazines and novels. When she began to publish on the subject, the public was no longer seeking to "discover" Appalachia (Lanier 310). Parks Lanier, Jr. writes in "Appalachian Writers," a section of *The History of Southern Women's Literature*, that a sub-genre of

Appalachian literature grew out of the propaganda novels about settlement schools (310). Lanier credits Furman with achieving the most substantial reputation in this sub-genre, and agrees with Appalachian scholar Cratis Williams that Furman most accurately portrayed the changes in the Appalachian Mountains that were occurring with the introduction of settlement schools to the region (Lanier 311). Additionally, in *A Literary History of Kentucky*, William S. Ward writes:

From the beginning Furman's books were well received by the review press, and she was cited as a faithful interpreter of the people about whom she wrote...

Furman, says a *New York Times* reviewer of *The Glass Window*, "is preserving an artistic record of a life that is fast dying – and she succeeds. A life that would torment most of us to bitterness and resentment, under Miss Furman's sure and sympathetic hand is lifted into its actual beauty." (88)

Furman's novels are not histories of the school, nor do they chronicle the day-to-day school operations. Rather, Furman centers her work on the relationships between teacher, pupil, and community. Her novels do not focus on directors Pettit and Stone, who were often featured prominently in local color articles on the school, and certainly were highlighted in school publications. This change of focus away from the school's operation obscures Furman's role in propaganda for the school, though it certainly could be argued that she published these works to generate publicity for the school. Furman's accounts of the community are heavily romanticized, balancing the extreme hardship she sees in the region with a characterization of the mountaineers as noble—ignorant but not stupid—and demonstrate the epitome of America's infatuation with the return-to-the-land attitude of the Arts & Crafts Movement.

In each of her settlement school novels—*Mothering on Perilous*, *Sight to the Blind*, *The Quare Women*, and *The Glass Window*—Furman's main character symbolizes modern America

as it interacts with the Appalachian region. Each novel explores a different way of how discovering Appalachia provides an awakening for the main character. In Furman's first settlement school novel, *Mothering on Perilous*, the main character, Miss Loring, a housemother at the school, represents modern America as it tries to understand its discovery of the Appalachian population. In her diary, Miss Loring details her experiences, observations, and discoveries with the boys at the settlement school. The awakening of Miss Loring to a full life in social service is both inspirational to contemporary young women and symbolic of America opening to new roles for women. In *Sight to the Blind*, settlement school nurse Miss Shippen represents modern America as she tries, sometimes in vain, to bring modern solutions to the Appalachian population. In *The Quare Women*, Isabel, a teenaged singing instructor at a settlement summer camp, is spellbound by a teenaged, feuding hero- Fult Fallon. However, when Fult begins to return her attention, she flees to thoughts of her "civilized" and "respectable" suitors in her hometown. This back and forth relationship symbolizes America's obsession with and repulsion of Appalachian culture as it is represented to them. *The Glass Window* is Furman's final novel set at the settlement school. In this novel, two main characters represent America, wishing to embrace and preserve some aspects of Appalachian life while only temporarily being captivated by others.

Mothering On Perilous is Furman's fictionalized account of her own involvement at Hindman Settlement School as a housemother and teacher. The novel is written in the form of diary entries of the main character, settlement school housemother Cecilia Loring, whose experience represents that of Furman. "Mothering" in the title refers to Miss Loring's place within the school as housemother, while "Perilous" refers to Perilous Creek, on which the school is settled in the novel—the name is a play on Troublesome Creek, which bordered Hindman

Settlement School. The book is based on Furman's personal relationships with the boys who lived under her care at the school, and on their families who lived on neighboring branches. While the storyline focuses on the awakening of the housemother, the details of life at the settlement school are woven into the diary entries of Miss Loring. These stories, because they are told through Miss Loring's diary, take place in the periphery of the school life that was often chronicled in publications on the school—these are private, sheltered moments, not reports on the daily workings of the school. Because the stories featured are out of the limelight of the famous school, they appear as a personal journey to understanding of the culture and region, rather than as propaganda or fundraising for the school. That is not to say that it cannot be construed as such, but simply that it is more subtle than the school's own reports, Pettit's fundraising speeches, or local color writer's accounts.

However, Furman does include more facts about the school than would seem natural in a diary. She includes that while sixty students live at the school, six hundred or seven hundred had been turned away due to the limited means of the school (Furman *Mothering* 14). Then, in the following diary entry she writes, "This is an industrial school,—in addition to the usual common-school subjects, woodwork, carpentry, blacksmithing, gardening, cooking, sewing, weaving and home-nursing are all taught, and the children in residence also perform all the work on the place, indoors and out" (Furman *Mothering* 14-15). While this may paint the scene for the interested reader, one can't help but wonder if this is evidence that she was intentionally feeding the reader selective information in order to raise awareness and support for the school. Yet, these facts are concentrated in the early sections of the novel, which supports the theory that she is simply setting the story for readers who would not otherwise be familiar with the social settlement movement or the plight of the poor, rural Appalachian farmer.

While *Mothering on Perilous* focuses on the individual teacher's relationships with several of her pupils, Furman's *Sight to the Blind*, a novel of just ninety-two pages, offers a glimpse into the experience of the school nurse. Miss Shippen travels the region offering basic medical treatments and education on common ailments that were easily curable with modern medicine. The book tells the story of the extensive repercussions the mountain population faced due to their lack of access to these modern medical treatments. Furman tells the story of one mountain woman, Aunt Dalmanuthy, who is believed to be blind as a punishment from God on her family. Miss Shippen explains that the woman has cataracts, and that a simple surgery will restore her sight. The short novel follows Aunt Dalmanuthy as she struggles with the idea of being "carved on" by a surgeon. She decides to follow Miss Shippen's advice and is taken to a surgeon who has agreed to do the procedure free of charge. Aunt Dalmanuthy spends several weeks in the home of the surgeon and his wife and he teaches her the alphabet, and encourages her to learn to read once she returns home. The surgeon also calls in a dentist to repair her teeth, and Aunt Dalmanuthy spends what money she was able to bring with her on "fine store clothes" to match her new "innard feelings" and new teeth (Furman *Sight* 17). Aunt Dalmanuthy returns to her mountain community not only with restored eyesight but also with proper dentures and a new dress. Furman's focus in this piece is on the benevolence of the outside community in caring for this woman when her own community has blamed her for her family's misfortunes, but there is also an element of self-realization for Aunt Dalmanuthy. Though she is resurrected by her experience in the Bluegrass Region, her love for her home region only grows after her time away. This story does not include any discussion or description of the school itself, but demonstrates a benefit to the community beyond education for children.

Furman's treatment of her Appalachian characters may be considered more respectful and sympathetic than the local color writers, but there is no mistaking her agenda in *Sight to the Blind*. Furman wanted to prove the necessity of the women's involvement by defending this involvement through her stories. While these moments can be found in *Mothering on Perilous*, this rendering focuses more on the awakening of the teacher than that of the "contemporary ancestors." However, this seems to be the purpose of the symbolism in *Sight to the Blind*, and was a common theme in local color writing and other contemporary works about Appalachian mountaineers.

The Quare Women is a fictionalized account of the summer camp that May Stone and Katherine Pettit held in Hindman in 1900. Lucy Furman was not present for Camp Industrial, but it is clear that her account is closely based on Pettit's diary from that time (Stoddart 17). This novel encompasses the legend of how Hindman Settlement School came to be, and many of the anecdotes told in this novel are also found in local color articles, though Furman's versions of these are told with much greater compassion. The novel is a story of unrequited love. Mountain boy Fult, the teenaged leader of the feuding Fallon family, develops an all-encompassing crush for Isabel, the very young music and singing teacher at Camp Industrial. The relationship is charged with symbolism of the broader relationship between modern America and the "Rip Van Winkle" mountain region. Isabel—representing modern America—responds quickly to the request for her help in the rural mountain region, leaving her suitor and family behind in the Bluegrass Region. Thrilled by the romance of the wild country, she is intrigued by the stories of the mountain feuds that are written about in her hometown paper⁵.

⁵ This is likely based in Pettit's experience, as Stoddart states that Pettit's intrigue with the mountains was sparked by reading accounts of the mountain feuds (32).

Furman's fourth novel, *The Glass Window*, picks up where *The Quare Women* leaves off in both storyline and symbolism. At the end of *The Quare Women*, Camp Industrial draws to a close, and the people of Knott County, led by patriarch "Uncle" Ephraim, request that the women return the next year to build a permanent school. *The Glass Window* begins while Directors "Amy" and "Virginia,"—the fictionalized May Stone and Katherine Pettit—are fundraising for the school across the nation. This sequence of events is an accurate reflection of the founding of Hindman Settlement School, as previously stated.

In *The Glass Window*, settlement worker Christine awakens to the beauty of the traditions around her, and by the end of the novel is engaged to a local school master. Her colleague, Susanna, on the other hand, continuously delays her marriage to a surgeon in Lexington in order to continue her work at the settlement school. Susanna begins to believe that the gallantry and bravery she has come to expect from the Appalachian men will prevent her from valuing her fiancé, as she no longer believes he has these qualities. In an act of desperation, her fiancé makes the trip to the settlement school, but is delayed on the trail, not far from the school, when he is asked to look in on a dying woman. He discovers that her life would be saved with a basic surgery to remove her appendix. Her family agrees to allow him to operate, but he must do so while the men in the room have their guns pointed on him with the understanding that if his operation kills the woman, he will be killed without pause: a life for a life. The mountain men are clear that do not fully believe in modern surgical practices – "carving" as they call it. Susanna's fiancé, the surgeon, remains calm and continues the surgery with a steady hand. Susanna walks in to find him selflessly helping her new community with his life bravely on the line and her love and devotion for her fiancé are instantly renewed, while at the same time her feelings of romance toward the mountain culture is brought to a standstill.

In each of her settlement school novels, Furman weaves a story of discovery and awakening for both Appalachia and modern America. While each novel deserves equal attention, due to the limitations of this project I will focus on the first, *Mothering On Perilous*, a fictionalized account of Furman's own experience, the others based more on the experiences of her colleagues.

III. Furman in Scholarly Discourse

Lucy Furman has not received a great deal of attention from scholars in either Appalachian Studies or Literature. Despite several references in anthologies of regional literature and regional women's literature (such as the previously cited *A Literary History of Kentucky* and *Listen Here: Women Writing in Appalachia*), most of the information provided is fact, not analysis, and is credited to *The New York Times*, either to her book reviews or her obituary. One published biography does exist, however it was published as part of a young readers series in Kentucky. This biography, *Her Troublesome Boys: The Lucy Furman Story* by Greta McDonough, is written as a narrative for children, and many of the accounts detailed are also included in Furman's novels. However, because the biography does not cite any sources I have chosen not to reference it.

Whisnant provides several pages of discussion of her works in *All That Is Native and Fine*; however he does not treat her as her own entity. Rather, he places Furman within the larger group of settlement school women who wrote about their experiences in order to garner more support for the school. Engelhardt provides context for Furman's writing, though she does not analyze Furman's writing directly. Shapiro, author of *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* and a

premier scholar in Appalachian Studies, mentions her only in a note in his appendix for further reading on the “settlement school experience.”

If Furman has been largely ignored by the scholars on the subjects to which she contributed, does her work have any lasting contribution? If her novels are not included in the canon of Appalachian writing, should they be written off? I believe that Furman’s works have been ignored because, as individual pieces of writing, they are not stellar. Her novels do not stand out because of their character development or plot. However, they are artifacts of a unique time and place in history, and they capture the intersection of two worlds—rural Appalachia and the experience of an employed, educated, single woman paving the way for generations. These two isolated groups came together to create a new community, and Furman’s works capture the essence of all three—none of which are in existence any longer.

A historical context can be provided by considering how Furman’s writings were marketed and received by her contemporaries. Furman’s writing was regularly advertised and reviewed in significant publications of her time including *The New York Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The Washington Post* which speaks to the audience Furman and her publishers aimed to reach. One review in *The Mountain Advocate* (Mt. Sterling, Kentucky) included that Furman’s stories had been appearing in magazines for months before *Mothering On Perilous* was published: “These stories have appeared from time to time in almost all of the leading magazines of the country” (“Kentucky Mountain Stories”). The reviewer describes Furman’s treatment of the mountain boys: “With much verisimilitude and affection Miss Furman portrays the eager, lovable, now patient, now hot-tempered life of these distinctively interesting and often misrepresented Kentuckians” and closes the review by stating, “It is the best collection of stories we have ever read dealing with the mountain people, and it

shows a clear insight to their character and an appreciation of their difficulties” (“Kentucky Mountain Stories”). While this example is from within Kentucky, references to her work in reviews, articles, and advertisements can be found across the country in daily newspapers, including *Miami News*, *Arizona Republican*, *The Hartford Courant*, *The Sacramento Record Union* and *Atlanta Constitution*, giving further evidence to the wide market for Furman’s work. The publishers’ advertisements often included a short description of the novel advertised, offering rich information on how the books were marketed. The Macmillan Company lists *Mothering On Perilous* under “Fiction and Juvenile” in their “Important New Books” in the *New York Times* on September 20 and 21, 1913. The matching display advertisements featured a remarkably brief description: “A Kentucky mountain story” (“Display Ad 8” and “Display Ad 32”). This brevity can be considered in two different lights: first, that Furman, who had not published a full-length work since 1896, was not that well known at the time of this publication of her first settlement school novel, or, more optimistically, the brevity gives evidence of Engelhardt’s assertion of the strong demand for regional literature set in the Appalachian Mountains (33-34). In other words, more description was unnecessary, as readers were eager to consume these stories and did not need further convincing once they learned it was a story of the Kentucky mountains. On pages packed with advertisements for recently published books, ads for The Macmillan Company on January 31 and February 1, 1914 give only slightly more information, but introduce a glaring hierarchy: “her diary of a teacher among the mountain whites, is fascinating” (“Display Ad 9” and “Display Ad 26”).

Nearly a decade later, Furman’s *The Quare Women* is given more attention by her publisher, The Atlantic Monthly Press: “With a fascinating mingling of fact and fiction, Miss Furman tells the story of the first rural social settlement in America. To read this book is to

know the joys, the trials, the feuds, and the friendships of Kentucky mountaineer life” (“Display Ad 58”). It is *The Glass Window*, Furman’s fourth settlement school novel, which enjoys the most attention from the publisher with large advertisements appearing in the October 11 and October 25, 1925 issues of *The New York Times*. The October 11, 1925 advertisement offers Furman a display box of her own, whereas previous ads listed her among the ranks of a handful of other writers. This advertisement also features an image of the book cover, calling great attention to Furman’s work amongst a sea of wordy advertisements by other publishers. With a title of “A Heart-Stirring New Novel of the Kentucky Mountains,” the description reads:

In this new novel Miss Furman continues to mine the rich vein which she tapped in ‘The Quare Women’—that moving narrative of the adventures which a group of young women ‘from outside’ encountered in one of America’s most tucked-away corners. There is more romance and adventure in this story than in its predecessor, however, and the love stories of two of ‘the quare women’ are most charmingly related. (“Display Ad 69”)

The language used in this advertisement tells volumes of Furman’s growing reputation as well as the continued interest in the “romance and adventure” of the rural mountain region. Though the October 25, 1925 ad does not boast a graphic of the book cover and Furman is placed back in a box with other authors, the advertisement is worth mentioning because of its description:

In this story of the Kentucky Mountains Miss Furman continues to mine the rich vein which she tapped in ‘The Quare Women,’ that moving narrative of the adventures of six young women who began the first modern school among the Kentucky mountaineers. ‘The Glass Window’ is a heart-stirring novel that

presents an authentic picture of one of America's most interesting localities.

("Display Ad 61")

Several phrases in this description are worth pointing out: "first modern school," "authentic picture," and "America's most interesting localities." These phrases are evidence that mainstream Americans were aware of the settlement school concept and the plight of the mountain region.

In *Appalachia on Our Mind*, Shapiro provides an analysis of how Appalachia was perceived during Furman's time at Hindman Settlement School. Though Shapiro only references Furman and her work specifically in one endnote, his discussion of the changing perception of Appalachia during Furman's tenure at the school is indicative of several aspects of *Mothering On Perilous*. Shapiro writes that there was a distinct shift in how Appalachia was perceived in the "American consciousness." In the nineteenth century Appalachia was considered strange, foreign and unknown, but, in the 1890s-1900s Americans began to recognize the concept of diversity (Shapiro 133-135). While Appalachians were still not seen to be equal, Shapiro writes that there was a growing "tendency to see mountain life as a more American alternative to be preserved as such for its own sake or as a model to be emulated" (134). That is to say, Appalachian culture finally began to be acknowledged as its own entity (134). This created a dilemma for the settlement school workers, and other social service workers in Appalachia, as their basis for developing such social services was to Americanize the Appalachian citizens. Therefore, such work now had the potential to be seen as interfering with not only a legitimate culture but one that was perceived to be potentially superior to the industrialized modern American culture (Shapiro 134). Shapiro writes, "That such a dilemma existed was widely acknowledged by persons active in mountain work during the early twentieth century, explicitly

by their assertions of a need to redirect the conduct of systematic benevolence in the region, and implicitly by their practical transformation of mountain work after 1900” (135). Shapiro suggests that this dilemma existed in social service and philanthropic efforts throughout the country; this new acknowledgment of diverse cultures within America was not isolated to the mountain region of Southern Appalachia (135). Settlement schools, therefore, were forced to shift their work and stated missions in order to continue to be well-received by the American public, and, more importantly, by American philanthropists. According to Shapiro, the shift that was made by settlement schools involved the creation of community among the mountain residents, rather than solely bringing modern customs to the isolated region (137-8).

It is this goal that Furman echoes most clearly in *Mothering On Perilous*. Furman’s later novels, *The Quare Women* and *The Glass Window*, look back to the experience of the earliest settlement school workers who ran the first summer camp in Hindman and then returned shortly thereafter to develop the settlement school. These works therefore reflect that earlier idea that Shapiro refers to—a curiosity in the “otherness” of the Appalachian citizens—and are a reflection on how that curiosity is understood by the Appalachian residents.

Shapiro also discusses the impact of the increasing focus on feuding after 1900. Shapiro states that there was an outbreak of feuds in Tennessee, West Virginia, and most prominently in Kentucky, which entered public consciousness when the feuds became a topic in state politics (138). He writes, “It was the feuds which focused new attention on Appalachia just at the moment that its existence as a strange land and peculiar people had been normalized by Frost’s coinage, and hence made to seem less interesting than it had been before, when its very existence was a matter for concern” (138). This attention on mountain violence created a new definition of Appalachia as a place without community or law. Shapiro suggests that it was this version of

Appalachia that caused many social service groups to change their missions from bringing culture to Appalachia to bringing community to the culture that already existed (139). He writes, “It was the feuds which precipitated the redefinition of Appalachian otherness in terms of the absence of community and the characteristics of group behavior or culture. This outbreak of feuds was not the cause of the transformation of benevolent work, but provided the occasion on which the transformation already under way made itself manifest” (Shapiro 139). Fittingly, early in *Mothering On Perilous* (before Furman or the other settlement workers have had much time with the boys who have arrived at school for their first sessions) Miss Loring describes her boys as “warlike” and laments that she must spend much time breaking up fights (Furman *Mothering* 45).

Shapiro writes that after 1900 a new type of social worker came to the mountains: “they presented themselves as friendly visitors, seeking to do a work of helpfulness” with the goal of “the acquisition of friends and the transformation of community life” (144). This description is most fitting of the representation Furman brings forth in *Mothering On Perilous* through the main character of Miss Cecilia Loring. Miss Loring, having just suffered the loss of her mother, believes that her only rescue from permanent grief and despair is through working in social service. Shapiro continues:

They did not overlook, we may be sure, the romance of their own adventures in the backwaters of America or the pathetic and picturesque aspects of life among the primitive people they served, but they approached the mountaineers of Appalachia as their sisters had already approached the immigrant Jews and Slavs of the cities, with an understanding that the peculiar people among

whom they worked were bearers of a legitimately discrete culture—however inadequate to modern American life it may have been. (144)

Engelhardt presents a similar idea of the women being romanticized by their own adventures. Referring to the letters, diaries, and reports of social crusaders such as Katherine Pettit and May Stone, Engelhardt writes, “The women marvel at their own physical, emotional, and even spiritual achievements in accessing those scenes” of natural beauty in the Appalachian landscape (66).

Many of the anecdotes that Miss Loring recounts in her diary come to a close with a moral, each a small package neatly tied with a string. Such examples tell both of the (stereotyped) reality of the mountain region while showing how the settlement school is working to mold these young children into their version of modernity. In *All That is Native and Fine*, David E. Whisnant calls into question the authority from which the settlement school workers determined which traditions of the mountaineers were to be preserved, and which were to be replaced with modern and popular ways of doing things. He discusses a passage from Pettit’s Camp Industrial diary:

On page after page of early diaries and newsletters, one may watch the settlement women trying to come to terms with a most troublesome cognitive dissonance. They are too intelligent and humane to be snobbish or condescending, and too Christian to judge or ridicule. But they nevertheless struggle with, on the one hand, their *conviction* that their new neighbors are descended from “hardy pioneers... of strong intellect and great force of character... will power, good hard sense in abundance...and good judgment” and, on the other hand, their *observation* that many of them eat little but bacon, coffee, and cornbread; go

barefoot; sleep (in their clothes) all together in one room; drink moonshine, swear, and fight; and indulge (one hears) in shocking immorality. (41-42)

Whisnant remarks on the tension that is apparent in the women's writings. While he is speaking specifically of the diary entries and newsletters of Katherine Pettit, Elizabeth Watts, and May Stone of Hindman Settlement School, the same tension is exhibited in Lucy Furman's characters. The women want to believe in the myth of the noble mountaineer, and look for evidence of its truth in each interaction. By favoring such evidence in their writings, they contribute to the strength of the myth itself.

Whisnant writes that available historical "evidence" shows that all of the women at Hindman felt a cultural tension between the "mountaineers as hopelessly degenerate or merely temporarily wayward kinsmen of the 'best stock'; local culture as beautiful and life-affirming or perverted and moribund; settlement women as bearers of modernity and enlightenment or seekers of primal authenticity amid modern alienation and anomie" (Whisnant 43). Each of these tensions deserves examination.

First, the question of the mountaineer as "hopelessly degenerate"—that is to say, of a different type of humanity that has no conviction, desire, or possibility of achieving the good-natured, educated, and responsible qualities that encompass a modern American, versus the idea that the population of the Southern Appalachian mountains has simply been cut off from American society, but is of the purest Anglo-Saxon heritage⁶. It does not seem likely that the settlement school workers believed that the population they served was "hopelessly degenerate." If they believed it to be hopeless, why invest their time and energies into the school? Much to

⁶ Duff writes that the founders and financial supporters of settlement schools believed that the people of the rural mountains in Appalachia were seen as sheltered, "pure" Anglo-Saxon communities that had been spared the "contamination" that urban dwellers had been exposed to in industrial cities (4).

the contrary, it seems that these women believed very strongly that the population they served had simply not been afforded the opportunity to keep pace with the rest of America, and therefore the ailments of the region could be remedied by the settlement school.

The more complex problem is whether the culture of the region was to be considered wholesome and worthy of preservation or backwards and menacing. This goes hand in hand with Whisnant's third noted tension: whether the settlement school workers aimed to bring culture to the mountains, or to tease out the wholesome and valuable traditions and preserve the culture that existed. It is clear from their writings that the women struggled considerably with this tension. Whisnant writes, "Pettit's diaries and other early documents reveal, however, that the perception of cultural *difference* was great on both sides and that the differences easily translated into a hierarchy of cultural values" (46). Though the women may not have intended to condescend, their primary reason for being at the school was to teach the mountain people the ways of modern America, and this demanded that a hierarchy be created and followed.

Whisnant continues:

Contradictions notwithstanding, it seems reasonable to conclude that, to Pettit and her co-workers, 'culture' was not the full range of attitudes, beliefs, practices, customs, and lifeways of a group, marked by both beauty and ugliness, consistency and contradiction, but rather a select *few* items (such as 'manners,' dress and 'carriage,' eating habits, home decoration, and 'breeding') *certified* as culture by a late-nineteenth century, upper-middle-class, Victorian consensus—items which were in short supply in eastern Kentucky. (46-7)

Perhaps the settlement workers did not believe that by changing the aforementioned characteristics of the mountaineers that they were changing their culture. As Whisnant points

out, the women were very straightforward about wanting to preserve some aspects of culture and replace others (48). He writes, “Paradoxically, for all their professed reverence for traditional culture and their wish to forestall the cultural effects of impending industrialization, the settlement school women were themselves powerful instigators of cultural change” (48). Noting that the girls at Camp Industrial were taught, among other things, how to properly dress cakes, chicken, and dining tables, he writes, “In sum, much of the indigenous culture of the area was being intentionally replaced by genteel turn-of-the-century mass culture: light bread, pump organs, ‘socials,’ Fletcherized food, and napkins on the left, please” (48).

Despite the compelling arguments from Shapiro and Whisnant, I still struggle with the idea that these women intentionally and consciously believed that they were acting in a condescending manner, rather than simply acting as life teachers with the best of intentions. Can blame be placed on the individual women, the individual schools or even the settlement school movement for believing that the mountain people would benefit from being updated to twentieth century American ways? Is this not part of human nature, to believe in the evolution of culture and tradition to keep up with inventions and improvements as well as to find goodness in assisting those less fortunate? I believe Furman’s novels assist in answering these questions. Furman’s lasting value may not be to Appalachian Studies or to Literature, but an archival record of how several worlds came together to create a new community. Whether her works are purely fact or purely fiction or, more likely, a combination of both, they are, in themselves, works of history, reflecting on a time and place that no longer exists, that did not find their way into the dominant national narrative.

Furman’s works are powerful because they preserve the attitude that one settlement worker brought to her service in the Appalachian Mountains. Regardless of whether Furman’s

novels are accurate portrayals of Appalachian life or even settlement life, they are at very least portrayals of what Furman believed worth sharing of her own experience. The fact that the author lived the life she describes means that the novel is an authentic account, not necessarily of her hour by hour tasks, but of her reflection on settlement life. The experiences that she chose to include teach the reader of a community of American outsiders—educated, unmarried, upper-middle-class women and poor citizens of the rural Southern mountains—who work together to create a better world for themselves.

IV. *Mothering On Perilous: A Close Reading*

Mothering On Perilous incorporates aspects of Appalachian culture that had been brought to the attention of magazine-reading Americans through local color articles in the late 1800s and very early 1900s. However, Furman takes great care to make these topics of otherness accessible to her target audience of readers: Americans who do not live in Appalachia. As one 1913 *New York Times* reviewer wrote, “she makes us see as she sees and love her boys ourselves” (“Current Fiction”). The reviewer continues, “She and her readers never for a moment part company. She takes us with her at every step, charming us with her humor, as she wins our affections by her warm humanity. Her style is graceful and clear, and her fascinating narrative cannot fail to widen the horizon of her readers in more ways than one” (“Current Fiction”). This review captures a surprising aspect of the novel, indeed of all of Furman’s settlement school novels: rather than writing about the Appalachian people awakening from their “Rip Van Winkle” sleep, Furman shows how the company of the Appalachian people awakens the settlement school workers and, through their characters, the reader.

Furman presents her main character, Miss Loring—housemother to twelve boys from ages five to thirteen—as someone her readers can relate to. Miss Loring is of the world that her

readers come from: educated, upper-middle-class, mainstream America. The prominent personal struggle Miss Loring faces is being unmarried and therefore without a family to care for. This, although it would also have inspired her readers' sympathy, places Miss Loring outside the mainstream lifestyle of upper-middle-class America. By establishing the main character as someone who the audience could see themselves personified in, Furman creates a direct connection from the reader to the Appalachian children. The fact that Furman was a housemother at Hindman Settlement School presents an obvious choice of vocation for her main character; however this provides for a far deeper role, as well. Because Furman sets up the character of Miss Loring to be the stand-in for the reader in the story, the fact that she is acting as mother to these children places the reader in that mind frame as well. This allows for the reader to have a more compassionate connection to the Appalachian children than local color stories would have produced. Through Miss Loring, the reader sees the children as a mother would—with sensitivity, understanding, patience, and hope. Engelhardt writes, "Much women's writing about Appalachia ultimately supports status quo structures of power that privilege certain humans over others and the human over the nonhuman...Readers get plots that hinge on drama between individuals who are easily divided into insiders, outsiders, subjects, and objects" (Engelhardt 35). Yet, Furman's work is an exception to this observation, as she places her main character, and thus the audience, in the position of serving Appalachian children.

This lens allows Furman to focus on topics of rural Southern Appalachian culture and traditions in a less critical light than that of earlier writers. Previously, writers had used these topics to emphasize the otherness in the Appalachian culture, however Furman shows Miss Loring eventually understanding some of these customs. These include old English traditions that had been retained due to the isolation of the mountain population, such as the tradition of

celebrating Christmas on January 6 (referred to as “old Christmas” by the Appalachian people in Furman’s novels) rather than December 25 (“new Christmas”). The celebration of “old Christmas” did not include presents, but rather a celebration with drinking and shooting—customs that the settlement school women would not allow, but that Miss Loring calls common practice in “the old world.”

Another topic that emphasized the distance between the people of rural Southern Appalachia and the rest of America was their portrayal as descendents of great American settlers who had not only become lazy and stupid in their isolation, but worse, had no motivation to improve their situation for their families. Furman addresses this by having Miss Loring believe in this stereotype, but insist that the lack of education and community is not due to a laziness or stupidity, maintaining that geographic and environmental factors prevented the contemporary citizens of the region from living up to their ancestors. Miss Loring believes that these ancestors were war heroes and well-educated pioneers who were unfortunate to settle on the eastern side of the Kentucky mountains, in an area isolated from the resources of the rest of the state.

A third topic that is addressed in *Mothering On Perilous* is perhaps the most notable, for it offers the impetus for Miss Loring’s change of heart towards the mountain people—the idea that the mountain people were “lawless.” Though the counties had sheriffs, they were said to follow the law of the mountains more closely than the laws of the state. Supposedly, the sheriffs rarely prosecuted those involved in mountain feuds, even in the case of murder. Other topics mentioned in many local color articles and also included in *Mothering On Perilous* are: mountain funeral meetings, lack of hygiene, violent mountain feuding, and moonshining or stilling (and children’s involvement in both the business and the hobby of drinking).

The drama of the novel surrounds the mountain boys' obsession with violence, which is a mainstay of conversation within the house and is brought to life through stories of the fictional Marris-Cheever feud, as told by Nucky Marris, younger brother of the famous feuding Blant Marris. Miss Loring's diary entries focus on the boys' activities, but are frequently followed up with personal reflections of her experience at the settlement school. These reflections show how her experience affects her emotionally and is changing her attitudes about many aspects of life. This creates the secondary theme of the novel: Miss Loring's progression from grieving and worthless "old maid" to a capable and fulfilled "mother" to twelve mountain boys. Furman presents the relationships and interactions of housemother Miss Loring and the boys in her care as mutually beneficial, which is of great importance when comparing this novel to earlier trends in writing about Appalachia. Rather than claiming that her sole purpose is to benefit the lives of others, Miss Loring acknowledges that her reasons for working at the settlement school are first and foremost a personal attempt to reestablish her life after the death of her mother and without a family of her own.

The first three chapters of *Mothering On Perilous* offer the reader Miss Loring's first impressions of her new environment, her students, their families, as well as her perceptions of herself in her current state of grief and discovery. In the opening pages, Furman writes only briefly about the trip from the railroad station to the school, whereas many other writers—even Furman in later novels—spend much time focusing on the isolation of the school by devoting many pages to the main character's several days of travel from the closest railroad station to the school. Additionally, other accounts of visitors arriving to the region focus on the mountain feuds as not only a source of intrigue and entertainment but even as a reason for having come to

the area (as referenced previously in *The Quare Women* and *The Glass Window*). In the opening paragraph of *Mothering On Perilous*, Furman writes:

By way of cheering me, [my Appalachian host] had just given a graphic account of the twenty-year-old feud for which this small town is notorious, and has even offered to take me around and show me, on walls, floors and courthouse steps, the blood-spots where seven or eight of the feudists have perished. I declined to go, - it is sad enough to know such things exist, without seeing them face to face. (3)

Such a statement so early in the novel establishes two important points to set the scene for the reader. First, it establishes that Miss Loring (representing Furman) is not personally interested in the stereotypical feuding that permeated popular accounts of the region. Secondly, it establishes that the citizens have come to expect visitors to the region to be interested and entertained by the feuds; the mountain population has an understanding of the stereotypes that exist about them. This is directly opposite of other novels and stories that focus on the relationship of feuding and the settlement schools. By establishing this tension in *Mothering On Perilous* Furman tells the reader—who presumably would be familiar with at least one previous writing on the subject since Furman spends no time introducing the idea of settlement schools or the Southern Appalachian region—that the main character is a serious educator who has traveled through the mountains not for the adventure but purely with the purpose of volunteering in social service. Miss Loring then explains that she feels compelled to volunteer in social service because of the recent death of her mother. This is further evidence that Furman represents herself through the character of Miss Loring, as Furman had traveled to Hindman Settlement School after the death of her aunt, who raised her after she was orphaned as a child (Ward 86).

Many of her diary entries focus on reading to the boys, and the real-life comparisons they observe from their own family history to the stories. On the first Sunday as housemother Miss Loring follows the direction of the heads of school and tries to keep the boys quiet after church by reading to them. She chooses *Robinson Crusoe*, thinking they would enjoy the adventures of the hero, but to her dismay the boys are bored and eventually fall asleep in the grass. Worse still, their energy erupts after dinner into a brawl (Furman *Mothering* 40).

Furman's accounts of various misunderstandings between teacher and pupil are written with the utmost sensitivity. Miss Loring is open minded, and wishes to learn about the community she serves in order to better and more thoroughly respond to its needs. Chapters such as "A Trade and Other Matters" explore the rationale behind survival decisions that Miss Loring, and presumably other contemporary Americans, do not understand, and therefore cannot amend in a meaningful way. In this chapter, one boy, Keats, has traded his half-box of apples to Geordie for a "mangy little purse" (55). Miss Loring responds that the purse could only have been worth one apple, and plans to speak to the two boys about it. Before she has the chance, she is told by a third boy that Geordie had sold the apples for 17 cents, a gingercake, a taw, and then traded the purse back from Keats in exchange for two "wormy apples" (57). Miss Loring is appalled that Geordie has cheated Keats, and tells him so. Geordie responds that he is deeply hurt by this accusation, and had traded Keats two apples for the purse only because Miss Loring had said the purse was only worth one apple. Geordie insists he was trying to do Keats a favor by trading him two apples when Miss Loring had said it was only worth one, and says that he wants to be a preacher when he grows up, and would never want to cheat anyone (58). Such an instance relates how the children and Miss Loring (representing modern Americans) had very different understandings of worth and value. However, Furman takes the time to explain how

Geordie arrived at a conclusion that he believed to be fair and honest. This creates some resolution for the reader, rather than shock and disbelief, which seems to be the way of local color writers whose main goal is to sell publications.

The second section of *Mothering On Perilous*, "Getting Acquainted," brings another national discussion to the table through the internal dialogue of Miss Loring. Describing her first interactions with the children and community members, she writes, "I have always heard that, shut away here in the mountains, some of the purest and best Anglo-Saxon blood in the nation is to be found; now I am sure of it" (Furman *Mothering* 10). While there are certainly elements of *Mothering On Perilous* that can be read as intentional propaganda for the school, Furman's account reads as a warm-hearted reflection on her first year at Hindman. Still, one cannot dismiss Furman's assertions and reaffirmations that this population has the aforementioned pure Anglo-Saxon blood. The question remains, however: was this the belief of Furman and her colleagues, or a method of increasing donations and support for the school? It is unclear whether any of Furman's novels were published specifically for fundraising efforts. However, Furman had already published *Stories from a Sanctified Town* in 1896, as well as pieces published in *The Century* and *Atlantic Monthly*, indicating that her interest in chronicling stories of town life predated *Mothering On Perilous* and her other settlement school novels, thus suggesting that her purpose in writing these novels was not for fundraising for the settlement school.

Still, though the facts of the settlement school are consolidated into the early sections of the diary entries to set the scene, stereotypes of the mountain population are buried throughout the novel. Miss Loring regularly comments on mountain feuds, the boys' misunderstanding of violence as heroic, their lack of knowledge of proper hygiene, funeral meeting traditions, and the notion that the ancestors who crossed into the Appalachian region were much more highly

educated than the generations that they produced. These stereotypes emphasize the importance of the settlement work, and even defend the structured elimination of some aspects of the rural culture. While Furman's accounts are more sensitive than the local color writers' accounts, the result—although increasing readers' awareness to these “contemporary ancestors,”—emphasizes Appalachians as “other:” an inferior population separate from modern America in need of assistance.

One example of this is provided on the subject of hygiene. This topic is discussed regularly in accounts from this period and is revisited throughout Furman's work. Miss Loring discovers that one boy has been washing only as much skin as is exposed from his clothing, because it is winter. She questions him about why he does not wash his whole body, as instructed, and he replies, “That was before the cold weather sot in. [Another student] he said down to your neck and up to your knees was a-plenty in cold weather, and all *he* was aiming to do; and it's all any of us boys been a-doing sence [sic] November started in” (Furman *Mothering* 190). This leads to Miss Loring's discovery that none of the boys in her care have taken a full bath in six weeks. While she does correct them, the fact that she takes the time to share this dialogue with the reader shows her sensitivity to their misunderstanding of the bathing rules. This misunderstanding is presumably based on the then-popular belief in that community that immersing oneself in water in the winter could be deadly.

Another example comes from Furman's accounts of the boys' obsession with wars, feuds, and their interpretation of heroics. The previously mentioned afternoon with *Robinson Crusoe* provides an example. Though Miss Loring believes that she begins reading the story in the most exciting part, the boys soon nod off, the last of whom says as he falls asleep, “Didn't he never get into no fights, or kill nobody?” (Furman *Mothering* 38). Miss Loring responds in her diary,

“Discouraged, I sat for a long while gazing upon the twelve sleepers, and wondering what if anything would be the proper literary milk for my babes” (38). Later she asks one boy, Killis, about the origin of his name, supposing that he must be named for Achilles. When she explains that Achilles was “a hero who lived several thousand years ago, and was the greatest fighter of his time,” the boys excitedly ask her to tell stories about him (51-52). Her stories of the Trojan War are met with “intense interest” from the boys, and she reflects, “I have found an acceptable literary food for my babes, - but alas, what they want is not milk at all, but blood!” (52). While Miss Loring is pleased that the boys are interested in this, a respectable history lesson, she is clearly concerned about their interest in fighting. While this story tells the reader that the boys are interested in classical history, it more strongly emphasizes their obsession with war and violence.

While Furman’s other novels include more interaction between the teachers at Hindman, there is very little mention of the other women at Hindman in *Mothering On Perilous*. This creates for the reader the experience of the housemother within the house she leads, rather than as part of the larger settlement school. Perhaps Furman constructs this artificial isolation for the reader as a way to replicate the isolation she must have felt at Hindman, which would have been further intensified for her, working within the boarding house rather than in the school. The relationships that she chronicles in this novel are the intimate maternal relationships between housemother and boarding students. This creates the understanding that this smaller community within the settlement school has become her family, rather than the company of the other women. If she included more focus on the relationships with other women, the feeling invoked by this book would be greatly changed, mirroring the experience many women in America were gaining by joining women’s civic clubs. If the book focused on the relationships between Miss

Loring and her co-workers, this would draw attention to the separation between these women and the children. Furman's placement of Miss Loring as part of the family in the dormitory is very deliberate, and it emphasizes the close relationship she has with the boys.

Though Miss Loring's diary entries focus on the activities of the boys, most end with reflection, bringing her personal journey to light. The earliest of these reflections, on the day she arrives to the region (but not yet to school), exposes her deep grief and feeling of worthlessness without a family of her own to care for:

For I am one whom death has robbed of everything,—not only of my present but of my future. In the past seven years all has gone; and with Mother's passing a year ago, my very reason for existence went.

And yet none knows better than I that this sitting down with sorrow is both dangerous and wrong; if there is any Lethe for such pain as mine, any way of filling the lonely, dreaded years ahead of me, I must find it. It would be better if I had some spur of necessity to urge me on. As it is, I am all apathy. If there is anything that could interest me, it is some form of social service. A remarkable settlement work being done in the mountains of my own state recently came to my attention; and I wrote to the head-workers and arranged for the visit on which I am now embarked. I scarcely dare to hope, however, that I shall find a field of usefulness,—nothing interests me any more, and also, I have no gifts, and have never been trained for anything. My dearest ambition was to make a home, and have a houseful of children; and this, alas, was not to be! (Furman *Mothering* 5)

This passage from Miss Loring's first diary entry gives the reader insight into the emotional state that led Furman to take up settlement work (the death of her aunt, who raised her). However,

this excerpt is also representative of the budding feminism that was cropping up around the country. Here, it is revealed that without elders or children to care for, Miss Loring believes that she is without purpose. Yet, she allows a possibility of “some spur of necessity,” in the form of social work, could awaken her. This suggests that her mind is opening to the possibility of women’s social work outside the home, though it seems she doesn’t fully believe that this will be a fulfilling role.

This internal dialogue is representative of a larger movement in America at this time involving educated women seeking purpose outside the home. As discussed previously, many educated women faced a new challenge due to their education. No longer considered a top choice for a bride, their options were further limited by an ongoing lack of professional opportunities (Duff 5). The language that Furman uses in this section also gives testimony to her lack of self-esteem and self-worth at this point in her life. At this point, she sees her role—a typical role of women at this time—as that of domestic caregiver. Without other generations to care for, a lonely Furman feels of no use to anyone. Though she sees an opportunity to help others through social service, she still writes, “I scarcely dare to hope, however, that I shall find a field of usefulness” (Furman *Mothering* 5). This statement exposes, more than any other in this section, Furman’s deeply embedded belief in the role of women within the home. Though she sees an opportunity to work, she does not believe it will be as fulfilling as her would-be role of wife and mother. As it turns out, she is able to combine this desire for a “houseful of children” with social service work by acting as housemother to the young boys who board at the school.

Miss Loring’s tone of grief and worthlessness gradually dissipates after she becomes housemother and finds ways to be more involved with the students. It is a role that she grows into as she learns about the boys and their lives and families. Perhaps the most important of

these moments is when she realizes that many of the boys in her care have also lost their mothers. This brings out the humanity in both the housemother and her students, and facilitates mutual understanding. Though their lives have very little in common, the love and loss of a mother seems to be universal, and the comfort that each receives from the other brings relief. Furman is especially touched when she learns that Nucky Marris lost his mother just a few months prior. Her cause of Mrs. Marris' death creates a deeper connection and garners more sympathy. Though Nucky's male family members are involved in a violent feud, Mrs. Marris is killed in the most sympathetic scenario. Furman writes that Nucky's mother was killed when she was thrown from her horse after visiting the settlement school to lend her support.

This discussion about mothers comes during the week of Miss Loring's mother's birthday. This timing brings a transformation. Miss Loring, being the comforter to her boys, becomes the mother, and sheds her mourning clothes for reds and pinks at the request of the boys. Nucky buys her pink ribbons to replace the black with money he has earned by asking for extra chores. She reflects, "I will try to deserve his sacrifice and love, - to-morrow I will send away not only for bright ribbons, but for cheerful dresses which shall please his eyes and those of the others. No longer shall they see me in garments of heaviness" (Furman *Mothering* 96).

Whether this desire for domesticity was Furman's true want for herself, or just a way of creating true fulfillment for the character of Miss Loring is unclear. However, the fact that Miss Loring finds fulfillment in this artificial domestic sphere is poignant either way. This need for family is neatly answered and fulfilled one hundred pages later, once Miss Loring is settled into the work of being a housemother, and has shed her black mourning clothes, "Who, seeing me sit here before our cottage fire this evening, clothed in the color of life and joy, with my happy and cheerful family close around, would ever believe me to be the same woman who arrived here

something more than two months ago, with a heart even more dark and desolate than her garb of woe? Truly, the ways and goodness of God are past imagining” (Furman *Mothering* 128). This reflection on Miss Loring’s change of mental and emotional state tells the reader how involved she has become in her work. From this, the reader understands that the experience she has had has had a profound and lasting impact. That is to say, her involvement has become a force strong enough to replace the state of grief that was consuming her life before joining the settlement school.

This information must be considered when analyzing her reflections of the settlement school boys and their families and communities. She is no longer a visitor who will simply do her best to help and then return to her previous life. Her whole life has been altered, and she credits this experience for this positive change. This is important when comparing her writing to that of the local color writers. Their aim was to make a living by writing stories that would captivate the American public. With this deeply personal connection to the community, Furman’s reflections necessarily become more sympathetic. While a local color author may be able to detach from the community and include only the most alarming of details, Furman tells several sides of each story – how the boys see the world around them, how she sees it, and often how she sees the boys see it. While she tends to believe that her truth is best, she understands that the boys’ version is not backwards, but is based in the realities that they’ve been living, leading to her reflections on their observations. This is, perhaps, the most important difference between the local color writers’ descriptions of Appalachians and Furman’s approach—she places herself as the outsider in the community, rather than the community as being the outsiders in modern America.

Receiving the most attention in the novel is the boys' tendencies towards violence, and their reverence for violence as a trait of a hero. While the boys' talk, and even the boys' fighting in the schoolyard seems somewhat innocent and defensible with a "boys will be boys" attitude, the implication when paired with the deadly Marrs-Cheever feud shows the audience that these boys do not grow out of this violence, rather they grow into it. This fear becomes reality when Nucky Marrs, only twelve years old, is shot by one of the Cheever boys when on lookout for his older brother. He survives only because Miss Loring has the knowledge of modern medical practice and calls in a surgeon from outside the area. This event is the climax of the novel. Miss Loring saves this child with her education and connections to the world outside of Appalachia. Whereas Nucky's family and neighbors were holding vigil and waiting for Nucky to die, Miss Loring has the ability to be proactive. If *Mothering On Perilous* is to be seen as a story of how settlement schools benefit the region, it is through this simple act of saving a child's life with education. If the story concluded with Nucky's recovery, it would be easy to assign this meaning to the novel. But, the story does not conclude with Nucky's recovery. In fact, the story continues for nearly another hundred pages. In this last third of the novel, Miss Loring begins to change her mind on what society deems right and wrong, and brings such questions to the mind of the reader. This allows the reader to understand and acknowledge the truth that was born from the intersection of these two cultures, to realize that rather than right or wrong there could be a third option where both sides learn and become the best they can be. This is the moral of Furman's story.

Nucky was shot while keeping watch for the Cheever boys, who made it clear that they would not rest until Nucky's older brother, Blant, was dead. Nucky had been on watch for the Cheevers, and had overheard their plan to take Blant down. Without the time to warn Blant,

Nucky had to act on his own, and shot at them. No one was killed in this exchange, though boys on both sides were wounded. While Nucky was in recovery at the school, the Marrs-Cheever feud resumed. Because Nucky couldn't help out, Blant's best friend, Rich, stayed at the Marrs' house to offer back up for Blant. One night during dinner the family heard a call from the road. Blant had been having visions of Rich headless, and believed this to be an omen of Rich's impending murder by the Cheevers, so he walked up to the road instead of letting Rich go in his place. What followed was tragedy. Blant approached the stranger who had called out, suspecting it was a ruse to get him out of the house so that one of the Cheever boys could sneak up on him. Blant heard shots from behind him, and spun around to return fire, fatally wounding Rich, who had come out against Blant's orders, to try to protect him. While this seems like a long description of this event, the details are important to understanding the transformation that follows for Miss Loring.

Though Blant had killed many, many Cheevers in feuding, he was usually left alone by the sheriffs. However, his guilt in killing his best friend led Blant to turn himself in, saying that because it is against God's law to kill himself, he must turn himself in and be put to death by the courts (234). Immediately, Miss Loring's response to the news of the killing and Blant's jailing is one of intense sympathy:

I went to the jail to see Blant this morning, - but was almost sorry that I did so. He sits there in his cell, speechless, despairing, refusing to eat or rest, hearing and seeing nothing. In vain the jail-keeper and I attempted to talk to him and tell him he must not reproach himself so bitterly, or give way to such utter despair, since he was in no way to blame for the death of his friend. He looked agonizingly beyond us, evidently not conscious that we were talking. (236)

Though one would expect the settlement school worker to be the one to bring the word of justice to the situation, Miss Loring does not believe Blant has done wrong, even though a purely innocent man has been killed. Whereas Miss Loring had previously been shocked at the boys' interest in war stories, here she finds herself in the middle of one, and siding with the killer. Miss Loring seems to be comfortable with this, though she spends much time reflecting on it in her diary, mentioning repeatedly that Blant's duties in his home caring for his deceased mother's very young children as well as his father, lame from a feuding wound, are far more important than Blant serving time in prison. While this thought flows somewhat rationally, the more surprising aspect is her believing that he never should have turned himself in. This feeling is echoed by none other than the guard who stands watch over Blant in jail, who says to Blant:

Everybody knows how it was betwixt you and Rich; and as for [the Cheevers boys] Todd and Elhannon and Ben and Jeems that you kilt, and t'other Cheevers you wounded, why, that war is a family affair, in which the law haint got no particular call, or no great desire, to meddle, and wouldn't if you hadn't a-throwed yourself spang in its arms thisaway. As it is, you have put it in a mighty embarrassing position, and, as you might say, forced it to set up and take notice, and probably some kind of action, - it may be a couple a year' sentence to Frankfort. (257-8)

Though all seem to agree that Blant shouldn't be held responsible, he turned himself in, and the court is now obligated to produce consequences. Though Blant hopes for a death sentence due to his grief, the county had never executed anyone, and the community believes that he would likely only be sentenced to a few years at the state penitentiary in Frankfort. As Blant begins to understand this likelihood, he develops a plan to escape. His infant sister he usually cares for has

been near death in his absence, and he realizes his higher means of serving this justice is to serve his family. Blant escapes and runs past the school, with Nucky cheering him on and everyone, including Miss Loring and the other boys, watching. The keeper from the jail chases Blant along the treeline, but when Blant reaches the woods, the keeper retreats. Nucky races home to visit with Blant. Upon his return, Nucky brings news that Blant has called off the feud, giving the Cheevers the bit of land their families had been feuding over for generations, and expressing sorrow and regret over the lives that were lost. With this news, the other boys ask Nucky, “Do you aim to let ‘em keep it when you git grown?” (309). He replies, “I allow I’ll be the same kind of a hero Blant is” (309). This is the last word from any of the mountain boys, and the novel then closes with a final diary entry by Miss Loring on Easter Sunday:

It is the season of new life. To-day the brown mountain sides are suddenly clothed with innumerable tender shades of green, and against them the exquisite ‘sarvice’ tree, incomparable symbol of spiritual resonance, stands forth in unearthly beauty. It speaks to me not only of the awakening of Blant and Nucky to higher things, and of the coming day when from all hearts shall be cast out the ‘dread brood of Chaos and Old Night,’ pride, hatred and warfare, but of my own wonderful resurrection from grief, despair and selfishness to life and love and service. Now that I have Nucky back again, my joy is perfect, my cup overflows. To-day I have written my agent to accept one of the offers I have had for the old home, - the proceeds shall be used for sending my boys to college when the time comes. Henceforth my home is here, - here, where my once lonely and drifting barque is held in a fair harbor by twelve strong anchors. Lapped

continually by warm tides of love and youth and joy. And my dearest hope is that the rest of my days may be spent Mothering on Perilous. (309-310)

The moral of Furman's story is how this intersection of two differing cultures – the children of the rural Southern Appalachian Mountains and the settlement school women – become the best version of their unique selves at the settlement school. While each learned from the other and even took on adaptations from this knowledge, they each retained their own cultural identity. Furman's story thus fulfills Katherine Pettit's mission for the settlement school—"to learn all we can and teach all we can."

V. Conclusion

The character of Miss Loring embodies important details that are known to be true of Furman and her life. Furman arrived at Hindman Settlement School while grieving for her aunt. Miss Loring arrives at the school grieving for her recently deceased mother. Furman was unmarried and thirty-seven years old when she arrived at the school, believing that she was too old to get married or have children. Though her age is not mentioned specifically, it is clear that Miss Loring is in the same situation as she describes herself as too old to get married or have children of her own. Furman planned to stay only a short time, but stayed nearly two decades. *Mothering On Perilous* ends with Miss Loring planning to remain at the school for the foreseeable future. The fact that Furman included such personal details of her own life is tremendously important. The details that link Furman to her main character are the structure for Miss Loring's transformation in the novel. It seems reasonable, even appropriate, to assume that the personal journey of Miss Loring is the true journey of Lucy Furman. As for the details of the boys' lives – while it cannot be known if the interactions portrayed are true-life events, the way

Furman represents the boys is far more important. Because she did have direct interaction with the boys and their families during the years she served as housemother at Hindman, Furman's representation of the boys is the way she would choose others to view them. That is to say, Furman, as the writer of the novel, controls the way the audience sees her characters. The fact that she has chosen to show them in a flattering and easily-relatable way indicates that she wanted greater America to have this view of Appalachia rather than that proposed by the local color articles. Most critical to the novel is Furman's portrayal of the relationship between housemother and boys as symbiotic; for everything that Miss Loring gives, she gains even more. Miss Loring longs for a family of her own, and she becomes housemother to twelve boys. Miss Loring longs to be of use to someone now that her mother has passed away, and the boys keep her busy.

It cannot be confirmed whether Furman's works are accurate portrayals of her experience and that of her colleagues at Hindman; the school might simply have provided a lively backdrop for regional fiction, for which there was a large market at the time. Nonetheless, Furman's novels were well received and published in several editions, suggesting that these novels likely had an impact on understanding of the region. Though Furman's writing has not received considerable attention from scholars, her work is an important contribution. Furman's novels preserve a way of life and pattern of thought that was particular to the population of women who traveled to the region to set up settlement schools. The compassionate character of Miss Cecelia Loring, housemother in *Mothering On Perilous*, inspires understanding and empathy rather than condescension towards the eastern Kentucky mountain population. Additionally, Miss Loring's journey through the novel emphasizes the benefit that she realizes while volunteering in this social service. When Miss Loring arrived at the school she had low self-esteem and was

mourning the loss of her mother. Lacking a family of her own, her left felt empty and without purpose. The novel ends in a spirit of rebirth on Easter Sunday as Miss Loring reflects on how grateful she is for her role at the settlement school as mother to the young boys. She is confident, and has found purpose in her work in the mountains.

Furman must have been acutely aware of how her writing stood to impact the settlement school. Her works, of course, are representative of the truths that she wished to share about her experience with the mountain population and her students. Regardless of whether the instances captured in the novels are really fictional, the representation was borne out of the mind of a woman deeply invested in the population she wrote about. Whereas local color authors sought to sell a story, and settlement school founders sought to raise money, Furman clearly intended her work to be the reflection of her experience at the school. This explains why she gave Miss Loring so many of her own attributes, including her unwed and childless status, as such social standing for a woman in her late thirties was still seen as unflattering at the time.

Furman's novel *Mothering On Perilous* offers a glimpse not only into the world of the rural and poor Southern Appalachian at a particular time, but also into the mind frame of the women who left another world behind to bring education to the region. Furman's work serves as an artifact of symbiotic relationship that existed at the intersection of these two cultures. These women had an impact on the region, and, perhaps more importantly, the region had an impact on the women. Furman's writing speaks to this point directly, and is therefore the perfect culmination of her work at the settlement school. *Mothering On Perilous*, while not a history of Hindman Settlement School directly, is a narration of the emotions and relationships that existed between individuals at the school. Allowing the novel to exist in its appropriate sphere of one account of one woman's life, the emotional truth becomes much more apparent. While it cannot

be determined if each moment occurred exactly as it was written, it is certain that Lucy Furman lived the life she wrote about in *Mothering On Perilous*, and therefore it is a true reflection of one woman's truth of her settlement school experience.

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