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The central claim of this project is that literary and historical texts from the turn of the last century rhetorically contained the Southern Appalachian mountaineer through racializing that figure into less-than-normative whiteness and anachronizing that figure into incompatibility with the modern era. Other scholars have traced the origins of Appalachian stereotypes to this foundational period, and some have also pointed to the capitalistic utility of Appalachian stereotypes given the contemporaneous and rather sudden profitability of Appalachian land and labor via the coal and timber industries. I expand upon previous scholarship to examine this phenomenon in terms of exploitative trends in American history and literature. In particular, I draw a parallel between the rhetoric surrounding the supposedly “Vanishing Indian” in the mid-nineteenth century and that of the supposedly doomed mountaineer, hopelessly backward and incapable of modernizing, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

The literary texts that established the hillbilly stereotype—one that has far surpassed the texts themselves in ubiquity—as well as that stereotype’s wide acceptance in historical paratexts of the period demonstrate that mountaineers’ rhetorical exploitation had more than a casual relationship with their material exploitation. In this vein, chapters one through three consider Mary N. Murfree’s *In the Tennessee Mountains* (1884), Emma Bell Miles’s *The Spirit of the Mountains* (1905), and John Fox, Jr’s *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (1908), in the context of an emerging racial hierarchy of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, which along with denigrating those deemed

non-white also privileged and disenfranchised particular kinds of whiteness. Chapter four examines more recent Appalachian literature by Lee Smith and Silas House. Though their novels under consideration here, *Fair and Tender Ladies* (1988) and *A Parchment of Leaves* (2001), respectively, were published in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries, they are set at the turn of the twentieth century, the same period as the earlier literary texts examined in this project. Having at their disposal the effects of land usurpation, Smith and House are able to view the figure of the Southern Appalachian mountaineer over the *longue durée*, complicating and amending that figure's earlier characterization. Thus, these authors' portrayals have something to tell us about the enduring marginalization of the mountaineer and the persistence of historical disenfranchisement. Moreover, while the literature of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, I argue, was complicit with the ruinous re-appropriation of mountain lands by greedy industrial interests, the literature of the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries may serve as a tool in rehabilitating the image of the Appalachian mountaineer. Finally, in chapter five, the conclusion, I consider modern popular conceptions of Appalachian people, some of which demonstrate that the hillbilly stereotype and its relationship to economic disenfranchisement persist to this day.

OTHER AMERICANS: THE RACIALIZED AND ANACHRONIZED
APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINEER AT THE TURN
OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by

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I dedicate this project to my maternal grandfather, Jack Esham, who grew up during the Great Depression in the Appalachian foothills of Portsmouth, Ohio, and Lewis County, Kentucky. He did not complete high school, leaving home at 17 to serve in the Navy in WWII, but he was a life-long learner. I regret that Pa did not live to see me complete my degree, but he left behind a legacy of highly educated daughters and grandchildren, in no small part because of the value he placed on education.



APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by Sara Taylor Boissonneau has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I am convinced that in order to understand culture in the mountains—or indeed in any culturally enclaved area within a larger, formally pluralistic but essentially assimilationist social system—one must inevitably talk about the politics of culture.

-David Whisnant, *All that is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region*, 7

The Emergence of Appalachia in the National Imagination

In an 1899 article in the *Atlantic Monthly* entitled, “Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains,” William Goodell Frost, then president of Berea College in Kentucky, famously asked,

The question is whether the mountain people can be enlightened and guided so that they can have a part in the development of their own country, or whether they must give place to foreigners and melt away like so many Indians. (319)

This statement is a prime example of the kind of rhetoric that typified descriptions of Southern Appalachian mountaineers at the turn of the twentieth century.¹ Here, Frost likens Kentucky mountaineers to the popular idea of “vanishing Indians,” a false phenomenon consumed by the reading public that in part made the usurpation of native

¹ Scholars generally agree that the first major description of Appalachian mountaineers as a distinct population in the United States is Will Wallace Harney’s “A Strange Land and a Peculiar People,” published in *Lippincott’s* in 1873. The title has become shorthand for Othering perceptions of Appalachian mountaineers.

lands and the violent removal of aboriginal peoples from those lands more palatable to the genteel reading public. Indeed, there is an important similarity between Frost's rhetoric of the disappearing mountaineer and that of the "vanishing Indian."

Brian Dippie, in his monograph, *Vanishing Americans: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy*, describes "Vanishing Americans" as the nineteenth-century idea that "Indians...are a vanishing race; they have been wasting away since the day the white man arrived, diminishing in vitality and numbers until, in some not too distant future, no red men will be left on the face of the earth (xi)." Scholar Lora Romero, in discussing the "vanishing Indian" trope, points to James Fenimore Cooper's introduction to the 1831 edition of *The Last of the Mohicans* as an important example of that rhetoric: "The Mohicans," Cooper writes,

were the possessors of the country first occupied by the Europeans in this portion of the continent. They were, consequently, the first dispossessed; and the seemingly inevitable fate of all these people, who disappear before the advances, or it might be said the inroads of civilisation, as the verdure of their native forests falls before the nipping frost, is represented as having already befallen them. There is sufficient historical truth in the picture to justify the use that has been made of it. (9)

Cooper is at once critical of the foregone conclusion that Native Americans will (or already have begun to) disappear even as he explains that the idea is rooted in "sufficient historical fact." As Romero explains, "The elegiac mode here performs the historical sleight-of-hand crucial to the topos of the doomed aboriginal: it represents the disappearance of the native as not just natural but as having already happened" (385). We can nearly apply this description to Frost's characterization of Southern Appalachian

mountaineers. In a manner similar to writers whose subject was Native Americans, Frost racializes and anachronizes Southern Appalachian mountaineers, pointing to their inevitable disappearance if they cannot modernize. Although Frost likely hoped to garner support for such modernizing projects as the Appalachian college of which he was president, taken alongside paratextual historical and literary documents, his question about the future of the mountaineer seems likely to be answered in the negative.²

Here, and throughout this dissertation, I mean “racialize” in terms of characterizing so as to associate a particular person or group of people with those considered “non-white.” This is not to suggest that “white” people somehow are without race in a way that people of color are not; rather, I am pointing to the systems of privilege that appertain to whiteness in the United States, therefore suggesting that to “racialize” mountaineers was to call into question their whiteness and, thus, their claim to the privileges of white status. By “anachronize,” as I explain further below, I mean to relegate to another time and mark as out of step with the present age.

Indeed, literary and historical texts from the turn of the twentieth century mark the Southern Appalachian mountaineer as incompatible with an emerging highpoint of the industrial era. As Appalachian studies scholar Ronald D. Eller notes in *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South 1888-1930*,

² Shapiro convincingly argues that Frost was quite invested in the idea of Appalachians’ normative whiteness as it put them at the top of the list for benevolence projects and funding (see *Appalachia on our Mind*, and Chapter three in particular). However, that rhetoric implicitly questioning mountaineers’ race/ethnicity crept into Frost’s writing demonstrates how pervasive these ideas were in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. See chapter two of this dissertation for further discussion of pervasive derogatory rhetoric, even when writers sought to laud mountain culture, as Emma Bell Miles did.

Between 1870 and 1890, over two hundred travel accounts and short stories were published in which the mountain people emerged as a rude, backward, romantic, and sometimes violent race who had quietly lived for generations in isolation from the mainstream of American life. (xvi)³

Marked as ethnically Other and relegated to the past, the mountaineer was rhetorically contained and unable to participate in or, importantly, profit from the evolving economic system of the region, which would center on coal mining and the harvesting of lumber. I explore through this project the particular nuances of anachronization and racialization that made the stereotyped image of the mountaineer useful to companies in need of land and labor. Again, it seems more than coincidence that Southern Appalachian mountaineers would become such a favorite subject for literary depiction and, if we are being fair, ridicule at the same time as their lands became valuable to business interests. Given the concurrent emergence of the profitability of Southern Appalachian land and what would become the hillbilly stereotype, I conceive of my project as an investigation into the processes of rhetorical containment that co-occur with the desire to exploit a particular population and/or their property. The similarities between the ways normatively white elites characterized racial minorities at the turn of the century and the

³ It is important to distinguish between the United States' industrialization in general and that of the mountain South in particular. As Eller describes,

The southern mountain country was relatively untouched by the early phases of American industrialization. Small quantities of coal were mined and marketed in parts of western Virginia as early as the 1790s. Gold, copper, and lead mines were opened after the turn of the [nineteenth] century in parts of northern Georgia, western North Carolina, and eastern Tennessee, and in the Great Kanawha Valley a major saline industry had developed by the 1830s. But these and other nonagrarian enterprises had relatively little impact upon the economy and lifestyles of the mountain people. The limitations of terrain, a restrictive transportation network, and the relative absence of slavery served to limit the growth of commercial agriculture in the region and to facilitate the survival of traditional cultural patterns and a family based economy and social system. (4)

image of the mountaineer that emerged in popular consciousness should not surprise us. From each group, something was desired, be it labor, land, or mere certainty in one's supposed superiority vis-a-vis unquestioned whiteness.

Chapter Overview

The literary texts that established the hillbilly stereotype—one that has far surpassed the texts themselves in ubiquity—as well as that stereotype's wide acceptance in historical paratexts of the period demonstrate that mountaineers' rhetorical exploitation had more than a casual relationship with their material exploitation. In this vein, chapters one through three examine Mary N. Murfree's *In the Tennessee Mountains* (1884), Emma Bell Miles's *The Spirit of the Mountains* (1905), and John Fox, Jr's *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (1908), in the context of an emerging racial hierarchy of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, which along with denigrating those deemed non-white also privileged and disenfranchised particular kinds of whiteness. The mountaineer, in this paradigm, was similar to the “dark whites” described by David Roediger in his studies on immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. I supplement these readings with relevant land deeds, correspondence, home mission reports, as well as short fiction and topical essays published in elite national periodicals. Alongside literary texts, these documents demonstrate the rhetorical containment of the mountaineer at this critical historical juncture. As Nina Silber argues, “While local colorists were discovering the ‘peculiar’ qualities of Appalachia, northern capitalists and investors had begun to make their own discovery in this region at precisely the same time” (249). In short, the co-emergence of what is now the well-known stereotype of the mountaineer and the

expanding of industrial enterprises that made Appalachian land more profitable than it had ever been before is not mere coincidence.

One could cite a host of figures to demonstrate just how profitable Appalachian land became at the turn of the century and the extent to which those from outside the region came to control the region's capital. For example,

[I]n 1892, more than a million dollars a month was going into the coal hands of southwest Virginia and West Virginia, and capitalists were rapidly penetrating other areas of the Appalachian South. By 1892, large, primarily nonresident interests owned over 80 percent of the mineral lands of Bell County, Kentucky. More than 60 percent of the land in Harlan, Leslie, Letcher, and Rowan counties, Kentucky, was owned by nonresident taxpayers. With the transition in land ownership, the power to shape the future of the mountains was transferred to the boardrooms and office chambers of New York, Philadelphia, and Richmond. (Eller 64)

Already, Appalachia was deeply integrated in the national economy, even as the region was depicted as a world apart. The texts that helped established the latter idea were part of the local color/regionalist movement of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Richard Brodhead defines regionalism as literature that “requires a setting outside the world of modern development, a zone of backwardness where locally variant folkways still prevail” (115). I will return shortly to the features of/distinctions between regionalism and local color, but for now, I adopt Brodhead's framework to highlight a particular feature of the texts this dissertation examines: the supposed separateness of Appalachian spaces from the modern world. As we shall see, however, and as Whisnant so artfully demonstrates in *All That is Native and Fine*, outside interventions in

Appalachia were primary shapers of popular conceptions of Appalachian identity and, indeed, of lived Appalachian experience.

Chapter four examines more recent Appalachian literature by Lee Smith and Silas House. Though their novels under consideration here, *Fair and Tender Ladies* (1988) and *A Parchment of Leaves* (2001), respectively, were published in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries, they are set at the turn of the twentieth century, the same period as the earlier literary texts examined in this project. Having at their disposal the effects of land usurpation, Smith and House are able to view the figure of the Southern Appalachian mountaineer over the *longue durée*, complicating and amending that figure's earlier characterization. Thus, these authors' portrayals have something to tell us about the enduring marginalization of the mountaineer and the persistence of historical disenfranchisement. Moreover, while the literature of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, I argue, was complicit with the ruinous re-appropriation of mountain lands by greedy industrial interests, the literature of the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries may serve as a tool in rehabilitating the image of the Appalachian mountaineer. Finally, in chapter five, the conclusion, I consider modern popular conceptions of Appalachian people, some of which demonstrate that the hillbilly stereotype and its relationship to economic disenfranchisement persist to this day. Finally, in chapter five, the conclusion, I consider modern popular conceptions of Appalachian people, many of which demonstrate that the hillbilly stereotype and its relationship to economic disenfranchisement persist to this day.

Contribution to Existing Scholarship

The central claim of this project is that the literary and historical texts under examination in this dissertation rhetorically contained the Southern Appalachian mountaineer through racializing that figure into less-than-normative whiteness and anachronizing that figure into incompatibility with the modern era.⁴ Other scholars, especially Allen Batteau and Whisnant, have also pointed to the capitalistic utility of Appalachian stereotypes given the rather sudden profitability of Appalachian at the turn of the last century.⁵ I wish to think about this phenomenon in terms of exploitative trends in American history and literature. In particular, I draw a parallel between the rhetoric surrounding the supposedly “Vanishing Indian” in the mid-nineteenth century and that of the supposedly doomed mountaineer, hopelessly backward and incapable of modernizing, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.⁶

⁴ Shapiro notes of early local color and travel sketches that regional backwaters, “those ‘little corners’ were separated from the bourgeois, urban present by an ethnic or chronological distance” (15). Because mountaineers and Appalachia thwarted these expectations in some ways (whiteness, living in parts of the United States that had been “settled by the first generation of frontiersmen”), Shapiro argues that local color writers found the perceived otherness of Southern Appalachian mountaineers particularly startling. I complicate this idea throughout my dissertation (particularly the notion of unquestioned whiteness), but the idea of “ethnic and chronological distance” greatly influenced my focus on the ideas of racialization and anachronization.

⁵ In *Modernizing the Mountaineer*, Whisnant argues,

The business community’s economic need for the wealth of the region turns out to be matched by the larger public’s manipulated psychic ‘need’ (treated in Henry D. Shapiro’s...*Appalachia on Out Mind*) for Appalachia as a reassuring norm against which to gauge its own well-being and self-esteem. The hallmark of development efforts, public and private, has been their genius for rationalizing each in terms of the other. (xxi).

⁶ In the afterword to *All that is Native and Fine*, Whisnant also compares mountaineers to Native Americans. In particular, he notes the similarities among cultural interventions foisted upon the two groups by outsiders. “The ‘savagism’ of the Indians,” he writes, “was functionally analogous to mountaineers’ social and cultural ‘backwardness’; both derived from a culturally based misperception. Like the Indians, mountaineers were ambivalently characterized as noble (‘100% Americans of the best stock’) or ignoble

In her 2011 monograph *Dear Appalachia: Readers, Identity, and Popular Fiction since 1878*, Emily Satterwhite

speculate[s] that readers' interest in region as a site of authentic culture rose and fell in part in relation to the rise and fall of U.S. imperialism and neo-imperialism and attendant concerns about racial difference, anxieties about geographic and upward mobility, and fears about the alienating effects of modernity and postmodernity (3).⁷

The city is the site of modernity; therefore, rural landscapes and their inhabitants are generally conceived of as incompatible with the modern world. Writers framed Appalachia's incompatibility as particularly acute, however, given the physical barriers of the mountains that made access to the "civilized" world more difficult for the average mountaineer. In this way, the mountaineer emerged as perhaps the *most* incompatible

(inbred degenerates, feudists, and moonshiners)" (257). In keeping with the aims of his study, Whisnant focuses on the effects of cultural interventions and "uplift" project, while my study focuses more specifically on the similarities among the literary constructions/rhetorical containment of these two groups.

⁷ Satterwhite's monograph examines many of the same issues my dissertation traces but through the lens of reception studies. In some ways, my work overlaps a great deal with Satterwhite's, even examining some of the same texts. Satterwhite argues that "physically and upwardly mobile residents of the region from the first Gilded Age to the second lent crucial credibility to the essentialist notions of Authentic Appalachia in national best sellers" (8). However, Satterwhite's incredibly important work focuses on the role readers played in creating Appalachian identity through their responses to its portrayal in popular fiction. "All the readers examined in this book," she writes,

from professional reviewers to working-class out-migrants from the South, shared a need for an imagined geography of Authentic Appalachia in order to bolster their own status, appease fears of placelessness, and confirm a vision of the nation and the world as one wherein whites of a certain class should appreciate but must manage cultural difference. Sadly, the Authentic Appalachia embraced by fans of best sellers may help reinforce simplistic versions of the region that celebrate whiteness, glorify Americanness, and figure primitive peoples the world over as in need of the expert guidance of well-to-do Americans. (8)

My study examines the rhetorical processes authors such as Fox, Miles, and Murfree participated in, and the ways in which authors such as Smith and House have sought to revise the images wrought by that rhetoric. Moreover, I focus on these processes as attempts to justify and/or as responses to the forces of industrialization and modernization.

local color figure. It is within this context that the idea of the mountaineer developed, and we should thus pay careful attention to the nuanced and at times self-contradictory rhetoric that surrounded the mountaineer during this period. Doing so allows us to understand the uses to which the popular idea of the mountaineer was put, whether implicitly or explicitly, by business interests that stood to profit from the mountaineer's Othering.

My work here is an intervention in both scholarship on literary regionalism/local color and whiteness studies. I aim to tease out the fraught racial position occupied by the Appalachian mountaineer at the turn of the last century vis-a-vis his literary and material exploitation. I suggest that while Appalachian fiction of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century hemmed in Appalachia as a site of intractable provinciality, the literature of a century later (set, importantly, during that earlier period), revises the paradigm to proffer Appalachia as a site for reconciling difference through the a-priori assumption of its Otherness in relation to everything else. Similarly, this project builds on whiteness studies in the vein of Roediger and Matthew Frye Jacobson, to argue that when viewed through the lens of the construction of whiteness and the fluidity of race more generally, the racialized and anachronized mountaineer is nothing if not a product of the changing economic conditions and cultural capital that grant and deny whiteness to various actors over time. These processes simultaneously allowed the white Appalachian mountaineer to be envisioned as a normatively white contemporary ancestor, a bulwark of racial sameness and cultural homogeneity tucked away in the mountains, as well as a

not-quite-white Other.⁸ It is precisely at this point of tension—the paradox of a quintessentially white and yet racially Other mountaineer—that I wish to begin my argument.

Satterwhite identifies three functions of the literary construction of Appalachian whiteness:

[T]he version of whiteness lauded by readers of Appalachian-set fiction is a complicated one rooted in long-standing nostalgia for Anglo-Saxon folk figured as simple and disadvantaged. The threefold representation of Appalachians as (1) presumptively ‘pure Anglo-Saxons *and* (2) racially innocent—which is to say, ignorant of slavery and racial violence—*and* (3) ethnic minorities. Appalachia becomes parallel to other minority groups and yet simultaneously represents the most quintessentially American culture possible. (219)

Throughout my dissertation, especially in chapter two, I come to similar conclusions about the paradox of Appalachian whiteness. However, these constructions become more complicated when we contemplate some writers’ emphasis on mountaineers’ Celtic heritage, which comes with its own set of sociopolitical baggage, as well as the

⁸ Satterwhite suggests that white America’s consumption of turn of the century Appalachian literature was a “romance with whiteness” (211). Stephanie Foote’s thinking about the national embeddedness of regional literatures and that movement’s relationship to constructions of ethnicity and race has also influenced my thinking here. In the introduction to her monograph, *Regional Fictions*, Foote argues, “It is no longer possible to regard regional writing as representing a common national past; rather, we must see it as helping construct a common past in the face of, and out of the raw material of, the increasing immigration and imperialism of the nineteenth century. “Regionalism...did not merely attempt to mediate national concerns about the relationship of strangers and natives; it also indicated that at the core of every representation of the native was a foreigner” (13). Foote’s paradox of native foreigners—in contrast to the previously held notions of regionalism as a project devoted to “constructing a culturally homogenous region”—is borne out by the paradox of the “native mountaineer,” at once Other and somehow quintessentially American (see chapter two of this dissertation for a fuller discussion of the mountaineer paradox).

similarities between the rhetorical containment of Appalachian mountaineers and that of supposedly “vanishing Indians” in the nineteenth century.

Matt Wray argues in *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness* that through the eugenics movement and fears surrounding the “degeneracy” supposedly resulting from “consanguinity (marriage or sexual reproduction by close relations),” lower class whites occupied an often-ignored position in the evolving race and class hierarchies of the turn of the twentieth century:

Professional scientists, in turning their analytical gaze toward poor rural whites, crafted bold and precise lines of race, class, gender, and sexuality, thus accomplishing some of the boundary work necessary for the formation of their own group and individual identities, and boosting them in their drive for higher status, prestige, and social advancement. In this way, poor rural whites played a crucial role in the self-fashioning of turn-of-the-century white middle-class American identity, a role that has been consistently overlooked by historians and sociologists of the middle class. (68)

The literary texts of this period, which helped establish the idea that Appalachian mountaineers were degenerate inbreds, positioned them as chief demarcators of the line between respectable, normative whiteness and less-than-whiteness. Indeed, the texts under examination in this dissertation emerged amidst a general American Zeitgeist fraught with racial anxieties over supposedly waning whiteness and vexed legal questions about what “kinds” of immigrants should be granted access to U.S. citizenship and categorizations of whiteness. According to Jacobson,

it is critical to recognize that figures...central to American political and intellectual life shared many of [the] basic assumptions [held by Eugenicists]—Theodore Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, Edward A. Ross, Frederick Jackson Turner, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman are among them. (88)

My study thus places primary literary works about Southern Appalachian mountaineers in conversation with this milieu. In particular, chapter three considers Fox's work in light of his correspondence with Theodore Roosevelt regarding Fox's writing and the status of mountaineers, the very existence of which attests to the national embeddedness of the rhetorical containment of the Southern Appalachian mountaineer.

The Otherness of the inhabitants of Southern Appalachia—or at least its representation in popular culture—has garnered scholarly attention since around the 1960's, a time when the “war on poverty” brought national attention to the region. Such attention prompted meta-analysis of the region and the establishment of Appalachian studies courses at major universities. A 1976 interview with a teacher of such a course at Marshall University (located in the Appalachian hills of Huntington, West Virginia) asks through its title, “Is Appalachian Literature an Ethnic Literature?” This interview indicates that one can in fact view Appalachian literature as an ethnic literature by virtue of the distinctive folkways described in these texts, including unique religious practices and linguistic features. However, this instructor and other champions of Appalachian culture in that foundational period of the discipline highlighted the perceived continuity of Appalachian culture with its Scots-Irish forbears (Deutsch and Lenning). This clinging to Scots-Irish heritage performs at least two rhetorical moves that are important to my project: first, it argues for the normative whiteness of the Appalachian mountaineer; second, it continues the mountaineer's relegation to a by-gone era. In other words, the mid-twentieth-century celebration of Appalachian culture seems to have sought correction of the racialization and ethnic Otherness of the mountaineer as established by

turn-of-the-century literature, even as it reinforced the mountaineer's anachronization.

This project, then, examines the evolving nature of the mountaineer's *characterization* as an ethnic Other, particularly as this phenomenon pertains to ideas of whiteness and (in)compatibility with the modern era.

Batteau argues,

The image of Appalachia as a strange land and peculiar people was elaborated at the very same time that the relationships of external domination and control of the Southern Mountain Region's natural and human resources were being elaborated. Until very recently, the idea of Appalachia has deflected attention away from the political interests that contributed to the definition of the region, at times in a manner that denied the basic premises of those interests. (15)

Indeed, Batteau is right that the co-emergence of the idea of Appalachia and its profitability as a region are not coincidental. As Batteau continues, "in the prevailing image [of Appalachia] it was not the monopolization of public services in the lowlands but the degeneracy of the highlanders that produced high levels of poverty and illiteracy" (15). Batteau's sweeping analysis contends that the development of the image of Appalachia was part of a project protecting "The integrity of the domestic sphere in the face of capitalist expansion, the survival of the Anglo-Saxon race threatened by immigrant hordes, [and] the triumph of democracy over fascists and plutocrats" (15). To be sure, the image of the Appalachian mountaineer that emerged in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was bound up with the concerns of the nation as a whole. However, the mountaineer's portrayal in local color and regionalist pieces of the period was fraught with anxiety about the mountaineer's racial status, even as he was lauded as "real" American stock. Moreover, the mountaineer was portrayed in ways that marked

him as hopelessly incompatible with the modern age, and therefore, destined to fade into American folklore of yesteryear, a quaint reminder of the time before America came of age.

Such depictions justified outside control of the Southern Appalachian region. From Protestant Home Mission boards and conservationists to coal and timber companies, Southern Appalachia and its inhabitants have been viewed as resources and/or nuisances rather than as land and autonomous inhabitants. Take for example, Eller's description of turn-of-the-century fights within the "conservation movement" between "advocates of 'scenic preservation' and supporters of 'economic forestry'":

Both factions approached the issue from a decidedly nationalistic and predominantly urban perspective. National needs, whether they were those of the tourist, the scientist, or the industrialist, were given priority over local concerns. The popular image of the mountaineer as backward, degenerate, and uncivilized (the very 'idea of Appalachia') seemed to justify this attitude, placing power in the hands of those who seemed 'best equipped' to bring progress and civilization to the region. (114)

Indeed, in terms of mountaineers' treatment by outsiders, representation has always been as important as reality (though, I suppose, such is almost always the case). In a variety of contexts, what Eller calls the "static image" of the mountaineer shaped policy and practice both defacto and de jure (xvi).

Scholars of Appalachia have also long grappled with these pervasive negative images surrounding mountaineers, images Satterwhite succinctly describes as, "toothless hillbillies in overalls on sagging front porches. Coal mining. Poverty. Moonshining. And of course, the strains of 'Dueling Banjos' from the film *Deliverance*" (141). Henry

Shapiro's foundational monograph, *Appalachia on our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920*, traces the establishment of the now-familiar image of the Southern mountaineer, as well as that image's attendant stereotypes, to the local color movement of the late-nineteenth century. According to Shapiro, local color is largely responsible for the formation of the popular "conception of Appalachia" (19). Shapiro outlines the following trajectory of the emergence of Appalachia's Otherness in the larger American consciousness through a fiction-nonfiction cycle: first, travel writing introduced mountaineers to the readers of national periodicals; then, Protestant home missionaries codified that Otherness as a social problem to be dealt with; third, new stories emerged with new foci: "Not scenery but human need formed the focus of the new stories and sketches which this generation of writers produced" (63). It is with this latter generation that *Other Americans* is chiefly concerned. As Shapiro notes, "it was through literature that the otherness of the southern mountain region was introduced as a face in the American consciousness" (18).

Scholars agree that the turn of the century is the key period in which Appalachian stereotypes were first established, and building on this body of research, my project delineates the rhetorical containment of the Appalachian mountaineer during this era, achieved through anachronization and racialization in local color texts, which made this image useful to various business enterprises. This is, of course, not to suggest explicit collusion between the writers of Appalachian fiction and the owners of lumber and coal companies, except in the case of John Fox, Jr. whose "family papers at the University of Kentucky," Appalachian literature scholar Darlene Wilson argues, "reveal the extent to

which John and his older half-brother James were involved in developing the modern southern coal industry” (6). For Murfree and Miles, however, I argue that the concurrent rise of the image of the Appalachian mountaineer and the rapid usurpation of mountain land in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were part of the same exploitation of a particular people—one for entertainment, the other for profit, with the former making the latter more easily accomplished. I attend to the difference between this fairly innocent (albeit ultimately harmful) rhetorical support for the exploitation of mountaineer lands and Fox’s deliberate scheming, which explicitly shaped his literary work. Conversely, I examine the ways in which Fox’s celebrated legacy in the Big Stone Gap, Virginia, region undermines the almost universally villainous interpretation of Fox’s work modern scholars have arrived at.

The disenfranchisement of the mountaineer, I argue, involved inseparable strains of racialization and anachronization. Wilson contends that “Fox's impact has been to racialize the ‘southern mountaineer’ within an evolving national text as ‘almost-white,’ a regional ‘other’ historically bound to pathological, under-class status” (8) My study indicates that Fox’s explicit racialization is further illuminated in the context of its predecessors—in this study, Murfree and Miles—and that the racialization of the mountaineer cannot be understood fully without considering the attendant anachronization of this figure that is akin to the myth of the “vanishing Indian.” Ultimately, marginalizing racialization was not enough to mark mountaineers as unfit for participation in a modern economy; they must also be talked about as if they belong to another time altogether, as if they will soon cease to exist. Moreover, this rhetorical

process should be understood within a particular historical framework, one fraught with anxieties related to both race and modernization. Thus, while in some ways similar to the rhetorical “vanishing” of Native Americans, the mountaineer’s rhetorical containment is a distinct phenomenon with particular contours shaped by its historical moment and specific circumstances. Just one example is Fox’s correspondence with figures like Theodore Roosevelt, in whose deeply nativist “True Americanism” (1894), we find such telling sentiments as the “European who failed to become an American would cease to be anything.” Clearly, intellectuals of the period were invested in making cuts to the roster of true, modern Americans, and the emergence of the racialized and anachronized mountaineer at this precise historical moment underscores the complex network of factors that precipitated his rise (or fall) to ignominy.

Scholars of Appalachian studies have rightly warned against speaking of Southern Appalachia in monolithic terms.⁹ In fact, the particularities of land exploitation in various sub-regions differed depending on the natural resources available in those places. Thus, it might seem disingenuous for this dissertation to point to a rhetorical process intertwining literary and land exploitation when the authors under examination wrote about the Southern mountains in different states. However, the stereotypes that emerged from those texts *did* paint the mountaineer in monolithic caricature, and therefore, it make sense to point to broad rhetorical trends, even if the material exploitation in different locales differed.

⁹ For more on the importance of resisting monolithic portrayals of Appalachian culture, see the introduction to *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller.

Finally, some of Appalachian studies' foundational scholars neglected to draw an explicit connection between economic development in Appalachia and the literary exploitation of the mountaineer, even outright refuting, as Shapiro does, the idea that such a connection exists:

Although this discovery [of Appalachia] occurred simultaneously with the first systematic development of the natural resources of the region, it was the strangeness of the strange land rather than the economic opportunities which it offered that made Appalachia seem interesting and hence a suitable field for literary exploitation. This is not to say that the growth of industry did not direct the attention of Americans toward this little-known land...but simply that what Americans saw in the mountains was not the usual but the unusual, not progress but its opposite: a strange land and peculiar people. (6)

In contrast, I argue that the sudden profitability of mountain lands did far more than “direct the attention of Americans” to the region, in that the stories that emerged of not-quite-white mountaineers who were keenly incompatible with the modern era made the exploitation of their lands all the easier. Moreover, as noted earlier, I contend that the rhetoric surrounding the Appalachian mountaineer during this period had certain overlooked similarities with the nineteenth-century idea of the “vanishing Indian.” Restoring that concept's attendant tropes to discussions of Appalachian stereotypes illuminates commonalities amongst hegemonic portrayals of marginalized peoples in the service of exploitation.

Terminology and Methodology

Much debate surrounds the use of the terms local color and regionalism. Throughout this dissertation, when I refer the local color/regionalist movement as a literary historical period, I use the terms interchangeably. For works from the late-

nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, when I am dealing explicitly with the cultural work each text performs, I adopt Fetterly and Pryse's definitions, calling Murfree's, Miles's, and especially Fox's work "local color" because I think these authors' works participate in the "literary use...of regional persons that reinforced their representation as strange, exotic, or queer" (*Writing out of Place* 29). While I adhere to Fetterly and Pryse's definitions because of their succinct categorization in terms of the cultural work various texts perform, I should note that calling Murfree's work "local color" deviates from Fetterly and Pryse's reading of her work. For Fetterly and Pryse, Murfree's work is regionalist because of its proto-feminism and what they read as her nuanced negotiation of narrative stance toward mountaineer characters.¹⁰ However, because I am interested in elements of anachronization and racialization, I must call Murfree's work local color by virtue of its employment and even founding mountaineer stereotypes. Too often, when lauding the proto-feminist or otherwise progressive (in the modern sense of the word and not the Progressive movement proper) leanings, scholars do so at the expense of glossing over authors' otherwise unsavory views, racism and classism often among them. While I do not seek to undermine the important work Murfree did as a female writer, I do want to properly contextualize her most famous work by paying attention the ways in which her text participated in problematic rhetorical trends at the turn of the twentieth century. In my final chapter, I'll use "neo-regionalist" for Smith and House because while much later

¹⁰ Regarding Murfree's use of dialect, Fetterly and Pryse argue that through the narrator's use of elevated, erudite diction, Murfree actually creates two distinct dialects without positioning one as superior to other: "By making her narrative voice itself a dialect, Murfree suggests that narrator voice and character voice represent to ways of seeing, knowing, and speaking, neither of which is better or stranger than the other" (187).

than the writers Fetterly and Pryse discuss, they "approach regions without predetermining what narrators or readers might find there," which is Fetterly and Pryse's criterion for work being considered regionalist rather than local color (*Writing out of Place*, 29). In chapter four, because House and Smith are writing in an era when local color/regionalism are enjoying a resurgence, I further justify my use of the term neo-regionalism because I believe local color to be a term temporally bound to the latter part of the nineteenth century. As Satterwhite argues,

the local-color movement occurred during the Gilded Age, an era that provoked anxieties about urbanization and homogenization and witnessed a masculinist, nationalistic, and racialized drive for empire. (193)

While perhaps these adjectives have not ceased to characterize the American zeitgeist, literary scholarship now values literature rooted in particular localities, and, as my final chapter demonstrates, writers working in that context have largely transcended those earlier complicities between nationalistic projects and literature focused on the local.

Other scholars have called for treating these terms as less fixed categories than Fetterly and Pryse would have them, especially regarding the work of Mary Murfree. In Bill Hardwig's introduction to Murfree's *In the Tennessee Mountains*, he argues,

Murfree, who is in some ways an insider (she lived in Tennessee and spent decades visiting the mountains she wrote about) and in others an outsider (as a member of the educated elite slave-holding family that has two towns, neither situated in the mountains, named after it), presents challenges to Pryse and Fetterly's distinction between regionalism and local color. Given the bleeding of categories that so often occurs in literature, it seems unwise to create a hierarchical distinction between regionals and local color writing. While there are distinctions to be made between writers and texts, this type of either/or binary

becomes restrictive, rather than helpful. It creates more falsehoods than it clears up old ones. (xxvii)

Hardwig is right to resist these categories. In some ways, I am hesitant to commit to them myself. However, because this dissertation traces a particular rhetorical phenomenon, I am comfortable applying the labels. I apply these labels not so much in an effort “to balkanize the local-color movement, to weed out the ‘good’ writers from the ‘bad’ ones,” as Hardwig describes, but to carefully document the foundational texts of the emerging hillbilly stereotype and to contrast these with the modern texts that revisit this critical period to revise that formulation (Hardwig, *Upon Provincialism*, 13).

Hardwig also notes that Murfree is villainized by Appalachian studies scholars such as Shapiro and Batteau because of her perceived role in founding mountaineer stereotypes. Hardwig refutes these readings, arguing instead that, “Murfree’s writing in [*In the Tennessee Mountains*] resists totalizing readings, and defies most attempts to pigeonhole the stories into a prefashioned school of thought” (xxix). That is, Murfree’s text does not present a unified Appalachian stereotype, according to Hardwig, but rather, it by turns traffics in “romanticized and exoticized scenes” even as it “critiz[es] the limitations” of mountaineer “gender roles” and is “sensitiv[e]...to the ways in which (primarily male) outsiders overlook, stereotype, and underestimate the mountaineers” (xxviii). Hardwig is correct that Murfree’s text, much as the rest of the texts in this dissertation, strains between discourses at cross-purposes. Such tension, such both/and, however, demonstrates the pervasiveness of contemporaneous popular rhetoric about the mountaineer’s unfitness for modern life. The very shapers of this rhetoric, Murfree,

Miles, and Fox among them, did not stumble upon these ideas in fictional flights of fancy. Rather, their works, and the ambivalences contained therein, reflect an unfolding rhetorical process—enacted amongst writers of fiction, makers of policy, and scions of industry—that had to make sense of a people whose labor and land suddenly became profitable. And this process, I argue, is not unlike that employed regarding hopelessly “vanishing” Indians and other marginalized populations. Again, I want to distinguish carefully drawing these parallels among rhetorical containments of various groups from somehow equating the disenfranchisement of white mountaineer and Native Americans, or any group for that matter. Such a one-to-one equation is not my aim in the least. However, drawing parallels between these processes demonstrates dialectical trends in American history, suggesting even supposedly “minor” literature’s crucial role in shaping popular “consumption” of the marginalized.

Within this framework, *Other Americans* takes select texts about Appalachia at the turn of the twentieth century as a kind of microcosmic investigation of the process of fitting non-normative peoples into an emerging racial hierarchy, one that developed as a product of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and immigration in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In this vein, *Other Americans* is not solely an inquiry into Appalachian culture and literature. It is also an attempt to answer in part a larger question about what role literature and its historical paratexts played in shaping a racial hierarchy that distinguished normative whiteness from all Others for the purposes of variously disenfranchising those excluded from normative whiteness. In the particular case of Southern Appalachian mountaineers, I argue that their place in that emerging hierarchy

was shaped by the evolving profitability of the land they inhabited, and that anachronizing and racializing rhetoric helped justify this exploitation.

Finally, I should note that I am referring to the mountaineer as popularly conceived and make no claims to ascertaining the identity of an “authentic” mountaineer. For my purposes, we shall think of mountaineers in terms of their portrayal in literature written or set at the turn of the last century, roughly 1880-1920. This mountaineer is native-born Appalachian and is typically male. While female characters are present in the works under discussion here, the mountaineer as popularly conceived is masculine. Satterwhite deftly illustrates in her analysis of the revelation of Charles Egbert Craddock’s identity as Mary N. Murfree that readers imagined the Appalachian Mountains as inherently masculine (188-186). As Satterwhite and others document, readers and editors alike were shocked that the author of such supposedly masculine prose could be the frail Mary N. Murfree from middle Tennessee, when they were envisioning a rugged mountain man. I will give some attention to the role of women in the mountain story “formula,” as Satterwhite, Shapiro, and others have it, in which the tension of a story revolves around whether or not a mountain girl will reform and “progress” away from her mountain heritage, joining the modern world. Importantly, then, we should note that the male mountaineer’s “Appalachian-ness” is largely figured as intractable, while the cultural identity of the female from the mountains is malleable. In chapter two, Emma Bell Miles’s conflicts with her husband over gender roles highlight the rapidly changing mountain economy and the important role literary depictions of mountaineers played in proscribing mountaineers’ place in that new economic system.

The issue of the gender of the mountaineer will be revisited in chapter four, as Smith's and House's protagonists are female and given much greater agency than their turn-of-the-century counterparts. Interestingly, overcoming the previously inherent maleness of the mountaineer may be a critical component of Smith's and House's revision of that image.

Mary Murfree's Mountain Essentialism

Mary Murfree is perhaps the best known Appalachian writer of the period under examination in this dissertation. Scholars have long recognized the important role she played in generating both interest in Southern Appalachia as well as in developing now-familiar hillbilly stereotypes. To establish the literary context for the lesser-known texts in this dissertation, I want to begin here with Mary Murfree's most famous work, *In the Tennessee Mountains*, which was published as a collection in 1884 and contains stories originally published in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Murfree's descriptions of mountaineers are markedly similar to the rhetoric of racial essentialism. In Murfree's text, mountaineers are variously described, in rhetoric similar to racist narratives of the period and beyond, as "lazy" (46), "ignorant of class distinctions" (67), "primitive" (68), and "superstitious" (75) to name a few. Murfree's text is key to understanding the establishment of the figure of the mountaineer in the normatively white, reading, elite American consciousness. I wish to draw a connection between Murfree's brand of literary tourism and the rhetorical containment (wrought through anachronization and racialization and, thus, exclusion from profiting from emergent industries) I argue is the sum effect of the figure of the mountaineer in the popular imagination at the turn of the twentieth century.

In his introduction to *In the Tennessee Mountains*, Hardwig argues that in addition to encouraging actual literary tourism—the practice of outsiders visiting regional locales they have read about—Murfree’s text can itself be considered a form of vicarious literary tourism: “This collection can be viewed in direct relation to the growing tourist industry in the region, and we might think of the book itself as a form of literary tourism in which the readers engage people and environments foreign to their everyday routines” (xii). Silber argues that Murfree was aware of her role as a sort of tour guide and

impressed upon northern readers a sense of Appalachian strangeness. ‘I was early familiar with their primitive customs, dialect, and peculiar views of life,’ Murfree explained to *Atlantic* editor Thomas Aldrich regarding her descriptions of mountaineers, and she undertook to show her readers just how peculiar the people of Appalachia were. (249)

The real-world implications of Murfree’s depictions of these “peculiar” Appalachians cannot be over-estimated. For example, according to Shapiro, “*In the Tennessee Mountains* was used as a first mission-study text for those who wished to understand conditions in the [Southern Appalachian] region” (57). Regardless of its being fiction, then, the text was consumed as ethnography, and it set the stage for other advertised-as-authentic representations of Appalachia, such as John Fox, Jr.’s, and might even have encouraged Emma Bell Miles to write something actually closer to an ethnography than Murfree’s or Fox’s highly dramatized portraiture.

The issue of authenticity figures prominently in examining works about Appalachia. Hardwig, in discussing the “outings” of Charles Chesnutt as an African American and Mary Murfree as a woman, argues,

A significant portion of the allure of this writing depended on a ‘real’ southern author. For this reason, the authors’ biographical and biological ‘truths’ become key components of the reception of their work. Whether Murfree’s stories of Appalachian ruggedness were written by a man or woman, by a mountaineer or outsider, and whether Chesnut’s stories of the color line were written by a black or white author, determined for many readers the value and meaning of those stories. (*Upon Provincialism*, 46)

Hardwig is talking about southern regional writing more generally, and I would argue that concerns about authenticity were particularly acute surrounding Appalachian texts because the region was, until the late nineteenth century, largely foreign to the reading public.

It is also important to remember that Murfree’s work emerged at a time of great scientific upheaval. Many intellectuals sought to impose order on our understanding of the world by putting Darwin’s theories to sociological use. In the October 1883 edition of *The Atlantic Monthly*, in which Murfree’s “A-Playin’ of Old Sledge at the Settlemint” was published, an essay entitled “Heredity” appears. Its author, Henry W. Holland, considers the implications of Francis Galton’s 1869 *Hereditary Genius*, arguing the book

seems to prove that the qualities of men are usually hereditary, not accidental, and that life is a prolonged viriculture, in which progress depends more upon marriage customs and birth-rates than upon the institutions on which we are wont to plume ourselves (447).¹¹

What I am calling Murfree’s “mountain essentialism” fits clearly within this paradigm: Appalachian mountaineers are portrayed as hereditarily predisposed to their

¹¹ Viriculture refers to, “Eugenics, improved by selection of breeding lines, according to Francis Galton” (<http://dictionnaire.cordial-enligne.fr/definition/viriculture> via Google Translate).

backwardness and degeneracy, and the elite urban reader can visit these peculiar people from a safe distance without fear of contamination through Murfree's stories. Within this context, the stories that would follow Murfree's, which often involved romance between a mountaineer and a "furriner"—for example, Fox's *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* in chapter three of this dissertation—take on the overtones of a eugenics project: mountaineers as such are doomed to disappear if their "stock" cannot be reformed by the injection of potentially reforming outsider blood.

As I discuss throughout this dissertation, the racial denigration of the Southern Appalachian mountaineer often accompanied a seemingly incongruous lauding of the mountaineer's quintessential Americanness. That is, paradoxically, the mountaineer was at once a racialized Other and a "true American." This paradox produced the rhetoric of anachronization that I also trace. If white reading elites were anxious about the waning of whiteness, as many scholars have demonstrated, they were also looking for a remedy. Mountaineers stood out as a both an example of degeneration in their being stuck in centuries past and because of inbreeding, the narrative goes, but they also exemplified an unsullied "American stock."

In the aforementioned essay, "Heredity," Holland exhibits some of these anxieties: "If the Teutonic race, from which modern civilization radiates, should decay, as other noble races have done in the past, it may be centuries before another is produced that can fill its place" (450). Murfree's mountain essentialism—the idea proffered in her stories that east Tennessee mountaineers constituted a particular "stock" whose qualities are inherent and, to a certain extent, intractable—is in line with the ideological

underpinnings of Holland's assertion, following Galton, that "it is not a question of education, but of stock" (450). In other words, for many of the readers of *The Atlantic*, uplift efforts for the "lower sorts" were starting to seem futile if the beneficiaries of these projects were of "inferior" heredity. Southern Appalachian mountaineers, then, became a most perplexing problem set for readers, challenging the notions of who and what constitutes white racial purity and "true" Americanness by virtue of their standing between these paradoxical portraiture of "authentic" Americanness and degenerate, less-than-white Others.

Perhaps, according to Holland's paradigm, solving the paradox of the mountaineer is simply a matter of distinguishing the reformable from the unreformable. Certainly, Holland is referring to humanity generally, but when read alongside Murfree's short stories, one sees emerging a (highly problematic) rhetorical and practical solution to the problem of fitting mountaineers (and other supposed degenerates) within the evolving and complex racial and class hierarchies of the United States: "We must have free competition," Holland writes,

in which the stronger win the commanding position which is their due; but if we can insure the fertility of the better portion, and the comparative sterility of the meaner part, of a community, it is no longer essential to destroy the deformed or diseased, or embitter their existence by hardships, for in the course of time *their strains will die out*. (450, emphasis mine)

Here, we see the repetition of the "vanishing" motif, applied writ large to "inferior" populations. Against this historical backdrop, then, Murfree's short stories emerge as critical to understanding the place the Southern Appalachian mountaineer occupied in the

white reading elite's hierarchy of supposedly desirable or undesirable Americans. The paradox of the Southern Appalachian mountaineer is another way in which the rhetorical phenomenon this dissertation traces is similar to that of the "Vanishing Indians." Notions of both quintessential Americanness and racial undesirability characterized the rhetorical formation of both figures.

In "A Playin' of Old Sledge at the Settlement," which, as noted above, was published in 1883 in the same issue of *The Atlantic* as the eugenics-leaning "Heredity," the narrator describes the mountain character Budd Wray as having an "expression of settled melancholy...very usual with these mountaineers" (46). Looks suggesting pensiveness are tempered by the narrator's assertion that,

notwithstanding the languid monotony of the expression of his face he seemed absorbed in some definite train of thought, rather than lost in the vague, hazy reverie which is the *habitual mental atmosphere of the quiescent mountaineer.*" (46, emphasis added)

Bud Wray's pensiveness is characterized as atypical for the mountaineer, others of whom are described as the "usual sad-eyed type" (47).

Murfree also establishes Appalachian Tennessee as entirely removed from the rest of the world, with "Pine Mountain...stand[ing]...against the west like a barrier" in "Drifting Down Lost Creek." This story, originally published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1884, tells the story of Cynthia Ware. Cynthia muses that "nothing which went beyond this barrier [of Pine Mountain] ever came back again" (6). This trope, the idea that the mountains are irreconcilable and incompatible with whatever lies beyond them, is later

adopted and ever further exaggerated in Fox's *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, underscoring Murfree's influence on authors of literature set in Southern Appalachia.

As we shall see with each of the authors under examination in this dissertation, Murfree's work is not easily classified as either disparaging or celebratory of mountain life. Certainly, as noted above, I place Murfree in the category of largely denigrating local color, using Fetterly and Pryse's framework, but I also acknowledge a more nuanced authorial stance at work throughout *In the Tennessee Mountains* than such classification would suggest. Hardwig notes,

At times, Murfree seems to be quite forward thinking and sympathetic to the mountain people and environment. At others, she capitalizes on the popular momentum of local-color writing, providing the stereotypical situations and character so common to this literature. (54)

In "Drifting Down Lost Creek," Murfree separates the mountains from "civilization," describing protagonist Cynthia Ware's hair, "of a brilliant, rich tint, highly esteemed of late years *in civilization*, but in the mountains still accounted a capital defect" (7, italics mine). Murfree might have separated the appraisal of red hair in the Tennessee mountains from that in other regions through other phrasing, but the effect here is clear: Appalachia belongs to a pre-civilized time rather than being merely a distinct geographical region. Moreover, in the next sentence, Murfree aligns through comparison with Cynthia's hair, the natural world, and Native Americans:

There was nothing as gayly colored in all the woods, except perhaps a red-bird, that carried his tufted top-knot so bravely through shade and sheen that he might have been the transmigrated spirit of an Indian, still roaming the old hunting-ground. (7)

Murfree participates here in the rhetoric of the “vanishing Indian” (“old hunting-ground”) as she simultaneously places the mountaineer in a similar paradigm.¹²

Even when the third-person narrator of “Drifting” endeavors to compliment her subjects, she does so through deprecatingly comparing mountaineers to “civilized” outsiders. When Evander Price attempts to court Cynthia and the latter’s mother gets in the way, the narrator remarks, “the unsophisticated mother in the mountains can be as much an obstacle to anything in the nature of love-making, when the youth is not approved, as the expert tactician of the drawing room” (12). On the one hand, we can read this passage as laudatory, thwarting readers’ expectations that rules of societal manners do not exist in the mountains. However, this description is rendered in terms of an exception to the mother’s lack of sophistication—an exception rather than a rule.

The narrative stance toward mountaineers is a bit more complicated and self-conscious in 1878’s “A Star in the Valley.” Ned Varney, an outsider character, never tires of “the pleasure of watching the development of the common human attributes in this peculiar and primitive state of society” (68). He observes a

patois of the untutored people, to hear which, Varney was wont to declare, set his teeth on edge; because of their narrow prejudices, their mental poverty, their idle shiftlessness, their uncouth dress and appearance. Chevis flattered himself that he entertained a broader view. He had not even a subacute idea that he looked upon these people and their inner life only as picturesque bits of the mental and moral

¹² Hardwig also cites this passage and comments upon Murfree’s alignment of the mountaineer with nature and with Native Americans. However, he reads this passage in far more positive terms than I do, even suggesting that this passage is an example of Murfree’s concern both for the plight of Native Americans and the “threat of the exploitation of Appalachia” (55). I cannot speak to the entirety of Murfree’s work (Hardwig cites other texts in which she more explicitly addresses Native Americans), but I do not see evidence of explicit political intent in this particular passage.

landscape; that it was an aesthetic and theoretical pleasure their contemplation afforded him; that he was as far as ever from the basis of common humanity. (68)

Here we see something like an acknowledgement of Murfree's inability to transcend objectifying mountaineer characters, even as one character seeks to avoid stereotype. Chevis, who is supposed to provide the contrast to Varney, nonetheless mentally treats mountaineers as objects to be studied rather than as humans to interact with. The narrator points out this fact, even as the narrative frame itself—in this and in other stories—reifies that objectifying gaze. For example, of the woman Chevis admires from afar, Celia Shaw, the narrative stance is hard to tease out: on the one hand, the third-person narration is limited to Chevis's perspective, so we might attribute any stereotyping to Chevis and not the narrator (whose views we can likely align with Murfree's own). On the other hand, in the passage below as well as in the excerpt above, the characters' observations of mountaineer "deficiencies" go entirely unchallenged by the narrator. That is, even in the following moment of reckoning, in which Chevis realizes he has been condescending, his assumptions about mountaineers writ-large go unchecked:

He began to have a glimmering perception that despite all his culture, his sensibility, his yearning to ward humanity, he was not so high a thing in the scale of being; that he had placed a false estimate upon himself. He had looked down on her with a mingled pity for her dense ignorance, her coarse surroundings, and a dilettante's delight in picturesque effects, and *with no recognition of the moral splendors of that star in the valley.* (76 emphasis added)

In short, while the narrator, limited to Chevis's perspective avers that Celia Shaw has wonderful qualities—these "moral splendors"—these are in contrast to, in spite of, her

other “typical” mountaineer qualities such as “ignorance,” rather than evidence of these stereotypes being untrue.

Murfree’s stance towards the mountains and its inhabitants was clearly ambiguous, given that she is largely credited with some of the earliest and most influential portrayals of what would become hillbilly stereotypes at the same time as she subverts some of our narrative expectations through at times challenging those very stereotypes. As we shall see in the chapters that follow, ambiguity, ambivalence, and convoluted attitudes toward literary subjects were hallmarks of works about Appalachia at the turn of the century. Such complexities are a result of the complicated period in which these texts were written—when ethnic and national identities were in flux, when urbanity threatened to supplant even a modicum of relevance for rural America, and when the “American century” was just getting underway. For the emerging image of the Appalachian mountaineer, a “problem” people emerged from the paradoxical tensions of their racialized denigration to Otherness on the one hand, and their relegation to a foregone time and, somehow, quintessential Americanness on the other.

CHAPTER II

EMMA BELL MILES AND THE NATIVE MOUNTAINEER

Sensitivity about the United States' moral stature among the nations of the world made it difficult for Americans to admit to a deep complicity in the Indians' destruction. It was easier to indict Indians for their own ruin, thereby washing the white man's hands of responsibility.

Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy*, 12

Cast in the static role, mountain people have thus rarely appeared as conscious actors on the stage of American history, and almost never on center stage. They are acknowledged to exist somewhere in the background, as subjects to be acted upon, but not as people participating in the historical drama itself. As a result, our efforts to explain and deal with the social problems of the region have focused not on economic and political realities in the area as they evolved over time, but on the supposed inadequacies of a pathological culture that is seen to have equipped mountain people poorly for life in the modern industrial world. Having overlooked elements of movement and change that have tied the mountains to the rest of the American experience, we have blamed the mountaineers for their own distress rather than the forces that have caused it.

Ronald Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, xviii

Emma Bell Miles's 1905 *The Spirit of the Mountains* straddles a line between fiction and anthropological research. Miles scholar Grace Toney Edwards aptly refers to it as a "fictionalized ethnography" ("Preface" xi). Of the works this dissertation examines from the turn of the twentieth century, Miles's does the most to disrupt the confining rhetoric of the anachronized and racialized mountaineer in her celebration of certain

aspects of mountain culture. However, the author's rhetoric also demonstrates the pervasiveness of the contemporaneous conversation regarding the fitness of Appalachian mountaineers for the modern world. Even those who celebrated Appalachia, as Miles undeniably does, imbued their texts with strains of that discourse. Miles writes,

The charm and mystery of bygone days broods over the mountain country—the charm of pioneer hardihood, of primitive peace, of the fatalism of ancient peoples, of the rites and legends of the aborigines. To one who understands these high solitudes it is no marvel that the inhabitants should be mystics, dreamers, given to fancies often absurd, but often wildly sweet. (18)

This description, which is typical of the text as a whole, contains both the anachronization and racialization that characterized the rhetorical containment of the Southern Appalachian mountaineer at the turn of the century. This passage relegates mountaineers to another era (“pioneer” and “ancient peoples”) and aligns them with Native peoples (“aborigines”). The final line of the passage exemplifies, moreover, Miles's simultaneous denigration and celebration of the region she called her home and the people she called her neighbors and family: “absurd” but “sweet” (18). Edwards argues that Miles's work is largely free from the Othering scholars identify in the works of Murfree, John Fox, Jr. (as I examine in chapter three), and others. However, I argue that elements of this Othering discourse *are* present in Miles's work even though the author does much to resist them. It is precisely this resistance to, yet ultimate engagement with this denigrating rhetoric that illustrates the pervasiveness of that emerging hillbilly stereotype.

The word “native” in the title of this chapter gestures at two guiding ideas: it refers simultaneously to Miles’s aligning of Appalachian mountaineers with Native Americans throughout *Spirit*, and it describes Miles’s own fraught position as both insider and outsider. Miles was born in 1879 and died in 1919, a lifespan, incidentally, nearly coterminous with the years constituting the height of the local color movement. The details of her life exemplify some of the central concerns of local color writing, among them regional identity and its relationship to national culture, as well as the interactions between insiders and outsiders in cultural exchanges.

In the introduction to *Spirit*, Appalachian studies scholar David Whisnant argues, “the central fact of Emma Bell Miles’s life and the predominant theme of her book is ambivalence and bi-culturalism” (xvii). We can further characterize Miles’s implicit attitude toward the literary exploitation of America’s backwaters as ambivalent and bi-cultural as well. Of the authors under consideration in this dissertation, Miles does the most to complicate literary depictions of the mountaineer, and her work fits into the genre of local color much less neatly than do the others. This is not to say that Miles’s writing is unique. As Roger D. Abraham notes in his foreword to the facsimile edition of *Spirit*,

It is hardly an unusual kind of book, only an especially perceptive example of a genre. It reveals a way of life in an area much drawn upon and discussed by folklorists, but never so fully and richly rendered. (vii)

It is precisely the “fully and richly rendered” nature of Miles’s depiction of her East Tennessee neighbors that makes *Spirit* so important to understanding the nascent hillbilly stereotype of the turn of the last century. That is, if a book written by an author who both

lived in the region and whose work resists some of the romantic and offensive stereotyping of other writers contains strains of that same discourse, then that rhetoric becomes difficult to dismiss as innocuous or confined only to the works of those less acquainted with the region or those who set out to malign its inhabitants.

In some ways, Miles's relationship to the region is similar to Mary N. Murfree's, though Miles ultimately had a more intimate relationship with the people of the mountains through her long residence there and her marriage to Frank Miles of Walden's Ridge, Tennessee. Miles, née Emma Bell, was born in 1879 in Evansville, Indiana, while her parents were visiting there. The family resided in Rabbit Hash, in Northern Kentucky, and they eventually settled in a small town outside of Chattanooga, Tennessee when she was eleven (Whisnant, "Introduction" xvii).¹³ Miles occupied the insider/outsider position so common to the narrators of regionalist literature during this period. In the only book-length biography of Miles, Kay Baker Gaston characterizes the Bell family as "a sort of middle class that was neither of the town nor of the mountain. To some degree they may have served as a bridge between the summer people and the mountain people..." while they "belonged to neither group" (10). Miles references these and other class divisions in her personal journals, writing on October 28, 1908

There are but two classes of people in the mountains: those who are in constant dread of being caught by the nip of winter without cornmeal or meal; and those who are not. The former are likely to be in the habit of frantically chopping wood as the snow begins to fly: the latter spend the snowy weather in mending harness and half-soling the children's shoes. (21)

¹³ Whisnant notes the lack of reliable biographical information available about Emma Bell Miles (note one, xvii). While a handful of articles and books have been published on Miles since Whisnant penned the introduction to *Spirit* in 1975, her life and work remain vastly understudied and underappreciated.

Such liminality and uncertainty characterized Miles's life, writing, and her role in popular conceptions of mountaineers and their place (or lack thereof) in the modern world.

Moreover, as Whisnant writes,

Miles's life was lived mainly with her husband and his people, but she was also an intellectual, an artist, and a writer whose need for an audience, a market, and personal support drew her into the lives of...the wealthy and socially prominent of Chattanooga. ("Introduction" xxi)

These factors distinguished Miles from her neighbors at least in terms of access to the milieu of social elites. Miles had access to social elites not only in the physical sense through her interactions in Chattanooga, but elite readers of national periodicals also consumed her writings. Thus, while Miles's work is largely unknown today, her work was very much a part of the larger national examination of mountain folk and mountain life.

Though *Spirit* itself was not widely circulated, Miles published stories and poems before and after *Spirit's* appearance in such publications as *Harper's* and *Putnam's*, including an essay that would later be reprinted in *Spirit*, "Some Real American Music." Within this context of Miles as a writer whose work was consumed by an elite reading public far removed from the material realities of the Southern Appalachian region, *Spirit* helps us understand Miles's views of mountaineers and demonstrates the extent to which derogatory notions about mountain people pervaded the conceptions of even the region's defenders. After exploring Miles's resistance to and reification of this rhetorical containment of the Appalachian mountaineer in *Spirit*, I turn my attention to Miles's recently collected and edited personal journals, which further underscore her ambivalence

toward the region she made her home and her participation in the discourse of the racialized and anachronized mountaineer, even as she sought to recuperate that image in certain ways.

Critical attention to Miles's work has been scant.¹⁴ Scholar Elizabeth Engelhardt, in focusing on Miles's magnum opus, *Spirit*, considers Miles's writing "an early form of ecological feminism," using the local color genre "to criticize both local color stereotypes and early feminist benevolent work" while being able "to reach the broadest audience possible" ("Placing" 12-13).¹⁵ I wish to complicate the notion that *Spirit* is largely oppositional to emerging mountaineer stereotypes, as Engelhardt suggests, even as I highlight the ways in which Miles's text *does* seek to defend the mountaineer from such degradation ("Placing" 14). This is not to deny the legitimacy of Engelhardt's argument regarding Miles's development of a proto-eco-feminism, a philosophical endeavor that is undeniably a part of *Spirit's* cultural work. This progressive cultural work does not, however, diminish the fact that Miles's text participates in the rhetoric of the emerging "hillbilly" stereotype surrounding the mountaineer, even as it attempts to resist that

¹⁴ The 2016 publication of Miles's short fiction, *The Common Lot and Other Stories*, edited by Grace T. Edwards, will likely help remedy this lack of scholarship, now that these stories are easily accessible. Up to now, however, scholars have made only passing gestures to her fiction and poetry, given the aesthetic and philosophical superiority of her more famous, book-length project, *The Spirit of the Mountains*. Appalachian studies scholar Shannon Brooks is one of only a few who analyze Miles's short fiction at any length, arguing for a "layered" approach to reading those works in order to perceive Miles's message about the "circumscribed life of women in mountain culture and the power of the women themselves" (166). She argues, "the wonder is not how flawed Miles's work may seem...; the wonder is how good it is, in spite of Miles's poverty, illness, work, disapproval, and deep personal doubt" (163).

¹⁵ Scholar Katerina Prajznerova also offers an ecological reading of Miles's "bioregionalist" text. Miles's narrative strategies in *Spirit*, Prajznerova argues, allow Miles to "expose the ecological and social abuses that have shaped the region's history but also to unveil the multicultural native elements that have been interwoven into the region's heritage" (1)

discourse. Rather, I argue that *Spirit* is part of a dialectic that was in the process of developing in the pages of national periodicals, business transactions, and personal correspondence regarding who the mountaineer is, who the mountaineer would be, and what the mountaineer would have to do with the development of an “American” identity. Moreover, Miles’s own life echoes the struggle to define mountaineer identity in the face of and in response to modernity.

Before turning to analysis of specific chapters of *Spirit*, contextualizing Miles’s text within what I see as the nativist impulses of the local color movement more generally further demonstrates *Spirit*’s embeddedness in a national conversation about whom should be considered “authentically” American. As early as Rebecca Harding Davis’s 1861 novella, *Life in the Iron Mills*, we see a literary depiction of racialized “othering” of immigrants to the United States. In that text, Davis depicts her Welsh and Irish characters with the imagery of filth. That Davis distinguishes Irish and Welsh characters from a normative kind of “authentic” American whiteness is but a precursor to the complicated race questions that would emerge during the period Roediger has called “‘the long early twentieth century’—the period from 1890 to 1945” (9). The local color/regionalism that emerged in the early part of this era was in part a racialized response to immigration. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the reading public’s *penchant* for regionally focused literature was the by-product of such turn-of-the-century developments. Indeed, as Richard Brodhead argues, regionalist works’ depiction of

a deeply fictitious America that was not homogenous yet not radically heterogeneous either and whose diversities were ranged under one group’s

normative sway...must have contributed profoundly to its historical public demand. (137)

While I am not sure we can argue with any degree of certainty that regionalist writers consciously wrote to assert a kind of “authentic” white Americanness, we can perhaps conclude that regional literature became so wildly popular at the turn of the century in part due to a national hunger for a racialized narrative of white American “authenticity.”

The popularity of regionalist and local color texts elucidates the mutual constitution of racialized nativist discourse and regionally-focused literature at the turn of the twentieth century, helping us understand how such discourse pervaded even unlikely and seemingly apolitical literary locales. As Stephanie Foote writes, “taking account of the ways [regional literature’s] subject-matter shaped and was shaped by the concerns of its own era, is a painstaking process,” but one that can “illuminate the cultural importance not just of regional literature, but of literature more broadly” (“The Cultural Work,” 26). Sarah Orne Jewett’s *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, for example, contains such discursive strains. Brodhead acknowledges that regional writing cohered with an anxiety about immigration to the U.S. from Southern and Eastern Europe (134). Moreover, Sandra Zagarell has attended to the presence in Jewett’s text of a coterminous anxiety over the waning of whiteness that came with this increased immigration (“*Country’s* Portrayal of Community and the Exclusion of Difference,” 40-43). In this vein, I posit that regionalist texts such as *The Country of the Pointed Firs* and Miles’s *The Spirit of the Mountains*, gained a national audience because readers found in them an articulation of what it meant to be “authentically” *white* and American, rather than merely upper-class,

urbanite, and American. As Roediger argues, despite “The spread of the critical study of whiteness[,]...there is still too little awareness, beyond and within academia, that the nineteenth century ended with predictions that the United States was about to lose its racial moorings” (7). Thus, in the analysis that follows, I read Miles’s text with an awareness of this turn-of-the-century racialized narrative of “authentic” and specifically white Americanness, which served to distinguish supposedly “real” Americans from the “new immigrants,” to borrow Roediger’s term, who arrived in the late-nineteenth century primarily from Eastern and Southern Europe (7). Moreover, I read Miles’s text with keen attention to the ways in which even, and perhaps especially, literature concerned with a particular region can actually reflect and shape national concerns. As Foote argues, “Regional writing, imaginatively devoted to the concerns of discrete localities, is also...committed to asking what place local knowledges have in the construction of national tradition” (“The Cultural Work...” 25).

We and They: Miles’s Vexed Representation of the Mountaineer

The Spirit of the Mountains was published in 1905 by James Pott & Co. and includes a reprint of “Some Real American Music,” which was originally published in *Harper’s* in June 1904. While *Spirit* itself enjoyed limited circulation, the high-profile publishing of the aforementioned chapter lends credence to the idea that through her work Miles participated in a national conversation about the mountaineer. Thus, this relatively obscure publication has something to tell us about the formulation of the now familiar stereotypes that emerged simultaneously with the increasing profitability of mountain land and labor.

In *Spirit's* first chapter, "The Log Church School," Miles's narrator, a young outsider-teacher, introduces her mountaineer subjects to the reader with alternating tones of distance and sameness. Scholars have determined Miles is not the unnamed narrator of *Spirit* because her narrator is a mountain schoolteacher, and Miles never taught during her time in the mountains. However, it is difficult to separate author from narrator in this genre-blending work that straddles the line between fiction and nonfiction. As Engelhardt aptly explains in her foreword to Miles's recently compiled journals, Miles "is not its narrator but...may be its voice" (xii). Miles's inability to decide if she is an observer of mountaineers or a mountaineer herself permeates the entire text and is likely responsible for the ambivalence the narrator exhibits regarding mountaineer stereotypes. For example, in this first chapter, the narrator characterizes the pupils of the titular school in animalistic terms, implicitly distancing herself from them: "[M]ost of the children hereabout run free as the fawns and cubs that they often capture for playmates—as timid, as lithe and about as intellectual" (3). However, a mere three pages later, Miles's narrator lauds "native" mountain learning as, perhaps, at least as valuable as formal education: "If the young minds wander afield with the scampering and flitting of little brothers of tree-top and burrow, what matter? Perhaps they learn at such times something not to be found between the covers of Webster" (5). In short, the narrator's mountain pupils are simultaneously wild creatures with sub-human intellect and possessors of knowledge superior to anything to be found in books.

The narrator's generally approbatory stance toward all things natural owes in part to Miles's own love of the natural world. In her biography of the author, Gaston

characterizes Miles's chief connection to the mountains as being with nature itself. "To look for her," Gaston writes, "you must go to the woods, the only place she was ever truly at home" (245). Additionally, *Spirit's* emphasis on nature may also have served to characterize the mountaineer as an anti-modern figure, clinging to the land and resisting the forces of industrialization. Most importantly, the narrator's waffling between counting herself among her mountaineer subjects and maintaining an observational and even denigrating critical distance may owe to Miles's affinity for the natural surroundings of the mountains, even as she disdained some of the behaviors of their residents. Indeed, as Engelhardt rightly notes, "Miles redefines communities to urge a sense of connection between human beings and non-humans and to explain why mountain people stay in the mountains despite the fact that life is often quite difficult" ("Placing" 15). Here and throughout *Spirit*, the mountains and its inhabitants in Miles's characterization are to be both pitied and admired.

Similarly, in "Chapter II: Cabin Homes," *Spirit's* narrator at once describes mountaineers in ways consistent with emerging national stereotypes, even as she counts herself among this increasingly maligned population. "Civilization is not likely soon to remedy this evil [the prevalence of poor health in the mountains]," she writes, "since it substitutes drugged whiskey for their own moonshine, and badly compounded plugs for their own home-grown 'scrip' tobacco...cheap baking powders and...salicylic acid...[for] canning fruit" (24). Miles characterizes encroaching modernization as exacerbating mountain woes rather than remedying them, and while her descriptions of mountaineers drinking moonshine and chewing tobacco are consistent with their emerging stereotype,

in the first sentence of the next paragraph, *Spirit's* narrator inserts herself among them in second-person-plural voice: "Yet, though we violate every rule of hygiene, we are a strong people, sound of wind and limb, making light of hardship and heavy labor" (24). Nonetheless, Miles's narrator, and perhaps Miles herself, is unable to characterize the mountaineer without stereotype—"we violate every rule of hygiene"—even when including herself.

Miles's ambivalence extends beyond her own affiliation with the mountaineer to a confusion regarding whether Appalachian mountaineers constitute a race or a class. Jacobson argues that "class markers have often been read as inborn racial characteristics: members of the working class in these [racially Othered] groups have been viewed in more sharply racial terms than have their upper-class compatriots" (21). It should not surprise us, then, that in some passages in which *Spirit's* narrator defends the mountaineer against stereotypes, she refers to them as a "class" rather than as a race. While "class" likely meant "type" for Miles without regard to socio-economics, her use of this term instead of "race," the latter of which she uses frequently elsewhere in the text, is important. Of her experience with the mountaineer not conforming to national stereotypes (like those popularized in Mary Murfree's short fiction), Miles writes,

How different from the actual state of affairs is that widespread popular idea, fostered by newspaper stories, that no *class* of people in America is more lawless than the mountaineers! That more killings do not occur in the mountain country in proportion to the number of inhabitants than elsewhere is a fact beyond dispute. (74, emphasis added)

Here, in an instance where mountaineers deviate from national stereotypes, they constitutes a class. Moreover, when a particular group within the mountain population differs in behavior from the population as a whole as observed by Miles, they too are characterized as a class:

There is certainly a class of mountain people, dirty, degenerate, incredibly ignorant and unintelligent, very little superior to savages...but I have lived in many different localities in the Kentucky and Tennessee mountains and have never seen it yet (76).

Elsewhere, however, and more frequently throughout *Spirit*, the mountaineers constitute a group who, though not always described as a race per se, are described with a tone of racial essentialism. Indeed, in Chapter V, “The Savage Strain,” Miles makes her implicit case for the affinity between the Kentucky and Tennessee mountaineer and that of the “vanishing Indian,” a rhetorical move that anachronizes and racializes the mountaineer, even if that effect was unintentional.

Miles’s application of the “vanishing Indian” trope to the Appalachian mountaineer draws on an established rhetorical device, as noted in my introduction, as delineated by Dippie and Romero. This rhetorical tradition should form the theoretical backdrop for understanding the significance of Miles’s aligning the mountaineer with Native American peoples. Dippie argues of “the rhetoric of doom” that surrounded Native Americans in the nineteenth century, “To make their case, poets, novelists, and essayists adopted a stylistic strategy that summed up Indian fate in images drawn from nature. The Indian was at the sunset of his existence” (13). In aligning the Southern Appalachian mountaineer with both Native Americans and with the mountaineers’

natural surroundings, Miles places her best-known work within this rhetorical lineage of supposedly vanishing peoples. While I do not believe that Miles's intent was malicious, she undeniably participates in the fashioning of a mountaineer who both belongs to another period and is racially Other. As I argue throughout this dissertation, such an image was part and parcel of the exploitation of mountain land.

Miles implicitly attributes many of the mountaineer's peculiarities—"qualities and traditions the cause of which is farther to seek"—to an underlying strain of Native American influence, whether through actual miscegenation in the not-too distant past or simply cultural contact. "The bearing of the mountaineer," she writes, is

...dignified rather than stolid, distinct alike from the homely shrewdness of the New Englander, the picturesque freedom of the man from the new West and the elaborate courtesy of the South proper! Does it not bring to mind a vision of moccasined feet and the grave, laconic speech of chiefs met together for a high pow-wow? (84)

Of course, we might read this passage as merely a comment on what Miles perceives as the mountaineer's proud carriage, and certainly such an image is part of her aim.

However, Miles simultaneously defends mountaineers against popular conceptions of their undignified character as she paradoxically furthers the rhetoric of the "Vanishing Mountaineer," a racialized Other who, to return to Frost's famous formulation, will "give place to foreigners and melt away like so many Indians" if he cannot properly modernize (319). Throughout the chapter, Miles furthers her alignment of the mountaineer with the "vanishing Indian," such as when the narrator describes a young man who "chews his tobacco with as much dignity as a young brave in his first war-paint" (85). "Indian-like,

too,” she tells us, “is the mountaineer’s stoic acceptance of privation and hardship and the sardonic quality of his humor” (85). “From the Cherokee,” the mountaineer has acquired his “knowledge of herbs and medicine,” and a certain Pap Ferris’s account of his knowledge of a secret cold-water spring “savored of aboriginal custom” (88). Miles even ends the chapter by saying “Sometimes one may suspect an aroma of Cherokee magic haunting them all” (97), which suggests that the mountaineer’s essentialized difference from normative white readers—Miles’s readers—might be accounted for by, at the very least, Native American influence on mountaineer folkways and, perhaps, even through miscegenation among Cherokee and white mountaineers¹⁶. Further, and allaying doubt that *Spirit’s* narrator is mostly a proxy for Miles, we see in Miles’s journals a direct claim of miscegenation between mountaineers and Native Americans. She describes the “typical Tennessee mountaineer...” as having “the ancestry of Scotch-Irish, and also the early association with the Cherokee [which] have given an indwelling look, a mystical brooding, dreaming” (qtd. in Cox, xx, excerpted from an entry not included in the collected journals). In short, Miles explains the mountaineer’s difference by racializing it. And while her aims are well intentioned—she is in many ways trying to defend the mountaineer by aligning him with “noble savages”—she participates in a rhetoric that is ultimately damaging, the effects of which we shall see in chapter three with the business dealings of John Fox, Jr.

¹⁶ I turn to the issue of miscegenation briefly in chapter four of this dissertation when I discuss Silas House’s novel, *A Parchment of Leaves* (2001).

Miles's impulse to record the customs of the mountaineer further attests to the idea of a disappearing mountain culture, aligning it with the idea of "vanishing Indians," as well. The mountaineer, according to Miles, lives a rough life, an "existence...nearly as primitive as that of the Dark Ages, and primitive life is necessarily dirty" (20). The word "Dark Ages" places the mountaineer out of modern time, and "primitive," derogatorily racializes the mountaineer. Miles's characterizing the mountaineer as primitive and, especially, her animalistic descriptions of her subjects are similar to contemporaneous descriptions of people considered non-white. Indeed, in the same 1904 issue of *Harper's* in which "Some Real American Music" appeared, a Civil War story entitled "The Non-Combatants" by Robert Chambers describes an African American slave, Moses, in the animalistic and primitive terms that resonate in Miles's text. For example, Moses "descended the steps stiffly, and teetered through the shrubbery with the instinct of a watch-dog worn out in service" (835). This description calls to mind Miles's earlier-cited description of *Spirit's* narrator's mountain pupils as "run[ning] free as the fawns and cubs that they often capture for playmates—as timid, as lithe and about as intellectual" (3).

Moreover, Miles accounts for one mountaineer behavior, at least in part, through mountaineers' affinity with Native Americans superstition:

It is scarcely too much to say that every man and woman in the mountains is, in one way or another superstitious...From the old Irish it is likely, or else from the Cherokee, or from the grimly mystical minds of the earliest Indian-fighting pioneers. (98)

The mountaineer may be superstitious, Miles surmises, because of Irish extraction—an ethnicity, as Jacobson has shown, that was regarded more as what we typically think of as

a denigrated “race” into the early twentieth century. In *Whiteness of a Different Color*, Jacobson convincingly argues that the various ethnicities that would become “Caucasian” were until at least the early twentieth century regarded as distinct races:

American scholarship on immigration has generally conflated race and color, and so has transported a late-twentieth-century understanding of 'difference' into a period whose inhabitants recognized biologically based 'races' rather than culturally based 'ethnicities.' But in the interest of an accurate historical rendering of race in the structure of the U.S. culture and in the experience of those immigrant groups now called 'Caucasians,' we must listen more carefully to the historical sources than to the conventions of our own era; we must admit of a system of 'difference' by which one might be both white *and* racially distinct from other whites. (6)

Ultimately, then, reference to Irish ancestry, especially when Miles attributes mountaineer “difference” to it, is a racializing move. Alternatively, we might account for the mountaineer’s superstitiousness, according to Miles, through Cherokee influence (again, I think it likely here that Miles is hinting at miscegenation between Cherokee and mountaineers), and through the unchanged mind of the mountaineer’s ancestors, “the earliest Indian-fighting pioneers” (98). In one sentence, Miles affiliates the mountaineers who are the subject of her study with two denigrated “races”—the Irish and the Native American—as well as characterizes mountaineers as intellectually unevolved in the one-hundred or more years they have lived in these mountains.

Chapter VI, entitled, “Supernatural,” is arguably the chapter in which Miles participates most directly in the contemporaneous rhetoric of the anachronized and racialized mountaineer. In fact, aligning mountaineers with their former Cherokee neighbors performs both anachronization and racialization. Old wives’ tales, specifically

remedies for various ailments, are attributed to Native American influence: “A baby’s sore mouth may be cured by the breath of a man who has never seen his own father,” Miles writes of one of the mountaineers’ beliefs. She continues, “This I take to be an old Cherokee charm” (101). Additionally, references to British Isle influences, unchanged supposedly in the intervening century or more since the mountaineer’s forbears came to Appalachia, deepens the mountaineer’s anachronization even as it appeals to white ancestry, the latter of which again betrays Miles’s ambivalence regarding the mountaineer. Among these various “superstitions of grandmotherhood,” Miles remarks that such grandmothers speak to their grandchildren with “pet names...and lullabies—baby-talk mingled with endearments that Chaucer’s nurse may have addressed to him! ‘You little dawtie, little poppee-doll! Bless hits little angel-lookin’ time!’” (100). Thus, while Miles by turns racializes the mountaineer through alignment with Native Americans even as she appeals to undisturbed Anglo and Celtic ancestry (the latter is more fraught, of course, as noted above), the anachronization wrought by both is consistent. These are a people, according to Miles, who belong to another time, whose culture is foreign and yet, as I will address later, particularly American. That Miles should be among the Appalachian mountaineers’ staunchest defenders and celebrants and still employ the rhetoric that was instrumental to the mountaineer’s material disenfranchisement serves to illustrate the pervasiveness of that rhetoric, such that its tenets were taken as undeniable truth.

Of course, such leaps from stereotype to perceived reality are common to our human desire to categorize, and for precisely this reason, representation is immeasurably important in shaping national conceptions of a particular group. As Wray explains,

[W]e tend to rely quite heavily on stereotypes because to do otherwise requires a significant amount of cognitive work. Instead, relying on our shared representations, we treat category as if it were a fixed, naturally given thing and then assume the person we are fitting to the category shared some or all of the traits and characteristics of the category. In short, we reify the categories into identities. (8)

Even as *Spirit's* narrator sometimes counts herself among her "subjects," she reifies and provides further evidence for the emerging "hillbilly" stereotype that is still readily identifiable in popular media over 100 years later. Such discourse surrounding mountain whites, and in some instances rural whites more generally, developed at a time when eugenics was gaining popularity in the United States. Indeed, as Wray documents, "Eugenic field researchers found evidence to confirm the received wisdom that poor rural white families exhibited higher levels of criminality, feeblemindedness, sexual promiscuity, and alcoholism than did other populations of whites" (19). Within this context, we can see that even fictional representations (especially, perhaps, in the case of *Spirit's* "fictionalized ethnography," as Edwards describes it) had the power to perpetuate and bolster such notions about the supposedly inherent deficiencies of mountaineers. Moreover, we can see Miles by turns continually resist and succumb to this rhetoric.

In fact, Miles's narrator continues to waver throughout *Spirit* between talking of the mountaineers as distinct from herself and including herself in that population using the plural first person. This waffling indicates Miles's desire to both be honest about her

outsider status, having been born elsewhere and having close ties to the Chattanooga elite, as well as her desire to be counted among the bona fide mountaineers of Walden's Ridge. One instructive example of Miles's indecision on her place among the mountaineers occurs in Chapter VII, "The Old Time Religion." "Courage seems to me," Miles writes, "the keynote of *our* whole system of religious thought" (140, emphasis added). In this first sentence of a paragraph, Miles's narrator counts herself among the native population of Walden's Ridge. In the next sentence, however, she becomes the removed observer:

The fatalism of *this free folk* is unlike anything of the Far East; dark and mystical though it be through much brooding over the problem of evil, it is lighted with flashes of the spirit of the Vikings. A man born and bred in a vast wild land nearly always becomes a fatalist. (140, emphasis added)

On the one hand, if read with a cynical eye, we might say that Miles's narrator *is* a mountaineer in the first sentence because she is describing them in positive terms (their courage), and that she *is not* a mountaineer in the subsequent sentences because she is describing an anachronized, depressing "fatalism." I am more inclined to think, however, that the narrator's quick rhetorical shift from insider to outsider owes more to an anxiety surrounding Miles's having not been born in the mountains—note the reference to "born and bred"—and guilt, perhaps, at her access to the world beyond Walden's Ridge, which is not available to most of her neighbors.

"Peculiarly American": The Paradox of the Native Mountaineer

Interestingly, and in contradiction to some of the narrator's earlier discussion of class in *Spirit*, Miles's narrator describes mountaineers as a "race" in Chapter VIII,

“Some Real American Music,” Chapter IX, “The Literature of a Wolf-Race,” and Chapter X, “Conclusion.” Each of these chapters champions the unique features of Appalachian culture, and in the conclusion, the narrator laments the already apparent effects of modernization. Significantly, the narrator’s chief argument against the destruction of mountain land and culture holds that mountaineers are quintessentially American, and that their destruction constitutes the eroding of a national past, calling the mountaineers the “truest Americans of America” (198). Miles paradoxically uses the word “race” most consistently alongside the narrator’s strongest defense of the mountaineer against the rhetoric of inferiority, insofar as she characterizes the mountaineer as quintessentially American.

As we shall see, Miles’s text strains in these chapters against the tension between its earlier alignment of the mountaineer with Native peoples, which in this time period would have been tantamount to marking the mountaineer as inferior and “vanishing,” and its contention in this section of the text that the mountaineer is more “American” than anyone else. Perhaps this seemingly contradictory pairing owes to Miles’s apparent sympathy toward Native Americans in light of their status as the most American of Americans, having been in this land far before the first European settlers.

Returning to Miles’s *Spirit*, Chapter VIII, “Some Real American Music” serves to highlight the cultural contributions of the mountaineer. Again, this chapter was originally published as a stand-alone in essay in *Harper’s* in June 1904, and that broad national audience should cause us to carefully consider the ways in which this chapter exemplifies Miles’s participation in the growing national conversation regarding the fitness of the

mountaineer for modern life. “It is generally believed,” the narrator begins, “that America has no folk-music, nothing distinctively native” (146). Unsurprisingly, she is prepared to offer the music of the mountains as a rightful American product, but not before she discounts other “native” forms of American music, and not for their quality—she finds them “excellent,” actually—but for their being “foreign,” in a nativist turn. Miles concedes,

Dvorak and a few other composers have indeed made use of negro themes, and the aboriginal Indian music has been seriously treated more than once. But these compositions, however excellent, *are no expression of American life and characters*. They fall as strangely on our ears as any *foreign product*. (146, emphasis added)

It is unclear here if Miles declares Dvorak’s compositions “foreign” because of his own Czech origin, or because he incorporates “negro themes,” or because he adapts “aboriginal Indian music,” but I suspect her reasoning involves a combination of all three. Notice, too, that “negro themes” and “Indian music” in their own right are not even considered for inclusion as American folk music. Rather, it is “here, among the mountains of Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Carolinas,” Miles continues, where we find “a people of whose inner nature and its musical expression almost nothing has been said. The music of the Southern mountaineer is not only peculiar, but, like himself, *peculiarly American*” (147, emphasis added). The mountaineer, in Miles’s estimation, is at once Other and quintessentially American.

Miles contrasts the mountaineer’s music with that of “savage peoples,” in the absence of “laments...sobbing and wailing” (147-148). Thus, while she has elsewhere in

the text, notably in Chapter V, “The Savage Strain,” aligned the mountaineer with the Cherokee, here she is careful to distinguish mountaineer music from that of Native Americans, as she seeks to highlight the former’s contribution to American culture. And yet she ends the chapter with a return to Native Americans, characterizing mountain music as “Crude with a tang of the Indian wilderness, strong with the strength of the mountains, yet, in a way, mellowed with the flavor of Chaucer’s time” (170-171). Miles, as this passage suggests, holds up the mountaineer, or his music at least, as a *mélange* of disparate cultures and times, thereby exhibiting a unique and quintessentially American character. She concludes the chapter by characterizing the song in question as a “folk-song of a high order” (171). “May it not one day, she asks, “give birth to a music that shall take a high place among the world’s great schools of expression?” (171). In other words, Miles positions Southern Appalachian music to favorably distinguish American culture, something whose absence scholars and artists had long lamented.

Miles even appeals to the idea of the mountaineer’s Scotch-Irish ancestry, in contrast to the hints at Native American descent in earlier chapters, calling them here “North American Highlanders [who] will yet become a grand race!” (199-200). Earlier, in her second chapter, Miles weds this pedigree to the mountaineer’s belonging to another time. This is the section of *Spirit* in which, as I noted early in this chapter, Miles refers to the mountaineer’s “pioneer hardihood,” his “primitive peace,” to the “fatalism of ancient peoples, and the rites and legend of the aborigines” (18). A few pages later, Miles notes a “mother...crooning over her work, some old ballad of an eerie sadness...something she learned as a child from a grandmother whose grandmother again brought it from Ireland

or Scotland” (30). These songs, she continues, are ones whose lyrics are “mere words to the mountain people” for which “they will often...apologize...for the lack of ‘sense’ in the lines; but they dare not alter a syllable; the song is too anciently received” (31). Thus, the sacred among the mountaineers, according to Miles, is that which is most ancient, underscoring their supposed incompatibility with modernity. Paradoxically, it is through this anachronizing, through this appeal to Scottish and Irish ancestry and to the idea that the mountaineer has been in the United States longer than many groups, that Miles makes the case in later chapters for preserving mountain culture. She simultaneously and at cross-purposes marks the mountaineer as unfit for the modern world and champions his cause as a rightful American.¹⁷

Indeed, for Miles, there is no greater appeal for the preservation of mountain land and peoples than to bind their fate up with that of the nation itself: “[W]e [Appalachians] are yet a people asleep,” she writes,

a race without knowledge of its own existence...When they shall have established a unity of thought corresponding to their homogeneity of character, then their love of country will assume a practical form, and then, indeed, America, with all her peoples, can boast no stronger sons than these same mountaineers. (201)

We see again in this passage the author’s shift from “we” to “they,” a reoccurrence of the narrator’s—and probably Miles’s—vacillation between counting herself as one with the mountaineers and separating herself as an observer. This passage also demonstrates that

¹⁷ Engelhardt importantly notes that “Although she [Miles] argues against systems of unjust economic privilege, rather than challenging structures of racial privilege that benefit white people over everyone else, Miles tries to get that racial privilege extended to white Appalachians” (*Tangled Roots*, 150)

the figure of the mountaineer is rhetorically masculine (“sons”). And, finally, Miles’s narrator here argues that cultural homogeneity is key to reversing the mountaineer’s destruction.

Finally, in “Chapter IX: The Literature of a Wolf-Race,” Miles makes the case for mountaineer dialect and storytelling to be considered another rightful American product and art. Here, the mountaineer still constitutes a race, but one that is “pure” in nature. The “literature” Miles refers to is not the “studies in dialect by authors such as John Fox and Mary Murfree,” she writes, “but the compositions of the mountaineers themselves, in song and proverb and story, made for no other public than their own circle. Of course, it is all purely oral, for very few of the mountain people can read and write. But it is literature, for all that” (172). Miles characterizes mountain speech as a “genuine dialect to be distinguished from mere barbarism and corruption” (173). Other American dialects, Miles argues, “are either forms corrupted from a standard English or bastard forms arising from a mixture with some other language, as French-English, Mexican-English, [and] negro-English” (173). The mountain dialect, Miles maintains, even surpasses the “famous New England dialect” in prestige because “many of... [its] word-forms are historic, and only to be found, in literature, in works antedating the close of the sixteenth century” (173). In this section of the text, the narrator temporarily de-racializes the mountaineer, or at least the mountaineer’s dialect, while she deepens that figure’s anachronization. Miles cannot, it seems, rid her characterizations of both simultaneously, even in her most pointed attempts to defend mountaineers and their culture. While anachronizing the mountaineers denigrates them, their connection with old English

culture (read: unproblematic whiteness), elevates them as racial and cultural superiors to much of the “bastard language”-speaking nation.

Miles’s Private Journals and the Future of the Mountaineer

Where earlier Miles had defended the mountaineer against all sorts of nefarious stereotypes, her later musings betray her fear that “genuine” mountain life was fading from existence, leaving only the worst behind. As Appalachian studies scholar George Brosi notes, in a 1915 journal entry, Miles laments her move back to her husband’s parents’ home on Signal Mountain, writing, “this God-forsaken neighborhood among the scum of humanity, those thieves, strumpets and degenerates left when the capable and normal mountaineers move away” (qtd. in Brosi 19). Mountain life, according to Miles, was passing away with each mountaineer who sought his fortunes outside that region. Left, she tells us, are those who embody the negative stereotypes she had in part sought to counter in *Spirit*.

Miles’s recently edited and published journals give us great insight into the writer’s life. Moreover, her personal struggles with financial hardship and traditional gender roles illustrate the degree to which Miles’s own life was embedded in the changing ways of mountain living. As the journals’ editor, Steven Cox, notes in his introduction,

Because Frank had trouble finding good paying jobs, Emma was often the main breadwinner...However, the demands of her family made it difficult [for her to work]...Traditionally, women in Appalachia during this period did not work outside the home for wages...Frank’s traditional ‘mountain’ way of supporting their family differed from Emma’s more modern way of earning money...Changing gender roles for mountain women and a growing reliance on

the regional market economy in mountain life were underlying themes in their [Frank and Emma's] frequent disagreements over finances. (xxxiii)

Unfortunately, financial hardship would be a dominant stressor throughout Miles's life, and this fact illuminates the close relationship between literary and economic exploitation of mountain subjects. In some ways, mountaineers like Frank had trouble sustaining their families because of the increasing unprofitability of mountain folkways in the modern economy. As Miles reports, Frank once told her in an argument, "he can make a living if I will be satisfied with the living he can make" (xxxiii). In other words, Frank's methods of subsistence were no longer compatible with the modern world, or more to the point, Emma's modern sensibilities. Eller tracks one such decline of traditional subsistence strategies: "While the size of the average mountain farm was about 187 acres in the 1880s, by 1930 the average Appalachian farm contained only 76 acres, and in some counties the average was as low as 47 acres" (xix). Such decrease in mountain farm land was not merely coincidental to the rapidly increasing coal and lumber industries:

This decline occurred throughout the region but was most pronounced in the coal fields and other areas of intense economic growth. Significantly, while the total number of farms increased during these years, the total amount of land in farms actually decreased almost 20 percent as a result of the purchase of farm properties by timber and mining companies. (xix)

While mountain living became increasingly more difficult as a result of land loss, the conflict between mountain gender role expectations, as outlined by Cox above, and Emma's abilities to make a living outside the home through painting and writing also underscore the tensions between the mountain past and the modern, encroaching world.

Moreover, these facts demonstrate that the Appalachian region was very much embedded in that modern world, even as it was being depicted as a disappearing anachronism in popular literature of the period, including to a certain extent, Emma Bell Miles's own writing.

Miles's employment of the vanishing mountaineer motif is not merely a rhetorical device. Indeed, in her private journals, 1908-1918, she references "long-abandoned mountain homes" and the solitude of "the last of a forgotten orchard" (Miles, Cox ed. 10). In some ways, the rhetoric of the anachronized and racialized mountaineer had become a self-fulfilling prophecy, effecting his actual vanishing—not into thin air of course, but in the form of children who did not stay in the remote recesses of the mountains and sought work elsewhere. That is, the decreasing viability of mountain subsistence and economies of exchange in the face of the encroaching modern economy made living in the mountains less attractive than it had ever been before. As I argue throughout this dissertation, the rhetoric of the anachronized and racialized mountaineer found in the literature of the period as well as paratextual historical documents, helped justify the usurpation of mountain land for various business interests. Thus, that rhetoric was but two steps removed from an actual vanishing mountaineer, as his children and grandchildren could no longer make a way in the hollows of their forebears.

While there were no coal mines in Miles's particular corner of Walden's Ridge, there was a rather large operation in adjacent Rhea county, which is also situated on Walden's Ridge, a ridge that spans seventy-five miles ("New Era," *Times Free Press*; Cox xxv). The Richland mine explosion of 1901 was the beginning of the end of the coal

boom in this part of Tennessee. While Miles's journals do not begin until 1908, and thus I can only speculate about her personal feelings regarding the incident, I find it likely that such disasters as the Richland mine explosion, which Miles certainly would have heard about, account at least in part for the narrator's mistrust of and disdain for encroaching modernization in *Spirit*, which was published in 1905.

Miles's comparisons of mountaineers to Native Americans continue in the journal: "The mountaineer's ideal of home comfort," she writes in a November 13, 1908 entry, "is that of the Indian Esquimaux: let furs and violent exercise warm a man out of doors, but in the house at home he wants to sit comfortably in shirtsleeves, toasting one side at a time, eating, singing, jesting, carousing, with open doors that mock the storm" (21). Unsurprisingly, as we find repeatedly in the texts under examination in this dissertation, the attendant anachronization is not far behind this likening of the mountaineer to Native peoples. Miles ends this particular entry with an exoticized account of mountaineers' supposedly otherworldly existence, characterizing them as who existing apart from time or, at the very least, apart from the modern world:

They are all romance, these luxuries of the mountaineer,—music, whisky, firelight, religion, and fighting: they are efforts to reach a finer, larger life,—part of the blue dream of the wild land. Who knows him? Who has ever understood the devious approaches of his mind to any subject? Who has tracked him to that wild, remote spot, echo-haunted, beautiful, terrible, wherein he dwells? Who has measured the rock foundation of his home, or tasted the water of his unknown well-springs of desire? (22)

Here, the mountaineer is a romanticized, racialized anachronism, but a racialized anachronism nonetheless. It is as if, despite Miles's celebration of the mountaineer, she

cannot escape taking this rhetoric as fact and must fit her praises within this framework. Importantly, Miles seems to attribute the mountaineer's otherworldliness to the ethereal nature of his landscape, "the blue dream of the wild land." In an entry dated November 29, 1908, she writes, "The whole place [the mountain-top on which she lives] is elevated above the lower strata of air, lifted quite out of the seething, busy valley, safe and still as an enchanted isle" (23-24). Notice, however, that the mountain's separation from the rest of the world is couched in positive terms. Moreover, the world below in the valley is subsequently described as ephemeral—lovely, but not having much real effect on the lives of the mountaineers: "The rest of the world fades to a dream; its sounds reach you echo-thin and sweet, its lights are a necklace of jewels on the dusky velvet bosom of the hills—all fairy-like unreal and dim" (24). Here, though assenting to the prevailing narrative of the disappearing mountaineer, of the ancestor locked in time, Miles revises the rhetorical paradigm to present the mountains as somehow more real than the valley; the former is enchanted, but quite real and alive, while the latter's sounds are "echo-thin," its effects on the mountaineer "fairy-like unreal and dim" (24). Nonetheless, Miles quickly betrays her own ambivalence at her mountain life, noting that "here in the loneliness one passes from surprise to surprise" (24). In other words, the mountains for Miles are simultaneously a place of isolation and alienation as well as exciting and endless intrigue.

In addition to attributing the mountaineer's unfitness for modernity to the landscape, not to mention placing a revisionist spin on that paradigm, Miles also seems to attribute to the land her racialized likening of mountaineers to Native Americans. That is,

for Miles, the land itself evokes a romanticized, and admittedly problematic, idea of Native peoples since “vanished”: “As the world rolls down into shadow a horn is wound faint and clear, somewhere in the hollow of the hills,” Miles writes in an entry from December 13, 1908. She continues, “its last note’s dying echoes fall and waken images of things long gone, lives lost in the gloom of time—of Cherokee myths and they yet more ancient, ‘little’ peoples—remote and vanished” (25).

In perhaps the most striking combination of anachronization and racialization of the mountaineer to be found in Miles’s journal, she writes

One sees now, on the streets, the wildest types of the region,—lean young hawks, profiles like those of the eastward bluff, girls with the woodland gaze of chamois, children like lemurs & lorises clinging on the top of a load and staring at the shops: strange wild-beast or Indian glances meet yours from the depths of quaint calico sunbonnets, and ‘possum eyes fix you from a busy of gray furry beard and eyebrows and hair: warlock faces & Rip Van Winkles awakened. (25, December 19, 1908)

Later, she continues, “The old faces, gnarled and shriveled as a limbertwig apple, seemed like an old Cherokee’s, were alight with anticipation” (25). Miles also hints from time to time at a suspicion of actual mixed race ancestry among mountaineers. For example, on February 1, 1909 she remarks of a conversation with a mountain man about the “interminable vexed genealogies which are a delight of the mountaineers” (28). By this point in the journals, Miles has fully committed to the Otherness of the mountaineers, and she renders her descriptions of them in these exoticized, racialized, and anachronized terms, without comment. That is to say, at this point in Miles’s experience with the

mountains, and perhaps in the national conversation regarding mountaineers, such difference from normative whites is taken as a given.

Perhaps Miles's deepening entrenchment in this denigrating rhetoric of the anachronized and racialized mountaineer owes to her own uncertainty about her place in mountain life, the evolution of which I trace below. Just as Miles's narrator in *Spirit* was ambivalent about mountaineers, so too was Emma Bell Miles about her plight as a struggling artist saddled to a husband she considered, by turns, either a well-meaning but ultimately ineffective mountain man or a layabout who stifled her potential and impoverished their family. For example, while she has earlier and often detailed the family's lack with a great deal of remorse, she strikes a proud if melancholy tone at the midpoint of her journal, and she exhibits remorse that she has not been thankful for what they do have in one another: "Frank says our Xmas will be slim," she writes. "I don't care. We will not let that spoil our happiness. We have been happy all these years, through all the hardships and very present dangers, if we had but realized it, and been kinder to each other" (61). Miles, it seems, counts her hardships with Frank as happy times nonetheless and, even, as integral to her having really "lived."

Writing to her imagined audience of her children and here singling out one or more of her daughters, Miles concludes her December 23, 1911, entry by recasting her hardships in terms of having had important experiences: "You will hear plenty of people say that I grew old before my time. Daughter, the reason some women look young at forty-five is that they have never lived" (61). In some ways, this passage shows us a Miles who has adopted a mountaineer ethos, in which hard work is an end in itself. Frank

Miles's mountain subsistence strategies, earlier so unsatisfactory to Emma, here become formative shapers of her life fully lived, a rhetorical shift that underscores Emma Miles's evolving and self-contradictory experience of mountain life.

A week later, Miles revises her stance slightly, ensuring the reader knows that her hardships have not been borne on Frank's account:

The sacrifices a woman makes in marriage, the pains she undergoes, are not for the sake of her man and should not be charged to his account. They are for the home, and the family in the home. She must expect to sacrifice her personal interests utterly for this; it is her business, her ideal, her trade, her life work, her art nobler than marble and more enduring than bronze. (62)

Though Miles cannot have known that she would be dead of tuberculosis in a matter of seven years, she seems to be in the business of legacy building at this point in the journals. While she absolves Frank of wrongdoing in causing the family's hardships, she is careful to attribute her own sacrifices to her devotion to the family unit as a whole and not to Frank himself. Moreover, she casts her role as homemaker as her chief creative achievement, perhaps sincerely but perhaps also in an attempt to assuage her feelings of despondency surrounding her stifled artistic and literary career.

A mere two days later, on January 7, 1912, Miles is back to resenting her family for her frustrated artistic endeavors: "I got up with the desire uppermost to do some watercolors of the silver forest. But Jean [her daughter] has got at my new Chinese White, wasted half and mixed the remainder with red, so that only a pastel was possible. I felt so disappointed that I scolded all morning. If only I could quit painting for the next five years I would be glad; but these wretched little daubs are almost all we have to live

on” (62). In this passage, Miles’s family has first literally prevented her art making through Jean’s wasting and mixing the paint. On another level, Miles’s need to provide financially for the family seems to prevent her from engaging in the creative activities—perhaps more writing—she actually wants to do, forcing her instead to do what sells. Miles gives explicit voice to these concerns later in the entry, confessing, “the house is upset from end to end and the children have to be whipped all round whenever I draw or write. I could be a good mother if I were not obliged for the sake of food to be a workman too” (62). In quite a reversal from her last entry, here Miles’s artistic endeavors, despite being for money and not for art’s sake, are her chief accomplishment, and she characterizes herself as failing at motherhood. Again, ambivalence is Miles’s hallmark feeling toward her circumstances in all regards. Surprisingly, Frank is the hero in this entry: “Yet the dear man’s patience and kindness in these hard days is an example and help to us all,” Miles writes, and she ends the entry with an account of Frank’s saving Judith from drowning in the well, an experience which apparently “hurt Frank worse than” Judith emotionally (62).

This harrowing event colors Emma’s attitude toward Frank in subsequent entries in which she is much more charitable to her husband than she has been earlier in the journals. She writes that Frank had been called for jury duty and she was so weary from a day’s work of splitting wood for the fire that she

was too tired and chilled to cook any supper, but while the coffee was warming Frank walked in. He had come all the way back to see how we were faring, and his feet were somewhat frostbitten. We had good news; we had found a chance to send for some groceries, and better still, the long-expected check [presumably for Miles’s stories and/or paintings in national periodicals] came in today’s mail. (63)

The Frank of these entries is not the shiftless mountaineer Miles paints earlier in the text. Rather, here he is a self-sacrificing husband and father who balances civic and familial duties literally at the expense of his own skin. Emma's wavering depictions of Frank, while in some ways owing merely to universal fickle human nature and the difficulties of any marriage, highlight Emma's own conflicted feelings about her life in the mountains, of which her relationship with Frank is metonymic. Moreover, because Emma ends this entry with a reference to her financial contributions to the family ("the check came in today's mail"), she threads together her mutually informed ambivalent feelings toward her artistic endeavors, the family's financial burdens, Frank's successes and failures as head of household, and the mountain atmosphere in general.

Indeed, in the next entry, dated January 9, 1912, Miles returns to despair at the family's situation, lamenting the cold weather, lack of food, dwindling funds, and absent husband who is still away at jury duty. Unlike earlier entries, however, Miles is repentant by entry's end for her attitude:

Evening brings a measure of peace and confidence unknown for days,... My heart expands, the racking anger and terror fall from it; I look up, and reach through the lonely darkness toward those warm faithful hands. My dear, I am so sorry I was cross! But he is in town and cannot get home before Saturday. (64)

This repentant attitude is also reflected in Miles's attitude toward her children's education and home life. While at times she despairs at her children's mountain upbringing, removed as it is from the education she wishes she could provide for them, at other times, she recasts these experiences of mountain deprivation as formative educational experiences themselves:

My children at least will never grow up with that smug bourgeois idea in their heads that poor folks are different—that they get used to cold and hunger and ugliness and dirt, and are not hurt by it. Whatever comes to them in after life, they will not forget this. The truth about elementary things like this, is educational in the highest sense. It will make up to them for their winter’s schooling. (65)

Notably, the children’s misfortune is characterized as temporary, and the hardships they endure are not minimized. Miles’s depiction is not of a quaint, folksy, bearable poverty, but rather of actual deprivation. Yet, these are the very conditions she cites as those that will make her children fit for the lives they will lead as adults, which she implicitly imagines will take them far from the limitations of Walden’s Ridge. In sum, Miles’s formulation of a mountaineer identity is one informed by a mother’s recognition of this region’s improving effects upon her children’s characters even as she imagines and hopes that they will transcend their station.¹⁸

In perhaps the most-cited passage from *The Spirit of the Mountains*, Miles rejects, as Engelhardt notes, the idea that encroaching civilization would necessarily benefit the mountaineer or better his circumstances in any way (28) Rather than advocating assimilation into a modern economy, Miles writes, “Let us be given work that will make us better mountaineers, instead of turning us into poor imitation city people” (198). What Miles’s narrator cannot seem to decide, however, is what would constitute a “better mountaineer.” The narrator’s and Miles’s continued ambivalence toward mountaineers

¹⁸ Miles’s journals in the later years of her short life are marked with tragedy. Her youngest son died of scarlet fever at the age of seven, and there are hints that Miles later had an abortion for fear of not being able to financially care for her unborn child. There are references to multiple unpublished works, including book-length projects, of which scholars have been unable to locate any remnants. Finally, Miles was diagnosed with tuberculosis and spent several years in and out of the Pine Breeze Tuberculosis Sanitarium in Chattanooga, Tennessee. She also made several attempts at divorcing Frank under the strain of their financial and familial woes, but the couple remained married until her death.

and mountain life underscores her entrenchment in this national conversation regarding what to make of the Appalachian mountaineers and what role they would play in the modern nation. As I have argued throughout this chapter, at nearly every turn, Miles is unable to escape anachronizing mountaineers without marking them as racial Others or vice versa, demonstrating the pervasiveness of this disenfranchising discourse, such that even the mountaineer's defenders could not escape it. Because Miles died of tuberculosis on February 18, 1919 at the age of 39, we cannot know what she would have made of the entrenchment of mountaineer stereotypes in national culture or of the continued exploitation of mountain lands. Such exploitation would not have been possible without the rhetoric of anachronization and racialization Miles both resisted and participated in.

In the introduction to Miles's newly collected short stories, editor Grace T. Edward characterizes Miles's writing as straddling local color proper and a "new regionalism." "Feminist that she is," Edwards writes,

her writings belong generally to the local color school, though literary historians usually claim that the local color movement was in decline by the time Miles began to publish. In the decade following her death, a new regionalism reached fruition, its proponents sharing a strong sense of place with the local colorists but imbuing their fiction even more overtly than most of their predecessors with social motives...Emma Bell Miles' fiction and nonfiction stand between these two closely related impulses. (4)

Certainly, we see the liminality of Miles's work in *The Spirit of the Mountains* as well. In this way, Miles's work highlights the importance of the turn of the twentieth century in establishing the image of the Appalachian mountaineer in the national consciousness. Certainly, a movement from local color to a more politically minded new regionalism

suggests new political concerns afoot. For Miles, these were the roles of men and women, but they were also her own uncertainty about the status and ultimate fate of the Appalachian mountaineer in the modern world. As we shall see in the following chapter, the most famous novel of Kentucky writer John Fox, Jr., published three years after Miles's *Spirit*, demonstrates some of these same literary and political evolutions, but with a clearer marriage of the literary and material exploitation of Appalachian mountaineer.

CHAPTER III

JOHN FOX, JR., *THE TRAIL OF THE LONESOME PINE*, AND DIVIDED APPALACHIA

Though late on the scene of local color writing, the work of John Fox, Jr. is the most explicit link between the literary exploitation of an emerging hillbilly stereotype and the material exploitation of mountain land. Fox, though sometimes thought of as himself a mountaineer, was actually from the Bluegrass region of Kentucky and, according to Appalachian historian and Fox expert Darlene Wilson, lived in the mountains only when he could not afford to live elsewhere and/or when his business interests called for it (“Judicious” 106). Wilson argues that

Fox was a major mythmaker who reinforced the “idea” of an Appalachian “other” and encouraged several waves of social reformers to descend upon the mountains with schemes for cultural uplift and nationalistic mainstreaming. (“Felicitous” 6).

Perhaps the staunchest of his modern critics, Wilson even goes so far as to characterize Fox as a de facto “publicist for absentee mineral developers” (“Felicitous” 6).

However, Fox’s relationship to the mountains and his legacy are less straightforwardly villainous than Wilson might have it. Satterwhite succinctly describes the two camps of Fox scholarship:

Scholars who criticize Fox argue that the author bungled his representations of mountain characters. [These scholars] accuse him of promoting imperialism by caricaturing feuding moonshiners as an inferior but potentially redeemable ‘peculiar mountain-race.’ Conversely, Fox’s promoters—from his day to the

present—have praised his ‘intimate knowledge’ of mountain residents, whom they believed Fox captured accurately and sympathetically. (56)

Satterwhite takes a different approach by focusing on receptions of Fox’s most famous work, *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, and by tracing common reactions among different kinds of readers. She distinguishes among readers of Appalachian-set literature as nationally identified, locally identified, and transitional readers. “*Nationally identified* readers,” Satterwhite demonstrates, “turned to Fox’s novel as an antimodernist tonic that celebrated mountain quaintness, rationalized industrial interventions, and affirmed readers’ nationalism, racism, and imperialism” (56, emphasis original). But *Trail*, according to Satterwhite, spoke most clearly to transitional readers—that is, those who had left the region to pursue work and/or education elsewhere. These fan letters, she argues, “point to the ways that *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* expressed, constructed, and helped them [transitional readers] negotiate the pangs of joining the rising middle class” (56). Satterwhite also documents the negative reactions of “*locally identified* readers” who “saw themselves fictionalized as the stereotypical buffoons who comprised the majority of Fox’s characters, and were rightly offended” (56).

While Satterwhite rightly resists the either/or classification of Fox as exploiter or mountaineer champion, *Trail’s* continued celebration by native mountaineers adds yet another layer of complexity in thinking through Fox’s legacy. Big Stone Gap, Virginia, still celebrates Fox’s work and the stage adaptation of his most famous novel, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, is the official outdoor drama of the state of Virginia. While Wilson is right that Fox’s business interests and literary endeavors have an undeniable link, Fox

simultaneously denigrates mountain people via the codification of the hillbilly stereotype even as he celebrates the region and establishes a unifying identity that is still lauded today. Such celebration includes Adrianna Trigiani's popular *Big Stone Gap* trilogy and its recent film adaptation starring Kentuckian Ashley Judd, in which the stage adaptation of Fox's *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* features prominently. Finally, Satterwhite focuses on reception studies by examining fan mail. If we look at a top-down model of the construction of Appalachian identity in the national imagination, as I do throughout this dissertation, Fox's correspondence with elites such as Theodore Roosevelt demonstrates the pivotal role normatively white elites played in shaping popular notions of Appalachian mountaineer identity.

This chapter situates *Trail* within the larger development of the rhetorical containment of the Appalachian mountaineer at the turn of the century. Wilson has demonstrated the extent to which Fox was not only in business with the mineral companies but also the ways in which "Fox's impact...has been to racialize the 'southern mountaineer' within an evolving national text as 'almost-white,' a regional 'other' historically bound to pathological, under-class status" (8).¹⁹ I expand and qualify this idea to place Fox alongside the other writers under examination in this dissertation whose collective work constitutes, at least in part, the borders of the mountaineer's rhetorical containment. I also suggest that Fox's legacy has been a bit more complicated than previously argued by most scholars: Fox was certainly instrumental, in both his literary

¹⁹ Wilson deals with Fox's work in totale, which is, of course, necessary to demonstrating the extent of Fox's complicity in land exploitation; I, however, contract to focus on *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* as a kind of case study in the larger phenomenon this dissertation traces.

works and his lecture tours, in creating the mountaineer caricature that I have argued throughout this dissertation was important in justifying mountain land exploitation, but he and his work are also still celebrated in southwestern Virginia, and to deny the legitimacy of that celebration is to continue to deny mountaineer agency. In short, I argue that Fox's stance toward the region is divided through the mechanisms of racialization and anachronization: The mountaineers in Fox's most famous novel are denigrated via their relegation to less-than-white status. Yet they emerge as a laudatory relic of yesteryear, a quaint reminder of supposedly simpler times past. While this anachronization has its own detrimental effects in marking the mountaineer as incompatible with modernity and therefore doomed to disappear, the attendant romanticization may well account for *Trail's* continued celebration in Southwest Virginia.

Fox's 1908 novel, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, is a romance revolving around a young mountaineer, June, and her eventual husband, John "Jack" Hale, from the Bluegrass region of Kentucky. While other novels in Fox's body of work might more readily lend themselves to analyses of hillbilly stereotypes, *Trail's* relatively complex treatment is worth attention in the context of this dissertation by virtue of its popularity, its date of publication, and its setting: *Trail* sold more than a million copies, making it key to understanding early twentieth century conceptions of Southern Appalachian mountaineers. It was also published later in Fox's life, and because of his personal experience with mountain people at this point, contains strains of resistance to the very discourse he had helped to establish in earlier novels. Moreover, the novel is set near Big Stone Gap, Virginia, the place Fox made his sometime-home and most of his business

dealings, therefore having more to tell us about the relationship between Fox's business and his art than perhaps do his novels set elsewhere in the Appalachian region.

According to Silber, a moderating trend in Fox's stance toward Southern Appalachian mountaineers was not unique among writers focused on the region: "The advent of the New South in Appalachia," Silber argues,

Encouraged observers to reassess the qualities of the peculiar mountain people, highlighting their economic potential as sturdy contributors to a capable middle class. Although observers still found much that was odd, peculiar, and even degraded about the mountaineers, they also stressed the positive features that made this group deserving of northern assistance. The mountaineers may have possessed many 'primitive' characteristics, northerners believed, but they also possessed qualities that made them capable of uplift and improvement. Hence, the literature on Appalachia that appeared between the 1880s and the turn of the century turned away from its initial bewilderment over the strange and unusual qualities of the mountain people to a celebration of their strong, vigorous, patriotic, and racially pure characteristics. ("What does America need..." 249)²⁰

Silber is right that later works on Appalachia, as is the case of Fox's later works and Miles's *The Spirit of the Mountains*, present mountaineers as less Other than earlier works. Indeed, as I have noted, both Miles's and Fox's texts contain strains of this "rightful American" discourse that sought to situate the mountaineer as, in Frost's terms, "our contemporary ancestors," who would provide roots and comfort in the face of increasing immigration and urbanization for elite white readers. However, this discourse struggles for coherence against the undercurrent of the mountaineer being "not quite

²⁰ Silber also argues that in addition to the "romance of reconciliation" facilitated by literature between the North and South in the nineteenth century, the people of the mountain South represented even more acutely than Southerners more generally the idea of an untouched Americanism "unsullied" by nonwhites and foreigners" (246).

white” (to again borrow Wray’s eponymous terminology). I suggest that perhaps mountaineers were characterized in popular literature as quintessentially American and white when the need arose for them to be rhetorically trotted out as examples of what “real” Americans look like. Conversely, when mountaineers needed to be contained so as to exploit their land or labor, as was often the case in Fox’s milieu, they suddenly became less white and, therefore, more “justifiably” exploited. In Fox’s text, these two divided discourses push against one another, creating a productive space for considering the various rhetorical uses to which nationalistic, capitalist elites put the mountaineer at the turn of the twentieth century. Moreover, these tensions are evident in Fox’s correspondence with elite figures, most notably Theodore Roosevelt, which places his work in the context of a national conversation about the character of the Appalachian mountaineer.

These discordant rhetorics perhaps account for Fox’s mixed legacy. While Fox is at first glance either an easy hero or an easy villain—establisher of a beloved and celebrated mountain identity yet knowingly complicit in both the material and literary exploitation of the Southern Appalachian mountaineer—his legacy is not so readily defined. Rather, especially in *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, we find yet another case of an ambivalent relationship between an author and his subject(s). “Divided Appalachia” in this chapter’s title refers to Fox’s own ambivalence toward the region and its inhabitants as well as to two undercurrents of division in the novel itself. As Satterwhite rightly argues,

The Trail of the Lonesome Pine—torn as it is between fashion, education, worldliness, and refinement on the one hand and simplicity, wildness, home, and freedom from social constraints on the other—tells two contradictory stories about “progress.” (87)

As we shall see, the narrative divides Appalachia from the modernized world through imagery pointedly contrasting the mountains and supposedly uncivilized mountaineers from the Bluegrass region of Kentucky and its genteel inhabitants. Such rhetorical division might well have served important business purposes in encouraging Bluegrass Kentuckians to think of themselves as distinct from the people of the mountains in order to preserve particular working conditions in the coal mines and timber camps.

This kind of divisive strategy has been documented by scholar Karida Brown’s Eastern Kentucky African American Migration Project. Coal and timber companies imported labor from different geographical regions to Eastern Kentucky and other parts of Appalachia. These companies hired immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, and from the Alabama coalfields came African American men who were desperate to escape chain gangs or sharecropping labor and willing to work for little pay. While the companies might have derived enough workers from either of these sources, they purposefully drew their labor force from what Ronald Lewis aptly calls a “judicious mixture” of European immigrants, white mountaineers, and African Americans largely recruited from Alabama. This “judicious mixture” ensured that unionization would be a fraught endeavor indeed because the laborers were from such different backgrounds and had such seemingly different goals (Lewis 121). We might, then, entertain the notion that Fox’s rhetorical division of Bluegrass Kentuckians from Appalachian mountaineers

served to position the former (of which Fox was a member) as superior to and therefore justified in exploiting the latter in the coal mines and the lumber yards.²¹ Additionally, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* itself seems divided in its stance toward the region, with its Bluegrass gentleman protagonist, Jack Hale, endeavoring to transform a mountain girl into a civilized lady but ultimately becoming a mountaineer himself.

Though Fox was one of the best-selling authors of his generation, his work fell into relative obscurity after his death. When Appalachian Studies emerged as an academic field in the 1960's and 1970's, however, his work garnered renewed attention. Scholars readily recognized Fox as an important shaper of now-familiar Appalachian stereotypes. Scholar Marilyn DeEulis, for example, argued in 1977 that Fox's work had previously been considered critically only in terms of its sentimentality. Fox's story collections, *A Cumberland Vendetta* and *Hell Fer Sartain*, DeEulis proposed, should be reevaluated in terms of their elements of "primitivism" and "exoticism." DeEulis cites an 1899 letter Fox submitted with his manuscript of *A Mountain Europa* in which he referred to the "passing away of a very peculiar people" (134), which of course is an early example of Fox's anachronization and Othering of Appalachian mountaineers. Importantly, DeEulis also draws one of the first parallels between Fox's literary and material exploitation of the region, noting biographer W.I. Titus's assertion that

as early as the summer of 1882 'James [John's brother] was suggesting that John became a writer...he urged John to write of the mountain regions, sensing that this was a new area for literary exploitation.' This sort of literary rape was in many

²¹ For more, see in Ronald Lewis's *Black Coal Miners in America: Race, Class, and Community Conflict 1780-1980*, Chapter 7: "Judicious Mixture in Central Appalachia, 1880-1920."

ways akin to the Fox family's mineral exploitation of the mountains. It appears, then, that even early in his career John, as well as his brother James, felt that mountain life held very little intrinsic value. (qtd. in DeEulis, 134)

DeEulis argues that Fox's portrayal of mountaineers softened a bit by the time he wrote *Hell Fer Sartain*, suggesting that "Perhaps the Panic of 1893, which left his family broke and in debt, was a key factor in motivating Fox to look at the mountain people without the exotic trappings of his earlier stories" (137). I would not argue that Fox's portrayal of mountain characters was without "exotic trappings" entirely in the primary novel under examination in this chapter, but certainly by the time Fox published *Trail* in 1908, his mountaineer mythos was both firmly established and, I argue, becoming ultimately more complicated and more (relatively) nuanced than those earlier literary treatments.

In *Trail*, the eastern Kentucky mountains and the rolling hills of the Bluegrass (central Kentucky) might as well be different countries. Such a dynamic was established, according to Silber, by "the early local colorists of the southern mountains [who] stressed the strange and alien qualities that set the mountain people apart from all others," including "Kentucky writer James Lane Allen...[who] found his home state divided into 'two Kentuckys'—the mountain region and the bluegrass region—so different from each other that they comprised two distinct identities" (248).²² Similarly, *Trail's* third-person narrator characterizes the mountain region as an ancient land with ancient customs, while the Bluegrass region is firmly in the modern era.

²² James Lane Allen was a popular Kentucky author who corresponded with and mentored Fox.

Through his nature imagery, Fox underscores the rhetoric surrounding the mountains and the mountaineer that is the chief concern of this dissertation: As Hale

rode by the [eponymous] Pine, [he] saw again at its base the print of the little girl's foot...and dropped down through the afternoon shadows towards the *smoke and steam and bustle and greed of the Twentieth Century*. A long, lean, black-eyed boy, with a wave of black hair over his forehead, was pushing his horse the other way along the Big Black [mountain] *and dropping down through the dusk into the Middle Ages*—both all but touching on either side the outstretched hands of the wild little creature left in the shadows of the Lonesome Cove. (39, emphasis added)

In Fox's configuration early in the novel, the mountains have an inescapable pull. One must leave entirely or become a mountaineer. There is no long-term visiting, as evidenced by Jack Hale's eventual transformation into a bona fide mountaineer even as he has tried to turn June into a "civilized" lady. This feature of the novel contributes further to the other-worldliness of Appalachia as popularly conceived—a place out of time, whose inhabitants would be left out entirely from the advances of the larger world. Thus, while throughout the novel Fox's characters champion the "potential" of the mountaineer, Hale's metamorphosis undercuts this strain of the text and creates a seeming irreconcilable dichotomy between the "ancient" mountaineers and the modern progress of folks in the valleys, encapsulated in the passage above.

Fox's text also illustrates an intriguing simile between extracting resources (coal and timber, for example) from the region, and extracting Southern Appalachian women from their homeland. Hale, in some ways, tries to obtain a mountain woman and separate her from her origins. Yet, even as Fox's text is one of the more stereotypical of those under examination in this dissertation, Hale's failure to convert June permanently from

mountain savage to civilized lady, or more to the point, his own conversion to what Wilson aptly calls a “whiskey-guzzling, ill-dressed, bad-smelling mountaineer,” leaves the novel’s final assessment of the merits of modern society versus anachronized and racialized mountain culture quite ambiguous (Wilson 6).²³

Fox’s racialization of his characters differs quite dramatically from that of Miles. In Miles’s *Spirit of the Mountain*, because mountaineers are the sole subject, their racialization is rendered in wholly positive terms— as what someone *is* rather than what someone is not. Fox’s racialization of his mountain characters is rendered both through positive description but also, and pointedly so, through negative contrast—in terms of what his mountaineer characters are not. And what they are not, Fox at first seems to suggest, are Bluegrass Kentuckians. Fox may have intended Bluegrass Kentuckians, then, to become a surrogate for the white elite readers who would have been consuming his works. This move to promote the sometimes denigrated Kentucky gentleman to a status above his mountaineer fellow statesmen, may attempt to Americanize and normatively whiten the former at the expense of the latter.²⁴

I use tentative language here because, as we shall see, the novel undermines these ideas in a number of ways. Wilson suggests that Fox’s configuration of the “southern mountaineer motif” was an attempt to rescue the befallen image of the Bluegrass

²³For a discussion of June, stereotypes, and film adaptations of *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, see Sharon Hatfield’s, “Looking for the Quintessential June: Archetypes and Stereotypes in John Fox Jr.’s Film Legacy.” *Appalachian Journal: A Regional Studies Review* 29.1-2 (2001): 128-137.

gentleman: “Fox chose his subject material out of a more gendered ambition,” Wilson argues,

to rescue the degraded national reputation of southern white manhood. More explicitly, he sought to celebrate white gentlemen from the incomparable Bluegrass region of Central Kentucky who had suffered an emasculating loss of integrity among both Northerners and Southerners for the Civil War stance of neutrality. (102)

However, this schema crumbles in the novel’s denouement. While Wilson’s deep biographical and historical knowledge allow her to give special insight into Fox’s *intentions*, such an interpretation does not ring true in terms of a close reading of at least *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*.²⁵ Jack Hale’s transformation from Bluegrass gentleman to bona fide mountaineer defies such an interpretation. Wilson cites “civilized” June’s return to the mountains to “rescue” Hale from his mountain degeneracy and upon their marriage “securing his access to her father’s remaining coal lands,” but the fact that Hale remains in the mountains weakens the notion that Fox’s text champions the domination of the Bluegrass gentleman over the uncouth mountaineer, whatever the author’s intentions (103).²⁶

²⁵ Wilson dismisses Altina Waller’s argument regarding Fox’s hand in creating and perpetuating the feuding hillbilly stereotype and takes the scholar to task for what Wilson calls “incomplete analysis,” noting that Waller “fails to acknowledge” Fox’s “poverty or that of his family and completely ignores the role of elder brother James Fox,” among other biographical oversights. It is true that Wilson is the leading Fox scholar to date, especially regarding the relationship between his biography and his work. However, one need not be a Fox biographer to make cogent claims about the place of Fox’s worker in larger Appalachian literary trends. (Wilson, “Judicious,” 101, 116 n.12).

²⁶ For a catalog of receptions of Fox’s early work, see Wilson, “Judicious,” 107-108. Wilson demonstrates that Fox’s first book, *A Cumberland Vendetta*, published in 1894, received “very mixed reviews” (108).

Trail was published by Charles Scribner and Sons in 1908, several years after the coal company wheeling and dealing Wilson documents. Thus, we might view that novel as both a culmination of and a reflection on the intimate relationship between Fox's business ventures and his literary texts. This chronological distance from the height of his land exploits in the 1890s might well account for the simultaneously stereotypical and nuanced approach Fox's narrator takes toward his mountaineer characters. The novel opens with an image of the protagonist, June, as a young girl, sitting beneath the eponymous pine. By the second page, Fox employs stereotypes regarding mountaineers' suspicion of "furiners," and he quickly draws a sharp dichotomy between the sphere of the mountains and the outside world. Indeed, it is the activity of the "furiners'...doing strange things" and their industrial "smoke" that have prompted June to "climb...up through the dewy morning from the cove on the other side to see the wonders for herself" (2). Fox's third-person narrator then provides the first of a series of recurring descriptions that paint the mountains and the modern world as almost supernaturally separate:

It was a big world...that was spread before her and a vague awe of it seized her [June]...and held her motionless and dreaming. Beyond those white mists trailing up the hills, beyond the blue smoke drifting in the valley, those limitless blue waves must run under the sun on and on to the end of the world! Her dead sister had gone into that far silence and had brought back wonderful stories of that outer world: and she began to wonder more than ever before whether she would ever go into it and see for herself what was there. (2)

The permanent absence of June's dead sister from the narrative is important because in this novel, characters are unable to successfully negotiate an existence with a foot in both

worlds—one must choose the anachronized, racialized world of the mountains or the modern world beyond.

Notwithstanding the novel's confused ending, in *Trail*, the native mountaineer characters *are* portrayed as a less evolved version of the Bluegrass Kentuckian, the latter of whom Jack Hale represents. Among June's first impressions of Jack is her observation that he walks more upright than the men of the mountains: "his walk...was new to her, as was the erect way with which he held his head and his shoulders" (Fox 4). Underscoring this idea of the under-evolved mountaineer are the animalistic descriptions surrounding June: in the first chapter alone, she is variously, a "little creature," "like something wild," "fox-like," and "like a crouched panther-cub" (3)²⁷. Appalachian studies scholar Rodger Cunningham also notes the animalistic terms in which June and her family are described, and he importantly also notes Fox's alignment of June with Native Americans: June's "perception is that of a cliché Indian, for her preindustrial perspective, in the terms of gilded-Age America, is equivalent to savagery or barbarism" (23). I would like to suggest an even more explicit link between Fox's portrayal of June and her family and popular conceptions of Native Americans. These descriptions are curiously similar to those surrounding racially denigrated Americans in the nineteenth century. In *Vanishing Americans*, Dippie notes that the "American school of ethnology," in the early-to-mid nineteenth century established certain rules of racial hierarchy in which the "Caucasian

²⁷ Scholar Jimmy Dean Smith cites similar animal-mountaineer comparisons in Fox's 1903 novel, *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, noting that the novel aligns its protagonist, Chad, with his dog, Jack: "The pair, we are to understand, are interspecies *doppelgangers*: they are both feisty' they are both mongrels" (59, emphasis original).

type stood highest on the ladder of merit; the Negro was permanently restricted to the bottom rung” (83). Somewhere between the two was the Native American, whose “unreasonable attachment to a specific locale...demonstrated the limitations of their native intellect, the seat of their inability to become civilized” (83). Dippie cites J.C. Nott and George R. Gliddon’s *Types of Mankind; or, Ethnological Researches* (1854) to illustrate the a priori assumption of Native Americans’ disappearance:

“It is as clear as the sun at noon-day, the last of these Red men will be numbered among the dead,” Nott asserted. “To one who has lived among American Indians, it is in vain to talk of civilizing them. You might as well attempt to change the nature of the buffalo.” (qtd. in Wray, 83)

In *Trail*, as well as in the works of Murfree and Miles, we see similar animalistic descriptions. Such similarities point to attempts—conscious or otherwise—to align ostensibly white mountaineers with denigrated peoples of color while (or, even, thereby) marking them as incapable of modernization.

Returning specifically to Fox’s work, June immediately suspects that Jack is a moonshine “raider,” sent to bust up illegal still operations. Two mountaineer stereotypes shape this assumption: suspicion of outsiders and rampant moonshine consumption. Unsurprisingly, June’s father threatens to shoot Jack Hale. He discovers June talking with Jack and eventually invites him to dinner when he discovers Jack is actually a land developer and not a “raider” (8-14). Fox likens the mountaineers’ reception of Jack Hale to that of the woodland animals, furthering Fox’s sub-human characterization: “Even the geese in the creek seemed to know that he was a stranger and to distrust him” (21). Shortly after this description, Jack observes June’s “deer-like ankle” (21). These are

unrelated details in terms of plot, of course, but the narrator's seamless movement between describing animals and describing mountaineers in animalistic terms underscores the novel's stance—albeit convoluted by novel's end—that the former are quite a different species from the civilized Bluegrass Kentuckians.

Of June's brother, Jack observes, "His jean trousers were stuffed in the top of his boots and were tight over his knees which were well-moulded, and that is rare with a mountaineer" (23). The phenotypic qualities of the mountaineer are assumed inferior, though June's clan seems to Jack to be of superior stock, a feature that perhaps foreshadows June's ability to transform for a time into a "civilized" lady. As if the mountaineer's inferiority had not been clear enough, the narrator muses at one point shortly after these observations, "What sort of wild animals had he fallen among?" (24).

The relationship between this literary exploitation and land exploitation is quickly demonstrated by Jack's thoughts on the mountaineers' typical ignorance of the value of the natural resources of their homeland: Jack comments on the quality of the coal in the stove at June's cabin, to which her father replies that it is from "Right hyeh on this farm—about five feet thick!... 'An' no partin'" (25). Jack observes that "it was not often that he found a mountaineer who knew what a parting in a coal bed was" (25). In this passage, Fox's narrator demonstrates the extent to which land developers—and Fox was one from time to time—assumed and depended on mountaineer ignorance of the monetary value of the mineral resources of their land. Thus, June's father poses a considerable challenge for Jack Hale's business ventures. As Eller explains, more typically,

The mountaineer had little knowledge of the value his natural resources had to distant industrial centers, nor was he able to comprehend the changes that would come to the mountains as a result of efforts to tap those resources. Despite its importance to mountain life and culture, land was often taken for granted by the mountaineers, for it had always been plentiful and ownership had never been a deterrent to common use. (56)

It is important to note that Eller does not attribute mountaineers' ignorance of the value of their land to any inherent deficiency. Rather, mountaineers were frequently unaware of their land's value as assessed by outsiders. Moreover, notions of land ownership and rights to use among outsider businessmen departed dramatically from that which was typically observed among mountain people in the years before industrialization.

Therefore, as Eller documents, while

prices paid by land agents during these early years varied greatly from state to state and according to the potential wealth of the property...amounts generally ranged from twenty-five cents to three dollars per acre. Some mountaineers were reported to have sold entire mountains rich in coal and timber for a mule, a saddle horse, or a hog rifle. (56)

June's father represents a historically documented mountain figure with whom Fox would have been familiar. Given the above dynamics of mountain land acquisition in the late nineteenth century, mountaineers began to mount resistance to exploitative interlopers: "By the turn of the century, travelers into the mountains were increasingly greeted with hostility. By 1900, the land agent was as likely to be met with a rifle as a 'halloo,' and he would seldom be invited inside the cabin" (Eller 57). Thus, while Fox here complicates mountaineer stereotypes by presenting June's father as knowledgeable of coal's value and resistant to Hale's presence, the narrator soon undermines that

complication by returning to a well-trod stereotype of mountain feuding, in yet another example of the novel's confused, divided stance toward the figure of the mountaineer. When June's father reveals that his name is Judd Tolliver, Jack immediately recognizes him as the famed "Devil Judd Tolliver" of feuding fame, noting that "mountaineers do not like to talk about their feuds" (26). The narrator couples Judd's feuding fame with yet more animalistic descriptions: "There was no more famous character in all those hills than the giant before him—yet his face was kind and was good-humoured, but the nose and eyes were the beak and eyes of some bird of prey" (26). In the span of a few pages, Fox ties together a string of mountain stereotypes and animalistic caricature, all revolving around Hale's hopes to exploit mountain land.

Fox's characterization in *Trail* of mountaineers as a less evolved version of Bluegrass Kentuckians takes on particular significance if that racialization is considered in terms of Wilson's revelation that in an early draft of *Trail*, June was a "Melungeon." As Wilson reveals, Fox

toyed with the problem of 'Melungeon' identity through several drafts of different texts—June Tolliver in *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* is identified in the earliest draft as a fiery Melungeon lass, descended from that mountain-dwelling group claiming to be Portuguese when encountered by Virginia colonial explorers as early as 1660, identified in early U.S. census records as 'free persons of color,' and, after 1830, disenfranchised in Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. (28)

The darker hair and skin of "Melungeons," an ethnic group of mixed-race people inhabiting various sections of Southern Appalachia, have long engendered speculation regarding their supposed non-white origins. June-as-Melungeon forms an interesting

backdrop for understanding the ways in which Fox rhetorically contains the mountaineer throughout his best-known novel.

Indeed, Melungeon identity was a source of great confusion in Fox's day. Take, for example, an 1897 report from "The Women's Mission Board" published in the *The New York Evangelist*, entitled "The Melungeons." The reports notes

The name 'Melungeon' is of obscure origin, supposed to be derived from Melange (French), meaning a mixed people...The have marked Indian resemblances in color, feature, hair, carriage and disposition...Later settlers came from North Carolina, and were charged with having negro blood in their veins. They explained their peculiarities by claiming a Portuguese origin...Their isolation may be due to the seclusion preferred by the Indian, and the exclusion on account of suspected Negro blood. (19)

While Fox ostensibly "whitens" June in the published manuscript, the racializing and anachronizing depiction remains. His decision to "whiten" June may also bolster the idea that his view toward mountaineers was evolving to a certain extent at this point, but certainly not the extent that he would suggest either in fiction or nonfiction that the exploitation of mountain lands and mountain people was something he and his ilk should cease.

Indeed, where Emma Bell Miles denigrated mountaineers despite her intentions to champion their cause, we might say that something like the inverse is true in Fox's case. While Fox exploited the image of the mountaineer both on and off the page, Jack Hale's transformation into a mountaineer reveals an undercurrent in the narrative about the power of Appalachian culture to survive the encroachment of industrial enterprises and homogenizing national culture. As Wilson concedes, "The [Fox] family papers also show

that Fox experienced bouts of latent uneasiness with his complicity [with exploitation], especially later in his life as financial gains promised to his family failed to materialize (7). Again, because *Trail* is a later novel in Fox's body of work, it makes sense that the author's view of the region and his role in its development might have become more nuanced by that point. Nonetheless, the rhetorical elements of derogatory racialization surrounding June remained even after Fox "whitened" her character and removed the "Melungeon" element of his manuscript.

In her important essay, "The Felicitous Convergence of Mythmaking and Capital Accumulation of An(Other) Almost-White American Underclass," Wilson has already demonstrated Fox's complicity with crafting a particular mountaineer image in service of land exploitation. Drawing on his literary oeuvre as well as business and personal correspondence, she argues,

Influenced by self-identification with, in his terms, a Boston-to-Bluegrass corporate and social 'aristocracy,' he helped to create and/or perpetuate myths of Appalachian 'otherness' for two purposes that can be traced within his texts and journals: 1) to facilitate corporate and class hegemony by marginalizing indigenous peoples and existing socio-cultural structures, and 2) to undermine local resistance to the 'new order' and to absentee control by implementing land and political policies that encouraged depopulation. (7)

Wilson convincingly demonstrates that Fox's work is a culmination of the connection between literary and land exploitation that I have explored throughout this project. In the introduction, I cite William Goodell Frost as one of the chief non-literary fashioners of the image of Appalachia in the American consciousness through his work as president of Berea College in Kentucky. In the literary realm, Fox became the primary spokesman for

Appalachia, solidifying and further denigrating the image first crafted by writers such as Murfree and Miles. As Batteau argues,

Although numerous writers contributed to the making of Appalachia during this period, Fox and Frost stand out as the two who created a compelling image. Lesser writers were not as effective, or dealt only in bits and pieces. Fox in his writing, and Frost in his institution building, created Appalachia as a totality. (58)

Yet that totality is not always consistent or coherent in nature.

Various scholars have noted Fox's uneasy relationship to his literary subjects. For Wilson, Fox is wittingly villainous, portraying mountain people as ethnic Others for the sake of profit. Scholar Jimmy Dean Smith also convincingly argues that in Fox's 1903 novel, *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, the author implies a genetic component to one's ability to either be or overcome being "trash" (60).²⁸ According to Smith, in Fox's schema, ultimately trash "is something that you, or the region, will never overcome, a justification for the old socioeconomic norms" (62). In *Trail*, however, I find a mixed assessment of whether or not the mountaineers' supposed degeneracy is intractable or reformable: Mountaineers it seems, in Fox's estimation, are broadly uncouth and unreformable but for notable exceptions. As I have noted earlier, Hale muses that June's family seems somehow set apart from their mountain neighbors, and Fox likely hints at

²⁸ Wilson certainly reads Fox's denigration of mountaineers as racial essentialism, arguing,

[Fox's] collected early works on Appalachian culture are representative of contemporaneous arguments for Anglo-Saxon hegemony both domestically and in global military and territorial affairs. Fox described Appalachian natives as a curious 'race.' Beyond physical attributes, socio-cultural distinctions for Appalachians viz-a-viz 'regular' Anglo-Saxons rested on his observations about their supposed cultural attitudes toward law, morals, fertility, and religion. (28)

some genetic superiority that will account for June's ultimate "civilization." When Hale arranges for June to attend school in the Gap, he notes her seeming intrinsic ability to distinguish herself from her peers:

It was curious to Hale...to observe how June's instinct deftly led her to avoid the mistakes in dress that characterized the groupings of other girls who, like her, were in a stage of transition. They wore gaudy combs and green skirts with red waists, their clothes bunched at the hips, and to their shoes and hands they paid no attention at all. None of these things for June—and Hale did not know that the little girl had leaped her fellows with one bound, had taken [her teacher] Miss Anne Saunders as her model and was climbing upon the pedestal where that lady justly stood. (169)

Over the course of the novel, June indeed demonstrates that she is reformable. Hale, on the other hand, becomes increasingly like the mountaineers he seeks to literally police with his guard—a group of "civilized" men who form a band to stop the incessant feuding of the area—and whose land he had initially come to buy and develop. "The last two years had wrought their change in" Jack, the narrator explains.

Deterioration in habits, manners, personal appearance and the practices of all the little niceties of life. The morning bath is impossible because of the crowded domestic conditions of a mountain cabin and, if possible, might if practised, excited wonder and comment, if not vague suspicion. Sleeping garments are practically barred for the same reason. Shaving becomes a rare luxury. A lost tooth-brush may not be replaced for a month. (249).

Notably, these changes in habit are both practical—there is simply not enough room for everyone to perform his or her morning toilet—and cultural, as practicing these civilized habits, according to the narrator, would perhaps arouse "vague suspicion." Mountaineer degeneracy in this paradigm is of divided origins, arising both from particular living

conditions but also through cultural inclinations, the latter hinting at a kind of essentialism. That Fox should couch Hale's degeneration into mountaineer-ness in these terms is not surprising. Such characterizations have early precedents in the development of class and racial hierarchies in what would become the United States. According to Wray,

the lower sorts [of white people] were consistently characterized as dirty, smelly, and unclean. What is striking about reading historical documents of the [British Colonial] period then is the similar ways in which poor whites, Indians, and blacks are described—as immoral, lazy, and dirty. (23)

Moreover, the narrator explains Hale's exposure and succumbing to supposed mountain degeneracy nearly in terms of contamination:

Hale's life, since his college doors had closed behind him, had always been a rough one. He had dropped from civilization and had gone back into it many times. And each time he had dropped, he dropped the deeper, and for that reason had come back into his own life each time with more difficulty and with more indifference. The last had been his roughest year and he had sunk a little more deeply just at the time when June had been pluming herself for flight from such depths forever. (250)

Each exposure to mountain living, it seems, increases the likelihood that Hale will never Recover. Moreover, such hints at contamination smack of eugenics.

In the late-nineteenth century, the burgeoning eugenics movement provided this ideological framework for genetic inferiority among certain groups of people. As Wray documents, the Eugenic Records Office conducted field research in the 1880s

to generate records detailing genealogical information about individuals in various institutions, and to amass data for the ERO's own strategic purposes,

which fell under the rubric of ‘negative eugenics’ (i.e., preventing the proliferation of ‘bad stock’ and minimizing contamination of ‘good stock’ by bad). (71)

Similarly, with each exposure to mountain life, Hale seems “contaminated” by mountaineer influence. Curiously, however, Fox will end the novel with the marriage of Hale and June, which, as I note throughout this chapter, leaves his message quite mixed, almost as if he began the novel with one ideology, but ended it with a changed and confused one.²⁹

If Hale is doomed never to recover from his “degeneracy,” June it seems has found the cure for her mountaineer condition through education and city life. In fact, when Hale meets her on the train back to the gap and June retreats from his kiss, he realizes that while he has succeeded in “civilizing” the girl, he has lost almost all traces of that civilization himself:

No, it was not the publicity—she had shrunk from him as she was shrinking now from the black smoke, rough men, the shaking of the train—the little pool of tobacco juice at her feet. Then the truth began to glimmer in his brain. He understood, even when she leaned forward suddenly to look into the mouth of the gap, that was now dark with shadows. Through that gap lay her way and she thought him now more a part of what was beyond than she who had been born of it was, and dazed by the thought, he wondered if he might not really be. (265)

²⁹ Such fears about contamination and degeneracy appeared in other literature of the period as well. Charlotte Perkins Gilman had some uncomfortable dalliances with eugenics-leaning notions herself. As Dana Seitler notes in her introduction to a recent reprinting of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s neglected novel, *The Crux* (1911), Gilman posited women as particularly important to maintenance of good “national stock.” In a strange incarnation and extension of what Linda Kerber’s “republican mother,” Vivian in *The Crux* does not marry Morton Elder because he has syphilis and it is her duty, she is convinced, to avoid passing such a disease to her children and, thus, corrupting the “national stock.”

Hale's anxiety at his unwitting transformation might well have reflected some of Fox's own distress over his role in the region's development and his outsider status. That is, if Fox had set out to write a narrative in which the Bluegrass gentleman subdued the "wild" mountain girl, what he ended up with was quite a bit more complex. Certainly, Hale's dismay at his transformation does not laud mountaineer life, but it at least attests to what perhaps Fox was beginning to see as its power and refusal to be easily dominated by outside interests.

Fox's Personal Papers and a National Context for His Regional Work

Fox's work is preoccupied with the relationship between native mountaineers and enterprising "furriners" largely because of his own experience with such dynamics. In the first letter in his edited personal papers, Fox details his relationship with the people "in the hills" (Moore 2). He relates that "a young mountain girl called me by my first name the second time she saw me and that my brother told me not to call the mountaineers working for him 'Mister'...[because] "it was subversive of discipline" (2). Early in *Trail*, June familiarly calls Jack Hale by his first name. As Fox notes, "Without knowing it, I began...gathering material for the work I was to do" (2). Conversely, Wilson argues,

Promotional materials claim that Fox's novel and the script taken from it [were] a 'documentary' presentation of Big Stone Gap's history. Although one might argue that *Trail* represents the corporate-sanctioned version of that history, nowhere in Fox's private papers nor in his nonfiction texts can one locate the means for substantiating his own or subsequent claims to authenticity or historical veracity. (103)

While it is true that Fox's papers do not reveal, as far as I can tell, events exactly parallel to those detailed in *Trail*, it is clear that Fox regarded his interactions with mountaineers

as research, as much as we might object to his rendering. Wilson too readily villainizes Fox who, while certainly an exploiter of mountain peoples of lands, certainly had a more complicated relationship to the region than his harshest critics would have it. When we dismiss Fox as villain, we sacrifice paying careful attention to the ways in which his work was (and is) embraced by some Southern mountaineers themselves and, therefore, risk missing the lingering cultural capital of his denigrating images.

According to his collected and edited papers, Fox and his brother “had taken a contract to grade a hundred yards of a narrow gauge road up to the mouth of the mines, and we had graded it with pick and shovel in our own hands. So I had learned little that summer about the mountain folks” (2). Fox’s statement here is both literal and figurative: his labor keeps him from getting to know “mountain folks” by occupying all his time and it simultaneously separates him from the mountaineers via the exploitation of their lands. In *Trail*, Fox bridges the gap between “furriner” land exploitation and some mountaineers’ own use of their land: Jack wonders upon observing the way Judd has used his land—through free indirect third-person narration— “Who had taught that old man to open coal in such a way...? It looked as though the old fellow were in some scheme with another to get him [Jack] interested” (*Trail*, 34).

Due in part to June’s father’s superior knowledge of coal, Hale recognizes the Tollivers as, perhaps, “good stock,” and he sets out to “civilize” June. Following a scene in which June and Hale kiss for the first time, Hale resolves to continue the girl’s education:

He had meant to educate her, anyhow. That was the first step—no matter what happened [to their relationship]. June must go out into the world to school. He would have plenty of money. Her father would not object, and June need never know. He could include for her an interest in her own father's lands that he meant to buy, and she could think that that it was her own money that she was using. So, with a sudden rush of gladness from his brain to his heart, he recklessly yoked himself, then and there, under all responsibility for that young life and the eager, sensitive soul that already lighted it so radiantly. (181)

In Hale's plan, June's reformation is inextricably tied to the exploitation of her father's land. Her access to education beyond her mountain home is, in Hale's mind, contingent upon her unwitting complicity with monetizing her family's property. In some ways, we might wonder if Fox through Hale justifies his own shady business dealings through a moral justification that the modernization (read: loss of land rights) of the mountains came with the desirable side effect of "civilizing" mountaineers through access to the schools that sprang up in coal towns.

In fact, it is possible that Fox even believed himself to be a kindly reformer. Fox's edited personal papers, compiled by his sister, Elizabeth Fox Moore, reveal an affable, family-oriented, and studious Fox in his early years, studying first at what was then the Kentucky University (now Transylvania University) and later at Harvard. He was not without homesickness for Kentucky, however, and he often dismayed at his middle-standing in both academics and social popularity at Harvard. "Up to now," Elizabeth Moore Fox writes in framing her father's personal letters,

John had always been surrounded by people who were deeply interested in him. His modest, friendly manner, and especially the generosity of heart and mind, that all his life brought him many friends, had made him popular at school and at the Kentucky University so that he was amazed on entering college to find the Harvard Sophomores reluctant to take in a stranger. (20)

Fox's desire for acceptance among American bluebloods is reflected in *Trail*. The pedigree of Jack Hale—at least in part a fictional surrogate for Fox, to be sure—is established early in the novel. “One of his [Hale's] forefathers,” the narrator explains, “had been with Washington on the Father's first historic expedition into the wilds of Virginia” and

His great-grandfather had accompanied Boone when that hunter first penetrated the ‘Dark and Bloody Ground,’ had gone back to Virginia and come again with a surveyor's chain and compass to help wrest it from the red men, among whom there had been an immemorial conflict for possession and a never-recognized claim of ownership. (40)

This passage performs several important functions: first, it establishes Hale as a “true” American, whose family might be found in the footnotes of the history of the nation's founding. Secondly, it establishes Hale as a bona-fide Kentuckian, continuing Boone's legacy. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this passage makes the claim that the first settlers of Kentucky had not taken land from Native Americans because, according to the claim, the area tribes had never established coherent ownership. This idea perpetuates the notion of manifest destiny, that the white men who “settled” this region merely claimed ownership over land that was, ultimately, their God-given fortune. Paradoxically, it simultaneously lends doubt to the early mountaineers' rights to their land, given that they had “wrest”ed it “from the red men” in the first place. Fox's motivations for painting the land situation in Kentucky as such were probably a nexus of factors including his guilt over past business dealings along with his continuing need to assuage that guilt and gloss over his personal culpability in the ongoing disenfranchisement of mountaineers.

Fox's unedited letters give us a fuller and less flattering picture of Fox, of course, than those edited and compiled by his sister. That Fox's work was imbedded in an evolving national conversation about what it meant to be an American and what that construction had to do with class and race is nowhere more evident than in Fox's correspondence with Theodore Roosevelt, both before and after the latter became president. Mixed in their correspondence are references to Henry Cabot Lodge and Henry Adams, further embedding these letters within a national context. Before turning to those letters, it is useful to recall that Fox was an author of local color literature and that Roosevelt had some very specific ideas about the role of the local in national identity: In 1894's "True Americanism," Roosevelt argued,

In the first place we wish to be broadly American and national, as opposed to being local or sectional. We do not wish, in politics, in literature, or in art, to develop that unwholesome parochial spirit, that over-exaltation of the little community at the expense of the great nation, which produces what has been described as the patriotism of the village, the patriotism of the belfry.

Roosevelt's interest in Fox's work (and that of other regional writers such as James Lane Allen who is mentioned in several letters to Fox) at first glance seems at odds with Roosevelt's call for being "broadly American and national" rather than "local or sectional." Local color, after all, is inherently parochial. Nevertheless, because Fox's work—much like Miles's—simultaneously paints southern Appalachia as Other yet distinctly American, its provincialism serves a larger purpose of subsuming regional identity beneath the heading of Americanness. Roosevelt further explains in "True Americanism" that regionalism/local color are merely part of a larger national fabric and

not cut of a separate cloth: “It is just as well that we should keep steadily in mind the futility of talking of a Northern literature or a Southern literature, an Eastern or a Western school of art or science,” he writes. He further avers,

Joel Chandler Harris is emphatically a national writer; so is Mark Twain. They do not write merely for Georgia or Missouri or California any more than for Illinois or Connecticut; they write as Americans and for all people who can read English.

Roosevelt’s role in shaping American literary aesthetics—or more precisely, that of his “‘manly’ ethos”—is delineated by Lawrence Oliver in *Brander Matthews, Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of American Literature 1880-1920* (xvi). Brander Matthews was an early president of the Modern Language Academy and professor of American literature (a new field) at Columbia, and thus a primary shaper of the developing American canon. As Oliver argues, “Matthews may have been the single most important influence on Roosevelt’s determined attempt to succeed as a ‘literary feller,’ as he once described himself to Matthews” (34). Likewise, “Roosevelt exerted an immense influence on the development of Matthews’s progressivist ideology” (34). This relationship and its effects on shaping turn-of-the-century literary tastes are important for this dissertation because

As Peter Conn and others have argued, the progressivist response to the ‘problem’ posed by those of different races, classes, ideologies, and gender was profoundly dialectical; in their attempt to come to terms with the Other, both Matthews and Roosevelt exemplify Conn’s “divided mind” thesis. (34)

Conn’s “‘divided mind’ thesis” holds that “advocates of progressivism were pulled between the contradictory values of tradition and innovation, organization and

individualism, order and liberation; they looked confidently to the future, while gazing nostalgically to the past” (Oliver xvi). For Branders and Roosevelt, according to Oliver, the tensions among these ideas was placed in starkest relief when considered in light of any Other. Fox’s work, then, which I argue is divided in part by its inability to determine the place of the mountaineer within the emerging and evolving class and racial hierarchies of the early twentieth century, fits quite comfortably in this progressivist dialectic. Fox wrote in conversation with his intellectual milieu, and as we see below, his correspondence with Roosevelt demonstrates the extent to which such a “minor” author engaged in a “major” discourse.

Just two months after the publication of “True Americanism” in *The Forum*, Roosevelt wrote to Fox in praise of the latter’s first chapters of *Mountain of Europa*. “If the rest of the story goes as well as these first chapters,” he writes, “you will have made a lasting and real addition to American literature.” He also praises Fox for having “avoided the dialect pit also. Dialect is a good adjunct for a feast but is a very poor feast itself.” This statement criticizes the emphasis on dialect in much local color writing which, in Roosevelt’s estimation, at times obscured narrative value.³⁰

Roosevelt’s feelings about local color were a common theme in his correspondence with Fox. He would return to the supposed inferiority of local color in a much later letter to Fox praising the latter’s novel *The Kentuckians*. On September 26, 1897, Roosevelt writes: “The local color comes out incidentally, and so simply makes the

³⁰ For another discussion of Fox’s dealings with Roosevelt and other national figures, see Darlene Wilson’s “A Judicious Combination of Incident and Psychology: John Fox, Jr. and the Southern Mountaineer Motif,” in *Back Talk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotype* (ed. Dwight Billings).

thing real instead of giving air as if it was written for the purpose of dragging it in.” For Roosevelt, local color should never be a means in and of itself, and it seems clear that his reasoning extends beyond the purely aesthetic. Rather, emphasis on local color for local color’s sake threatens to undermine the homogenizing Americanism in which Roosevelt was so invested. Fox’s work, tellingly, passes this litmus test of provincialism, and emerges as adequately “American” in character. By this point, Roosevelt was Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and despite this fact avers, “I don’t suppose my criticism is of the slightest value, I wished to tell you how I feel.”

In their correspondence, Roosevelt and Fox also muse about the “stock” of the mountaineer in a letter written on June 14, 1894: “I think the mountaineers represent a variety of entirely different entities,” Roosevelt writes.

I have no question that old bond servant and redemptioner class is largely represented among them, but I also have no question that they contain descendants of many of the old free settlers, English, Scotch-Irish, German, and even French Huegenots.

Here, Roosevelt paints the mountaineer as bona-fide American, descended from such sundry national and ethnic sources so as to not cling to or claim any of them above the others. This sentiment is in keeping with Roosevelt’s argument in “True Americanism” that “the man who does not become Americanized nevertheless fails to remain a European, and becomes nothing at all.” While Roosevelt seems to celebrate the mountaineer’s assorted ancestry, he also attributes some of the mountaineer’s stereotypical characteristics to certain components of that ancestry. Regarding mountain feuding, Roosevelt writes “as to the fighting, the Scotch have always been rough-and-

tumble fighters.” The mountaineers’ religiosity, Roosevelt conjectures, owes also to Scottish ancestry, “the Sabbath being kept in the Scotch fashion” among “backwoodsmen” who “so invariably took to the Presbyterian religion...until the Methodists and the Baptists began to make their way there.” Given Roosevelt’s intellectual milieu, such obsession with “stock” is not surprising. As Oliver documents, “No issue loomed larger to Matthews and Roosevelt and to most of their fellow progressivists than that of race” (36). Fox’s own racializing descriptions of his mountaineer characters, along with June’s being “Melungeon” in an earlier draft, places the mountaineer in a racially questionable category, that is, among those whose access to “whiteness” was situational and debatable.

Most importantly, Roosevelt’s letters to Fox give insight into the ways in which the latter’s novels and correspondence were shaping the perception of America’s elites regarding this newly “discovered” corner of the nation and its inhabitants. In a June 21, 1894 letter, Roosevelt writes to Fox

What you said in your letter about distributing funds at the time of the plague [to Southern Appalachian mountaineers] was so interesting that I read it last night to Cabot Lodge and Henry Adams, with whom I was dining...Mrs. [Henry Cabot] Lodge, emphatically objected to your [Fox’s] statement that ‘if the women took baths and the men didn’t shoot each other in the back they would be first class characters’ on the ground that she saw no earthly reason why you should apparently condone the offense of the men not taking baths, or think that cleanliness was essential to only the one sex.

Certainly, in this statement, the mountaineers are reformable, but already their backwardness, violence, and lack of hygiene are taken as givens and, importantly, as fodder for joke-making. Indeed, we see the emergence of the hillbilly stereotype in the

casual correspondence of the nation's upper echelons. Ultimately, Fox's presence in this conversation underscores the centrality of his work to shaping national perceptions of southern Appalachia.

Letters between Kentucky writer James Lane Allen and Fox also illuminate the construction of the emerging hillbilly stereotype. In a letter dated January 26th, 1894, Allen writes:

I believe that a lecture on the Cumberland mountaineers would fetch you a good sum of money, if you lectured so far away that no one knew anything about them. Miss Murfree's audience in New England ought to be ready for you also; and you will find my article on the subject ready for you, and myself ready to collect a royalty for your use of it. You can work in Proctor's ideas as to the feudal origins of these people; and you can have the *Mountain Europa* bound up to sell as they go out the door.

Obviously, the construction of the mountaineer persona is bound up with economic gain here. Importantly, Allen acknowledges that Fox should give his lectures far from real mountaineers or anyone who has had much experience with them. We can suppose that those more familiar with mountaineers, and certainly mountaineers themselves, would recognize Fox's portraiture as denigrated caricature, coming at a particularly fraught time of land exploitation and, thus, sensitivity to the sanctity and coherence of mountain life. The mention of "Miss Murfree's audience" positions Fox's literary intervention into the emerging mountaineer stereotype as part of a larger phenomenon of white elite interest in America's backwaters.

These stereotypes were profitable for John Fox, Jr., and they were intimately related to his business ventures. A letter from his brother James Fox to John dated June

12, 1903 regarding a recently published story demonstrates the intertwining of John's literary and business ventures. James avers that the story is John's best to date, projects that John will "make a killing," and offers only "minor" corrections

as showing intimate familiarity with your subject...as for instance, big wood fires are not customary even in the mountains, in the summer months, hoe-cakes are never made in my experience three feet in diameter, your "Synthy" should be spelled "Cynthy" as showing derivation (Cynthia), as you probably remember our old friend Cicely Garrard spelling her beautiful name "Sicily."

James then offers to make corrections to the Scribner proofs of John's manuscript.

Without much transition, James then offers advice about John's business prospects in the mountains, noting, "If he [a Mr. Slempe] would sell about 4,000 or 5,000 acres more at #20 peracre [sic], we would then be on the floor to begin sharing profits. Our investors would then have back their money and interest." The unchanging tone regarding literary and business ventures demonstrates how deeply related these two spheres were for the Fox family. Indeed, John's knowledge of the mountains came from his time living in the region as part of his developing enterprises and the tales related to him by his brothers who preceded him to the region.

Nonetheless, and as I have noted at various points in this chapter, *Trail* is late in Fox's body of work and betrays some of Fox's own reluctance at his complicity with mountain exploitation. The eponymous pine closes the novel, leaving the reader unsure which society—Bluegrass or mountain, or neither—has triumphed. For all the denigrating rhetoric Fox perpetuates throughout the novel, nature, as representative of mountain society seems to have the last say:

The big Pine stood guard on high against the outer world. Nature was their church and stars were their candles. And as if to give them even a better light, the moon had sent a luminous sheen down the dark mountainside to the very garden in which the flowers whispered like waiting happy friends. Uncle Billy lifted his hand and a hush of expectancy seemed to come even from the farthest star. (422)

Fox closes the novel with nature imagery as he began it, but at least in this passage, this imagery is not used to characterize human beings, but to subsume everyone beneath its power.

Despite these narrative ambiguities, Wilson describes Fox's oeuvre as "a handful of portable plotlines, all bearing his own 'fungible motif': the benevolent outsider or narrator essentially acting as mediator or interpreter of the southern mountaineer, to explain away odd speech patterns, irregular behavior, and quaint customs" (109). Even if we ignore some of the more nuanced aspects of Fox's latter work, however, this motif was not particular to Fox. Rather, it was a common feature of the popular local color literature Fox emulated. Wilson concedes that Fox "argued that this interpretation was necessary because mountain folk were so bereft of hope and bewildered by modernity that they were virtually mute" (109). However, given that local color literature served as a kind of vicarious literary tourism for white reading elites in urban centers, both Wilson and Fox himself miss an important factor in the necessity of "interpretation": for both outsider readers and eventual Appalachian natives who would consume Fox's caricatures, interpretation served the important role of distinguishing the "superior" reader from the "inferior" depicted subject. Were mountaineers presented as their own representatives (for example, if June were afforded first-person narration), authors and readers would risk identification with the depicted. Fox's representations of Appalachian mountaineers,

then, at least in *Trail*, are again an exercise in division: mountaineer from civilized reader, “authentic” chronicler (i.e. Fox) from illiterate mountaineer, modern from ancestral, and white from “not-quite-white.” And even all of these divisions are complicated by something like lapses in Fox’s paradigm, in which the reality of mountaineer exploitation creeps into his narrative, most notably in the form of Jack Hale’s transformation.

Ultimately, Fox’s legacy is not easy to characterize. He certainly profited in tangible, documented ways from both the literary and material exploitation of the Southern Appalachian mountain lands and people. *Trail*, though, one of the author’s last and certainly his most famous novel, lends itself to a more complicated reading of Fox’s relationship to his subject(s) than previous scholars have offered, with Satterwhite being a notable exception. Too, we cannot dismiss the fact that *Trail* and especially its stage adaptation still hold such an important part in the economy and mythos of the Big Stone Gap region. To insist that these are merely offensive portrayals to the people who call this area home is to deny their agency. What is clear is that the extraction industries of which John Fox, Jr. was a part as well as the literature he wrote and the caricature he created are inextricably linked in the history of popular conceptions of mountaineers. Too, just as the material realities of Big Stone Gap were shaped by those industries as well as Fox’s literature, his legacy continues to impact the region’s economy today. Upon visiting Big Stone Gap, one realizes how central Fox is to the tourism industry there, and how fully he has been adopted as a native son, despite many scholarly claims that Fox did nothing but damage the people and region.

John Fox, Jr.'s complex legacy to the region he made his home is readily apparent in the gift shop of the June Tolliver House in Big Stone Gap, Virginia. The home once belonged to a woman upon whom Fox is thought to have based June Tolliver. One will find copies of such pamphlets as *Welcome to John Fox Jr's Lonesome Pine Country* by Don Wax and *Crimes, Criminals, and Characters of the Cumberland's* of Southwest Virginia by Roy L. Sturdily. The former chronicles, in rather celebratory manner, Fox's literary and business relationship to the Big Stone Gap area, while the latter includes historical documentation of some of the notorious characters of the region, some of which are included in Fox's novels, including "The Red Fox" from *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*. In the caption beneath a photo of Powell Valley featured in Wax's pamphlet, Wax even adopts Fox's caricatured Appalachian dialect to welcome "Furriners." I can only conclude that Fox's legacy is as divided as a parting in the coal seams that brought him to Southwest Virginia.

CHAPTER IV

THE PERIOD IN RETROSPECT: THE NEO-REGIONALIST REVISIONS OF LEE SMITH AND SILAS HOUSE

In addition to his writing, John Fox, Jr. completed several lecture tours, in which, according to Wilson, “Audiences were encouraged to expect a ‘realistic’ or ‘real’ interpretation of culture and dialect from both Fox the lecturer and Fox the storyteller” (Wilson “Judicious” 111). As we have seen, authenticity was expected in the vicarious literary tourism industry. However, Murfree and Fox, two chief fashioners of the national image of the Appalachian mountaineer were not actually mountaineers themselves, at least not in the way their readers consumed their texts. Murfree, as seen in chapter one, was actually from the wealthy Murfree family of middle Tennessee. Fox, as we saw in chapter three, was actually a Bluegrass Kentuckian. And though Emma Bell Miles lived the most “authentic” mountaineer experience of the three, her family was not from the region and she was not born there. Not surprisingly, then, authors who have sought to revise the image of the Southern Appalachian mountaineer in more recent years—which is the focus of this chapter—are actually from the regions they write about.

These authors have recognized the turn of the twentieth century as a critical period in shaping national perceptions of Appalachian mountaineers. Exploring the literary connection between works I identify as neo-regionalist and Appalachian regionalist texts from the turn of the last century, I argue that Lee Smith’s *Fair and*

Tender Ladies (1988) and Silas House's *A Parchment of Leaves* (2001) revise and complicate the denigrated image of the mountaineer established in earlier regionalist and local color texts. Set in rural southwestern Virginia and extending from the World War I era through the mid-1970s, Smith's *Fair and Tender Ladies* suggests a paradigm available to the nation as a whole for reconciling the perceived sanctity and coherence of national identity with an increasingly supranational and, certainly, supra-regional world. After exploring Smith's revision of Appalachian stereotypes by revisiting this earlier period, I turn to House's revision in *A Parchment of Leaves*, which suggests that the effects of modernity, especially those of industrialization, are central rather than antithetical to Appalachian cultural identity.

The Longue Durée: Lee Smith's Revision of Appalachian Otherness

Smith's *Fair and Tender Ladies* is an epistolary novel that traces the loves and losses of its protagonist, Ivy Rowe. Ivy's relationships to others and the land bear out a localized version of Wai Chee Dimock's theory of expanded scales of aggregation as Ivy navigates her filiations and affiliations within and beyond her home and family. Dimock argues that we must extend the idea of "Aggregation: not only as it produces random and non-random sets of casualties, but also as it generates different kinds of filiations on different scales" ("Scales of Aggregation" 219). That is, resulting from what Dimock calls "scalar variety" (219), humans form cultural aggregations within and beyond the nation-state, thus calling into question that political entity's coherence and utility in a globalized world, as that world challenges the way we think about things like "American literature" or "American-ness," for examples. Smith's text is perfect for such analysis

because the novel hinges thematically on exposure and isolation, experience and speculation. In Smith's text, various "hollers" within the same county are as distinct from one another as separate cities, and characters regularly comment on the disconnection between Sugar Fork, the novel's primary setting, and the rest of the nation. For example, Ivy's husband Oakley tells her "The depression don't make no difference up here," highlighting both the geographical and what he perceives as the economic isolation of their Appalachian home from the rest of the nation and world (203).

Even Smith's use of names points to the ostensible separation of Sugar Fork from the industrialized outside world. Franklin Ransom, Ivy's suitor at one point in the novel, is heir to the coal company; implicit in his last name is the idea that affiliation with the coal company (a symbol of industrialization) comes at a price, hence "Ransom." Oakley Fox, however, becomes Ivy's husband and alternative relationship to the world, and his name connotes intimate connection with the land. This overt negotiation between region and nation—especially the national economy—places Smith's text within a particular literary tradition. Though published roughly a century later than the works of local color authors such as Mary Murfree, Emma Bell Miles, and John Fox, Jr., *Fair and Tender Ladies* participates in a kind of neo-regionalism reminiscent of the regionalist and local color fiction popular at the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth century.

As noted in my introduction, Brodhead defines regionalism as literature that "requires a setting outside the world of modern development, a zone of backwardness where locally variant folkways still prevail" (115). In the early sections of Smith's novel, such separation from "the world of modern development" holds. In the mountains of *Fair*

and Tender Ladies, though, there is no readily identifiable group to reign in the community's outliers with their "normative sway," to use Brodhead's apt term³¹ (137). Because the plot of *Fair and Tender Ladies* extends from the turn of the century to the 1970s, the people of Sugar Fork are confronted by contact with the outside world in ways unavailable to and thus not depicted in the regionalist and local color fiction of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These distinctions mark Smith's text neo-regionalist in light of its modification of the earlier form.

As neo-regionalist fiction, Smith's text expands the scholarly possibilities for examining fictional representations of how inhabitants of American backwaters negotiate their relationships with the encroaching outside world. Replete with characters who fear the "foreign" and who say the word "French...like a cuss word," *Fair and Tender Ladies* illuminates in microcosm changes in American culture and sensibility following the First World War, as their rural community becomes more national and their nation becomes more global (Smith 204, 396). Through the protagonist's increasing exposure to cultural Others and, more importantly, her articulation of the foreignness embedded within even the very familiar, Smith's neo-regionalism interrogates the perceived sanctity and coherence of national identity within an increasingly supranational and, certainly, supraregional world. Is it possible, the novel asks, to retain the one and acknowledge, even embrace, the other? As I will argue, the neo-regionalism of *Fair and Tender Ladies* suggests a possible paradigm for the reconciliation of the regional and supra-regional vis-

³¹ Brodhead argues regionalism's depiction of "a deeply fictitious America that was not homogenous yet not radically heterogeneous either and whose diversities were ranged under one group's normative sway...must have contributed profoundly to its historical public demand" (137).

à-vis the portrayal of the self as the only sovereign, calling into question the sanctity of any territorially defined identity.

In order to understand Smith's work in the context of earlier regionalist fiction, we must briefly explore that literary milieu with regard to its relationship with the national imaginary. To be clear, I am thinking of that national imaginary in terms of Benedict Anderson's "definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). What I want to do, then, before turning specifically to Smith's novel, and later, House's, is to outline briefly the ways in which literary regionalism is tied to such a national imaginary and, perhaps more importantly, consider that American regions are themselves "imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."³²

Because of their insistence of the importance of women regionalist's writing in American literary history and American history more generally, Fetterly and Pryse's

³² Fetterly and Marjorie Pryse champion the study of often marginalized women writers from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as Sarah Orne Jewett and Alice Dunbar-Nelson. Concerned with the local and though writing in a form seen as a lesser version of the literary realism of the same period, women regionalists nonetheless broached issues that transcended the local and the marginal in important ways. "However the writers of these texts would have articulated their concerns had they written in forms other than sketches and fictions," Fetterly and Pryse write, "it remains the case that readers now find in their work issues that have increasingly occupied our attention at the turn of our own century [the twentieth to the twenty-first]" (2). While Fetterly and Pryse argue that "the texts [they analyze] themselves 'define' regionalism," we might also entertain the idea that our critical lenses define regionalism (2). That is, I find a vastly different set of issues in Smith, for example, when I am concerned with the relationship amongst the local, national, and global than when I am concerned solely with gender roles. This is not to say that such issues are not related, or that both and a host of others are not simultaneously present in *Fair and Tender Ladies*. Rather, we must cautiously acknowledge the influence of our own theoretical concerns upon the readings we derive from regionalist texts, especially because regionalist writers themselves came (and come) from such disparate backgrounds and wrote (and write) with different aims. To be fair, Fetterly and Pryse express a similar concern when they write, "By 'locating' these texts that have seemed for so long to be 'out of place' in American literary culture, we are not trying to establish regionalism as a fixed literary category, but rather to understand it as the site of a dialogical critical conversation" (2).

work has indeed inspired many scholars to reexamine the regionalist fiction of the turn of the last century. For example, in *American Literary Regionalism in a Global Age*, Philip Joseph also argues for the continued relevance of the regionalist fiction of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through its ability to “make visible and apparent some of the forms of local community upon which a strong modern civil society depends. In the process,” Joseph continues, “regionalism can function correctively in relation to versions of the civil society argument that seem unsuited to a globalized world” (6). However, in addition to examining the ways in which the regionalist fiction of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries addresses issues still of concern today, it seems important, too, to explore how the “dialogical critical conversation” Fetterly and Pryse identify is still being engaged and revised by more recent authors like Smith and House.

In this vein, Smith’s *Fair and Tender Ladies*—more conversant, in my estimation, with the late nineteenth and early twentieth century tradition of literary regionalism than with more recent literary milieus—has a great deal to tell us about the relationships amongst self, Other, region, nation, and, perhaps, world. Again, Smith’s 1988 text depicts the local’s negotiation with the national and even the global over the *longue durée*, beginning in the teens and concluding after the Vietnam War, extending temporally the cultural work of earlier literary regionalist fiction. Indeed, the protagonist’s communication with a long-dead sister via unsent letters attests to the expanded relationship between past and present, local and global in Smith’s text. Thus, analyzing Smith’s text within the regionalist paradigm is in part my attempt to answer Dimock’s question, “What would American literature look like...restored to the *longue durée*, a scale enlargement along

the temporal axis that also enlarges its spatial compass?" (*Through Other Continents*, 4). Of course, Dimock is referring here to a much longer span of time and to American literature in general, but I find it a fruitful practice to apply this question to a particular literary movement—that of literary regionalism—and to investigate its legacy, persisting as I argue it does in more recent texts like Smith's and House's. While the mere act of calling these texts neo-regionalist helps us extend the idea of American literature temporally, space is equally important in understanding Smith's continuation and emendation of literary regionalism's cultural work.

In terms of the relationship between space and identity, this chapter is informed in part by the scholarly apparatus established in a collection of essays entitled *The Poetics of Appalachian Space*. As its title suggests, the framework for this collection is the application of Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* to Appalachian writing. "Bachelard helps us connect Appalachian literature," the collection's editor Parks Lanier writes in the introduction, "to that which is universal. He helps us to understand the power of regional writing which transcends its local habitation" (1). That is, we can think through the particular spaces of Appalachia, the house, the holler, the furniture, even, and the ways characters negotiate these spatial terrains as encoded with a de-territorialized human impulse to negotiate *any* boundary beyond self. However, I want to think about Smith's neo-regionalism as doing more than transcending the local and more than being merely connected to the universal. Rather, like the regionalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Smith's text articulates a kind of mutual constitution of the ideas of territorially defined identities such as region and nation. Moreover, through the

protagonist's letter writing, the novel interrogates these identities in opposition to the self. In contrast to some of her regionalist forebears, however, Smith's *Fair and Tender Ladies* is not involved in a nationalistic project of articulating a kind of supposedly authentic Americanness. Rather, from the vantage point of a post-world-war-world, Smith's text questions the stability of territorialized identities and exposes the dependence of supposedly discrete identities upon one another for their coherence and legibility.

Regional identity—particularly Southern and even more particularly Southern Appalachian—has always contested the coherence and supremacy of the nation-state. Couched in Dimock's terms, we might think of regional identity as “prenational” (“Scale of Aggregation,” 225). Yet the coherence of regional identity persists after the encroachment of national and global cultures and economies—perhaps even more so than before their intrusion. As Scott Romine argues in *The Real South: Southern Narrative in the Age of Cultural Reproduction*,

culture itself is democratized as the stresses of modern economy introduce a gap between the culture we have and the one we want, a gap that in turn permits culture's salience as a graspable entity. A way of life is only intelligible as such in comparison with something: either its disruption or another way of life. (11)

Examined through this lens of clarity through comparison, Smith's *Fair and Tender Ladies* articulates a paradigm for the integration of region, nation, and, perhaps, planet: that is, her text rejects that any one of these markers is more authentic than the other and, indeed, asserts that discrete individuals and communities always precede and succeed such larger aggregations. This is not to say that the characters of Smith's text welcome

the outside world without contest or that Smith has depicted a Utopian vision of an Appalachia at one with the world. After all, Ivy meets with a shotgun the African American coal company representative who comes to report that the company is claiming rights to her land. Rather, Smith's characters, particularly her protagonist, approach the world in a manner that seems cognizant of their culture's becoming more legible and thus more stable in contrast with the Other, while still resisting the exploitation of their land. Moreover, given the insularity of these characters' communities, the Others of other hollers have always closely bordered their worlds, so that the inevitable encroachment of cities, states, and nations is merely an old phenomenon played out on an expanded scale. Thus, the local as microcosm might help us think through the ways in which, to borrow Dimock's terms, scalar variety and expanded scales of aggregation—even if that expansion begins with the next holler—both transcend and reify territorially imagined identities.

Within such a framework, then, an analysis of *Fair and Tender Ladies* itself reveals that Smith's text offers an alternative model for the relationship between local and the national. While earlier regionalist fiction idealized the local and was consumed by the larger American reading public as if it portrayed a normative, "authentic" Americanness, Smith's narrative problematizes the privileging of any entity beyond the self. Indeed, the self emerges as the only inviolable sovereign entity—not region, not nation. Everything beyond oneself is Other; in Smith's text, this means that anything beyond Ivy's letters—her primary means of self-fashioning, which provide the narrative structure of the text—is foreign. On the one hand, thinking about the self as the only

sovereign entity might seem to promote a pessimistic, solipsistic worldview. On the other hand, when we extend the logic of this structure, we realize that if one can reconcile oneself to *some* Others—one’s family, one’s community, one’s city, et cetera, expanding in an ever-widening circle—then one can conceivably reconcile oneself to any Other. Put another way, if we can start to think of our families as foreign because they exist outside the sovereign self, the result is not simply that the familiar becomes foreign but that the foreign can become familiar. Nothing is impossibly Other when everything and everyone outside the self is Other.

The protagonist of *Fair and Tender Ladies*, Ivy Rowe, reveals through her letters to pen pals early in the novel that a girl in another county is as far removed from the territoriality of her imagination as a girl in the Netherlands, and she refers to a preacher from the Northern U.S. as “forren” (7). In her essay, “Beyond Regional Borders: The Emergence of a New Sense of Place, from Mary Murfree to Lee Smith,” Tanya Mitchell explores female writers’ representations of Appalachian space. She rightly notes,

Being from a very poor family in the mountains, Ivy is already as a child keen on learning more of the world beyond Appalachia. She always dreams of going to far away places. For lack of opportunity to travel, Ivy writes letters, first to a pen pal in Holland, who never answers her, and then to her family and friends. (416)

Yet much of the novel suggests that while Ivy does desire knowledge of the outside world, that outside world could be Holland or the town of Majestic just down the road. The outside world is anything beyond Sugar Fork. In this way, Ivy distinguishes between but imagines herself as part of communities representing “scalar variet[ies]” of

“aggregation,” to use Dimock’s terms: her holler, the next one over, the town, the county, the state, the nation, the world (219).

Under this logic, the townspeople from her county whom Ivy has never met is just as foreign as the Northern preacher, and he is just as foreign as Hanneke the Dutch pen pal. Indeed, Mitchell makes a compelling argument regarding Ivy’s relationship with her pen pal Molly, whom Ivy meets through Molly’s aunt and Ivy’s schoolteacher, Mrs. Brown. According to Mitchell, the girls are keenly conscious of the class and cultural differences between them (Molly is a city girl of means), and their friendship hinges on their mutual interest in each other’s difference (Mitchell 416-417). This relationship demonstrates in microcosm Ivy’s childhood ability to level scalar variety: Molly, whose aunt lives in town is, again, just as foreign and interesting as Ivy’s Dutch pen pal. It seems Smith deliberately thwarts our expectations that her Appalachian characters would feel more akin to the folks in town than someone across the Atlantic ocean or, more precisely, that her characters would view someone living down the road as being as foreign as someone an ocean away.

Ivy’s leveling of these scales (everything is foreign) helps us think through the ways Smith’s neo-regionalism may suggest a theoretical framework for reconciling territorially bound identities perceived as incompatible. That is, if we extend Ivy’s spatial logic, the foreign or Other is always present, and if we can reconcile ourselves to Others beyond the space of our own bodies, we can reconcile ourselves to any Other. The novel’s epistolary structure bolsters this reading: Ivy’s supreme form of self-fashioning is not through filiations or affiliations but through letter writing—through her own voice.

Thus, in a paradoxical turn, the novel does not hold up region as familiar and anything beyond that as strange or foreign; rather, it paints the self as the only sovereign territory.

In a letter to Molly, Ivy talks of Blue Star Mountain as if it is a person: “All the leaves were that deep dark shiny green they get right at the end of summer, like they are putting on the last act of a show w[h]ich in a way they are I reckon” (52). Much like Blue Star Mountain’s end-of-the-summer performance, Ivy at times performs her Appalachia, her Sugar Fork. Ivy’s community has such a distinct way of doing things that she transforms the English language to fit its ontology. For example, in a letter to her sister Silvaney, Ivy writes, “a dear c[o]uld meat a mountain family for nearabout a year” (85). She transforms the noun “meat” into a verb to mean, “to provide with meat.” Not surprisingly, this linguistic assertion of regional identity is part of a conversation about the coal companies that have moved into the area and the “two big shots from Detroit” who have hunted deer only to take back home, “stuff them and put them in their liberries” (84). Here, Ivy recognizes and gives voice to the discreetness of her region, yet it seems her disdain is not necessarily for the foreign but for the disregard the men from Detroit have for the economic well-being of people in the Sugar Fork area. As we shall see, Ivy’s portrayal of self as the only sovereign eventually allows her to reconcile the familiar local and the intrusive outside world when she thinks of that relationship in terms of the persistence of one’s identity. That is, even if the region can be distorted and harmed by outside influences that do not have the local culture’s best interests in mind, the self has the possibility to persevere intact.

Indeed, as the novel progresses, the insularity of Ivy's imaginative and literal community decreases: "there is lights all over the bottom of Bethel Mountain," she writes, "there is somebody there clearly, people living in our view" (193). Here, Smith connects sight and contact with the outside world: Ivy can *see* evidence of other people, and thus the stability of her holler-specific identity is called into question. Nevertheless, the imaginative space of Ivy's territorial identity remains intact: "Who all do you reckon lives over there?" she asks, "I don't know. I can not immagine [sic] (192). As reflected in her syntax, Ivy retains a distinct "I" and a separate imaginative space after the encounter with a new "who all." In fact, Ivy's encounter with the lights marks a turning point in the novel. While she might have retreated within herself, refusing to expand her affiliations, she recognizes her inevitable and already existing integration with the world of lights. She tells her sister Silvaney, "For all of a sudden when I saw those lights, I said to myself, Ivy, this is your life, this is your real life, and you are living it" (193). Ivy recognizes the presentness of the foreign and accepts it as part of her existence, not threatening or antagonistic to it.

Even in moments of the text where Ivy comes across as, perhaps, stereotypically narrow-minded or even racist, she collapses the distance between the foreign and the familiar in surprising ways. Again, while such moves may at first convey a pessimistic world view—even that which is familiar is foreign and, therefore, hard to reconcile with self—we must always keep in mind the inverse of that paradigm: the foreign can become familiar. For example, Ivy writes to Silvaney about her husband's hunting for sang, which is in growing demand and helps the families in the area make ends meet. In that

description, she breaks down the distance between foreign and familiar by pairing her grandmother's herbal medicine practices with the Chinese market for sang root. This passage bears quoting at length because it demonstrates both the conflation of foreign and familiar and the relationship between those concepts and the economy. In a letter dated January 4, 1937, Ivy writes,

[I]t is the root they use, and the root is shaped like a human body, like a little man. It gives me the creeps. It is the Chinese people that want it, lord knows what they do with it. Granny used to boil up sang to clear out your throat if you had a roomy cough as I recall, and also she said it would cheer the heart, comfort the bowels, and help the memory. Well, lord knows I don't need no help with the memory! My memory works overtime anyway. I just can't bring myself to boil up any sang, because I think about all those creepy Chinese people liking it so, and somehow this puts me plum off of it. I feel like it is foreign stuff. So when Oakley has been out singing, I tell him, Sell it all. (204).

Here we see the conflation of the increasingly global economy, vis-à-vis Appalachian men hunting for an herb used by the Chinese, and local traditions, as Ivy remembers Granny Rowe using "sang" for medicinal purposes. There is certainly racist xenophobia in Ivy's description ("Lord knows what they do with it" and "creepy little Chinese people"), but we must remember that her first exposure to sang is through Granny Rowe. In some ways, then, Granny Rowe is rendered as "creepy" and "foreign" as the Chinese people of Ivy's imagination, bolstering the argument that Ivy's letters portray self as the only sovereign and all else as Other. One might counter that Ivy begins and ends her discussion of the sang with derisive comments about the perceived unsettling foreignness of the Chinese consumers who drive the sang market. However, we must not elide the fact that Ivy's initial justification for not using sang is that she does not need any

enhancement for her memory. Memory, of course, is tied to the past and, thus, the familiar, especially when coupled with a description of the grandmother's medicinal use of the herb. In other words, through her disdain for sang, Ivy pushes away both the familiar past and the foreign future, rendering them both Other.

In this way, Ivy points to the Otherness inherent in any social formation beyond the self. As Mitchell rightly notes, the "basic assumption of a pure and authentic culture is problematic and inevitably leads to the question: Can we determine which features of a regional culture are original and authentic or is culture necessarily always hybrid?" (Mitchell 408) Ivy's portrayal of her corner of Appalachia seems to answer that culture *is* always a hybrid: The foreign is always embedded in the familiar, and there is no such thing as untainted or pure culture. Because culture is always the product of the interactions of various selves, it is always a hybrid of self and Other. Indeed, as Mitchell argues, "Cultural change is a complicated phenomenon, often ambivalent and contradictory and it can be understood only through a concept of difference and through the way difference is represented, e.g. in art or literature" (Mitchell 408). Mitchell helpfully outlines the applicability of social theorist David Harvey's idea of "new regionalism" to the study of literature, writing, "Unlike the older regionalist stance of the Nashville Agrarians, for example, the new regionalism does not portray region as a closed concept. Rather, it describes region as a process and thus accounts for difference *within* a culture" (Mitchell 409, emphasis mine). Ivy's interesting conflation of the foreignness of Chinese sang customers and her grandmother's herbal medicine illustrates one of the ways Smith's neo-regionalism expands the literary regionalist negotiation

among the regional, national, and even global precisely by pointing to such “difference within a culture.”

Though Ivy lives in several different places over the course of the novel, she returns to the family home on Sugar Fork. As several scholars have noted, Ivy suffers from depression upon settling at Sugar Fork. Such depression, as scholar Donna Ogle rightly notes, seems to be the result of Ivy’s loss of her “creative side” (Ogle 107). We can tie this “creative side” to Ivy’s self-fashioning and her nuanced understanding of the sovereignty of self. While Ogle is right that Ivy’s extra-marital affair with a character named Honey Breeding is what finally jars her out her depression, I would argue that this is not solely because of Honey’s lack of responsibility to home and family as Ogle would have it (107). Rather, because Ivy has always been interested in things beyond the familiar, Honey’s Otherness (he is depicted as ethereal, almost unbelievably so) must accompany his desirable freedom in order to reawaken in Ivy the empowering sense of self-sovereignty, which, again, is legible only in contrast to Otherness.

It seems appropriate at this point to reiterate the reading *Fair and Tender Ladies* as neo-regionalist is not intended to erase the other cultural work the novel does. At the same time, it is important not to monolithize such works and gloss over their particularities in service of a particular theoretical aim. For example, as Mitchell argues, “the (de)construction of place that many Appalachian women writers undertake means a revision or (de)construction of oppressive hierarchies and traditions from the periphery” (Mitchell 413). While Mitchell is right that Appalachia, vis-à-vis its insularity and societal marginalization, forms an ideal site for interrogating power structures, we must

be clear that the epistolary nature of Smith's text moves Ivy from the periphery to the center. Hers are the only words we read; even when others speak, they are filtered through Ivy's transcription. Smith seems to employ the epistolary form for this very reason.

In fact, Smith has been praised for the centrality of Appalachian women's voices in her work and has herself commented on the marginalization of regional writing and regional women. In the preface to an interview with the author, for example, Maria Fernandez Gonzalez argues that "Part of Smith's effectiveness as a writer is due to her portrayal of the psychic dislocation of southern women in times of rapid change...[I]ssues of female isolation and identity constitute the core of her work" (117). Through having Ivy tell her own story, not just in first person narration, but also through a series of letters with different audiences, which give her opportunities to create various selves, Smith allows Ivy to work through her own "psychic dislocation...in times of rapid change." Moreover, Smith agrees when Fernandez Gonzalez asks about the marginalization of regional literature, saying that people "consider... [it] trite" (119). Smith says that Ivy Rowe is able to "resolve the conflict" between her roles as mother, wife, and writer, coming "to terms with her life and reach[ing] spirituality" (120). Given the evidence in the novel of Ivy's collapsing of the foreign and familiar, we can draw a parallel between Ivy's resolution of her competing roles and the conflict among region, nation, and world.

Such a parallel begins with the fact that even in an increasingly modernized world, culture still varies holler to holler in Ivy's corner of Appalachia. Ivy writes in a

letter to Silvaney of her sister-in-law Dreama's going to "pay the light bill...for they have got electricity now down on Home Creek" (Smith 219), in contrast to her home on Sugar Fork, where there is no electricity. Moreover, Ivy's letters to her grown daughter Maudy near novel's end suggest a nuanced approach to territorially defined identity that is informed by the particularities of each holler's culture and points, again, to the unique sovereignty of the self. Of Maudy's daughter, Ivy writes, "Well, congratulations. I guess. Of course I am real proud of your Maureen for being Little Miss Tri-City" (301). At first, Ivy's reluctance may seem to indicate a suspicion of an identity marker—here in the form of a pageant sash—that transcends the local as she understands it: Maureen is Little Miss *Tri-City*; Ivy is from Sugar Fork. Further, Ivy tells Maudy, "I don't know if I would go on to put her in the Little Miss East Tennessee Pageant or not, if I was you" (301). And while her justification for her hesitancy is that Maureen is so "delicate," we might surmise that such a title—Little Miss East Tennessee—transcends Ivy's self-imposed limits for cultural affiliation beyond Sugar Fork. Later, Ivy remarks as an aside in a letter to another daughter, Joli, that she "hope[s] she [Maureen] will not grow up to be Miss America!" (314). On the one hand, this suspicion of identity markers beyond Sugar Fork might seem to contradict my earlier reading of *Fair and Tender Ladies* as articulating the self as the only sovereign territorial boundary. On the other hand, Ivy's suspicion might betray her knowledge that such aggregations defined by pageant sashes with regional identity markers will disrupt her granddaughter's understanding of her already-existent integration with and distinction from everything beyond herself—that she can simply be Little Miss, and not Little Miss *Whatever Territorially Defined Identity*.

Importantly, Ivy's disruption of the boundaries between foreign and familiar, which form part of the stereotype of Appalachian culture, extends beyond territorially defined identities to disrupt linear notions of time as well. Ivy addresses many of her letters to her sister Silvaney. At first, the letters are presumably being sent to Silvaney who has been put in a home for the mentally disabled. However, even after we learn of Silvaney's death, Ivy continues to write and keep letters to that sister. In a letter to her daughter Joli near the end of the novel—we have reached the mid-1970s at this point—Ivy tells Joli that she has known what she was doing writing those letters all along. She says,

Joli, you ask about the letters. I do not know if I can explain this or not. I will try, though. Because you are a writer, I will try. I know your Aunt Silvaney died in the Elizabeth Masters Home in the flu epidemic that took so many lives...I have been knowing it ever since [Ivy's brother] Victor came home from the war and went over there and found out about her death. I got so mad at him I liked to have died, for telling me! I did not want to know it then. For it didn't matter. Silvaney, you see, was a part of me, my other side, my other half, my heart. (313)

This passage is particularly telling about Ivy's relationship to time, her notions of self, and the importance of writing to her self-fashioning. Because Ivy continues to write to a long-dead sister, Smith conveys that Ivy is in touch with a "deep time," one not determined by linear time or bound by territorially defined space (Dimock, *Through Other Continents*). "[D]eep time," according to Dimock, "highlights...a set of longitudinal frames, at once projective and recessional, with input going both ways, and binding continents and millennia into many loops of relations, a densely interactive fabric" (4). Ivy continues to write to Silvaney because that relationship persists beyond

the latter's death. We should note here, too, that Ivy identifies Silvaney as being a part of herself. That is, Silvaney is the exception to the idea that everything beyond the self is foreign. Thus, it is logical that Ivy writes the bulk of her letters to the sister she considers "her heart." In some ways then, Ivy writes letters to herself in a kind of meta-self-fashioning. Finally, Ivy attempts to explain this difficult concept to Joli solely because Joli is also a writer, which underscores the importance of writing as a means of self-fashioning (i.e. if only other writers can understand, then Ivy's art transcends merely putting words on the page but requires a special kind of need to fashion oneself and one's world through words).

Surprisingly, on the next page of *Fair and Tender Ladies*, Ivy reveals to Joli that she has burned the letters she wrote to Silvaney. "I gathered them up and took them out back to the firepit," she writes,

With every one I burned, my soul grew lighter, lighter as if it rose too with the smoke...For I came to understand something in that moment, Joli, which I had never understood in all these years. The letters didn't mean anything [...] It was the writing of them that signified. (314)

Ivy astutely points here to the act of writing as the means of her self-fashioning and her integration with Silvaney. Her comfort with burning the letters attests to the reconciliation of her competing roles—those Smith discusses in the interview with Fernandez Gonzalez—that I have argued have parallels to the reconciliation among the local, national, and global or the familiar and foreign. Unsurprisingly, Ivy's final letter is to Silvaney. The writing begins in a localized way, talking about her sister-in-law Dreama, for example, but ends with a universal, transcendent tone: "The hawk flies [sic]

round and round, the sky is so blue. I think I can hear the old bell ringing like I rang it to call them home oh I was young then, and I walked in my body like a Queen” (317, extra spacing original). Thus, the novel ends by reiterating the novel’s arc from tenuous, territorially defined identity to the transcendent realm of self-sovereignty.

We should note that Ivy’s self-fashioning and her reconciliation of territorially defined identities on different scales need not, and perhaps cannot, be separated from one another. Other critics, however, suggest otherwise. Ogle, for example, makes observations similar to mine about the significance of letter writing. However, my assessment differs from Ogle’s in that Ogle understands Ivy’s letter writing as a mediator *between* self and space, while my analysis leads me to the conclusion that the ideas of self and space (or region) cannot operate independently of one another. More specifically, Ogle argues that, in *Fair and Tender Ladies*,

Smith explores three distinct ways in which to respond to place of origin: 1) acceptance without questions, 2) total rejection and shame, and 3) an initial struggle against place of origin followed by a complete embracing of all that it encompasses, good and bad. (104)

While these categories are helpful in some ways for our understanding of how Smith’s characters understand themselves in terms of regional identity, Ivy’s quest always involves consideration of both region *and* self. Furthermore, as I have suggested throughout this chapter, Ivy’s self-fashioning is a helpful parallel to the possibilities for the reconciliation of territorially defined identities that seem to exclude but that, again, transcend even as they reify one another when placed in the context of the self as the only sovereign. To be fair, Ogle argues that *Fair and Tender Ladies* suggests that “place is

part of who we are,” not what we are entirely (105, emphasis added). I would add that, at least for Ivy, place and self are problematic categories that she can only reconcile with competing parallel entities (broader territories and Others, respectively) when she acknowledges the sanctity of each and its simultaneous and paradoxical discreteness from and embeddedness within everything else. That is, just as regional cultures are illegible without the contrast of some Other culture, the sovereignty of self is illegible without the contrast of territorially defined identity markers and vice versa.

Mitchell rightly notes that, “While they [Appalachian women writers] write against oppressive regional traditions, on the one hand, they at the same time represent and portray a social experience with regional culture that points towards a new regional identity” (413). Mitchell ultimately concludes that “these authors [including Smith] bring to the fore a direction in Appalachian women's writing.” This direction “combines positive regional and traditional values and yet simultaneously shows an engagement with gender and sometimes class problems that go beyond (and sometimes reject) regional borders” (418). Drawing on the work of Homi Bhaba, she continues, “In this they participate in the heterotopian process of creating the region” (418). While Mitchell is right that writers like Smith explode the idea of monolithic regions entirely separate from the world, the very suggestion that their “engagement with gender and class problems” transcends regionality reifies that very monolith. That is, as Smith’s novel demonstrates through Ivy’s portrayal of self as the only sovereign, any relationship beyond self involves an engagement with the Other.

Thus, while aggregations become more difficult as they expand in scale, their challenge to identity is something that should be recognizable to and, therefore achievable for every human being. Such is the nature of Smith's neo-regionalism in *Fair and Tender Ladies*. That neo-regionalism is a literary project intimately concerned with the issues of self and other, region and nation, that preoccupied the regionalist and local color writers of the 1890s, but it has at its advantage the perspective of a globalized world, which illuminates the interconnectedness of all things—even the seemingly foreign—and, indeed, the Otherness of the very familiar.

Generational Revisions: Silas House's *Parchment of Leaves*

Like Smith's novel, Silas House's 2008 *A Parchment of Leaves* revisits the "problem" of the mountaineer. House's novel tells the story of a Cherokee woman, Vine, her husband of Irish descent, Saul Sullivan, and the dramatic consequences of Saul's brother Aaron's infatuation with Vine. The intertwining of the story of a Cherokee family and a white mountaineer family points to the parallels (though certainly not one-to-one equation) between the treatment of Native Americans (and that phenomenon's accompanying rhetoric of the "vanishing Indian") and the disenfranchisement of the mountaineer as his land and labor became profitable in a rapidly industrializing region. Moreover, the novel gives voice to the racial complexity of a region long portrayed and popularly imagined as racially and culturally homogenous. In these ways, House's novel serves as an amendment to the problematically anachronized and racialized mountaineer of the turn of the twentieth century.

A Parchment of Leaves is one of three related novels, and in order to understand the revisionist work House performs in that text, we should consider it in the context of the two associated novels. While chronologically earliest in the story, set just before and during the First World War, *Parchment* was the second novel to be published. *Clay's Quilt*, also published in 2001, was House's debut novel and tells the story of Vine and Saul's great-grandson, Clay, and is set mostly in the 1990's. *The Coal Tattoo*, published in 2004, tells the story of Vine and Saul's granddaughters, Easter and Anneth (Anneth is Clay's mother), and is set during the 1950's and 1960's. For clarity's sake, we can think of the novels in the following way since they are not a trilogy in a straightforward sense: *The Coal Tattoo* is a sequel to *Parchment* and a prequel to *Clay's Quilt*, even though *Clay's Quilt* was published first in 2001, followed by *Parchment* in 2002, and *The Coal Tattoo* in 2004. *Parchment* is the only of the three not to mention characters from the other works because it is set the earliest chronologically.

One of House's most important interventions into the hillbilly stereotype established at the turn of the last century is Vine's first-person narration (with the exception of the third-person prologue), allowing a Cherokee mountaineer to speak for herself. Of the texts examined in the earlier chapters of this dissertation, Emma Bell Miles's *Spirit of the Mountains* is the only to contain first person narration, and then only sporadically and plural, in "we" and "our." Murfree and Fox, in contrast, use third person narration. Like Smith, who allows Ivy Rowe to tell her own story through her letters, House, too, shifts the paradigm from mountaineers depicted to mountaineers *depicting*.

Vine's being Cherokee in *Parchment* is notable for at least two important reasons: first, though set at the turn of the century, *Parchment* was published in 2002 and serves to correct the racially homogenized versions of Appalachia depicted in earlier novels. Secondly, Vine's ethnicity allows House to literally marry the plight of Native Americans with that of disenfranchised mountaineers. Vine marries Saul Sullivan, and while her family's land is the first to fall into the hands of the coal company, Saul's brother's actions set off a chain of events that will put his family's land in jeopardy in future generations. As discussed in chapter one of this dissertation, the hillbilly stereotype in early stories about mountaineers, such as those by Murfree, Miles and Fox served to establish a narrative similar to that of the "Vanishing Indian."

However, the revision of the early hillbilly stereotype is not universal to recent Appalachian literature. For example, Adriana Trigiani's *Big Stone Gap* trilogy, while not outright denigratory of the mountaineer, does not revise the hillbilly stereotype in the rehabilitative fashion of Smith or House. Though published around the same time as House's work, Trigiani's novels leave many stereotypes intact and celebrate them. The recent movie adaptation of *Big Stone Gap*, starring eastern Kentucky native Ashley Judd, does even more to keep the hillbilly stereotype alive, though, again, in a celebratory rather than denigratory fashion. Importantly, Trigiani is from Big Stone Gap, Virginia, where she sets her novels, which was the long-term home of John Fox, Jr. Fox's work, as we saw in an earlier chapter, was key to establishing the mountaineer stereotype, and his literary projects were those most closely associated with the coal industry. His novel *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* was later adapted into a stage play that has since become the

official outdoor drama of the state of Virginia, and the tourism industry in Wise County is now based largely on Fox's legacy. One can visit the author's home in Big Stone Gap and even tour the June Tolliver House, which was the home of a local whom the character of June Tolliver is thought to have been based upon. Thus, it might just be Fox's legacy that mires Trigiani's work in some of these stereotypes, while authors like Smith and House have transcended them to a large degree. This is not to suggest that Trigiani's work is without merit, of course, but that her characters more unapologetically resemble those caricatures found in Fox's work. To be fair, Trigiani's novels do have a "melungeon" character, Pearl. "Melungeons" are a long-denigrated multi-racial population of east Tennessee, eastern Kentucky, and southwest Virginia whose name is thought to be derived from the French *melange*. Pearl's denigration and then acceptance into the community of Big Stone Gap is one way in which Trigiani does transcend Fox's legacy.

House, in *Parchment of Leaves*, does even more to correct the myth of Appalachian racial homogeneity. Vine, the novel's protagonist, is Cherokee. Her mother explains how her people came to settle in the hills of House's fictional Crow County, Kentucky, which is adjacent to House's real-life home of Laurel County:

"Lucinda [Vine's great-grandmother] was just a little child when they was ordered out of their homeland [in North Carolina]. Her people wasn't about to go, though. For all they knowed, they was being marched off to a death camp. No sir, they run off. They scratched out refuge in them mountains." (22)

Eventually, Vine's great-grandparents settled at Redbud Camp, where Vine is raised.

The affinity between marginalized white southerners and Native Americans has largely escaped scholarly attention. In *Reconstructing the Native South*, however, Melanie Benson Taylor argues,

[T]he biracial U.S. South and its Native American survivors have far more in common than geographical proximity...[W]e have yet to investigate the moments when the experience, rhetoric, and the effects of such histories converge in explicit and startling ways. Part of this oversight rests in persistently anachronistic notions about both groups: these narratives suppose that Indians are relics preserved in the ether of a tragic colonial past and that the South has yet to fully transcend the residues of slavery, segregation, and its biracial legacy. (1)

While Taylor deals primarily with texts written *by* Native American writers in the southern United States, House's novels are also conversant with this overlooked relationship. In fact, *Parchment* opens with a conflict between Vine's Cherokee family and the encroaching coal company, just as *Coal Tattoo* ends with a similar battle. In the prologue, the narrator explains that a myth has sprung up around "a Cherokee girl who was able to invoke curses on anyone passing her threshold. Several men had ventured up into the place called Redbud Camp and had come back either dead or badly mauled" (3). Vine is the storied girl, and we learn that while the men's misfortunes had not been the result of some literal spell she cast upon them, "[t]hey *had* been possessed by the Cherokee girl standing at her gate, but she had not done it intentionally...her beauty had so transfixed their thoughts that they could not keep their minds on the work at hand" (3)

Serena, a character in both *Parchment* and *Coal Tattoo*, seems to have a prescient knowledge of the parallels between the plight of Vine's people and her own. Through their children's marriage, Vine and Serena will become the grandmothers of Easter and

Anneth, and the great grandmothers of Clay of *Clay's Quilt*. When Vine meets Serena for the first time, their conversation focuses on Vine's being Cherokee: "You a Indian, ain't you?" Serena asks. "That's what they tell me. Cherokee," Vine replies. She continues, "I couldn't tell if she was disgusted or happy by the look on her face." Serena quickly answers Vine's worry, however, telling her, "I never knowed no Cherokee before. I'm happy to, though" (49). Serena is the first person outside of Redbud Camp Vine has encountered who has not seen her Indian-ness as a problem. Saul, of course, was attracted to Vine and began courting her at her place on Redbud Camp, but his mother initially had quite a different take, believing tales about Vine's being a witch. It is only because Vine saved Saul's younger brother Aaron from a snake bite that their mother Esme will even entertain the notion that Saul can marry Vine, though she eventually comes to love the girl.

We can further contrast Serena's immediate acceptance of Vine with other mountaineers' attitudes toward their Cherokee neighbors. On a day trip to the town of Black Banks just down the mountain, Vine has an accidental and literal run-in with a local businessman who calls her a "stupid Indian" and a "fool" (House, *Parchment*, 79). Vine is surprised by this discrimination, but is later informed by the postmistress that hatred toward Cherokees has increased recently because the people of Bell County have "hung a Cherokee boy...They say he robbed a bootlegger and pushed him over a cliff." She continues, "It'll be bad times for your people, my opinion" (81). Indeed, the bad times for Vine's people are about to begin all over again. When Vine goes to visit her family on Redbud Camp after receiving word that her father has had a stroke, she finds

out from her mother that “That man has laid claim to this land” (137). “That man” turns out to be Tate Masters, the coal company executive who had originally hired Saul to clear Redbud Camp to make way for the mine, and the very man with whom Vine collided in Black Banks. ““But he can’t,” Vine tells her mother. ““It’s ours.”” ““We’ve got no proof,”” her mother explains. ““The law don’t go by a man’s word, only his piece of paper...People have turned on us since that Cherokee boy killed that man in Bell County”” (137). Vine’s family is forced off their land, and they make their way back to North Carolina. The “piece of paper” Vine’s mother imagines would fix things turns out to be the undoing of many families later on, underscoring House’s alignment of the anachronized mountaineer and the “vanishing Indian,” though in what seems a conscious, revisionist manner.

Foreshadowing the events detailed above, Saul and Vine’s first meeting is precipitated by the coal company’s intervention. Saul is sent to Redbud Camp to clear the land the company now claims to own, a trope present in Smith’s work and one that appears in *Parchment*, as well as the other two installments of the trilogy, *The Coal Tattoo* and *Clay’s Quilt*. The two greatest menaces to Vine, Saul, and their eventual children’s legacy—the coal company and Aaron Sullivan, as we shall see—are the very forces that draw the two together. When Saul goes to clear the land for the coal company, Aaron insists on tagging along. As if the legend of Vine’s bewitching powers were true, Aaron is bitten by a copperhead on Redbud Camp. Vine comes to his rescue, using home remedies to draw out the poison. Of course, everyone Saul tells this story to reads the

incident as another spell the mysterious Cherokee girl has cast on interloping white men, but Saul has an entirely different take. As Vine, the narrator at this point, tells the reader:

Saul did not go back to Redbud Camp to clear the land, but not because he was afraid. He told Tate Masters [the coal company executive] that the Cherokee owned that land and he would have no part in cutting down the mountain. Besides, Saul had not relished the job of sawing down the redbud trees while they were full of their purple bloom. (11)

Saul's reluctance to cut down the blooming redbuds is echoed in House's third novel, *The Coal Tattoo*, in which Bradley Stamper, the father of Saul's great-great grandson, Clay (of *Clay's Quilt*), denounces the practice of strip-mining:

There was a layer of coal that had been left exposed by the workers, who had left for the day. Anneth couldn't bear to look at it. She caught the glint of dying sunlight shining on the river far down in the valley and focused on this, but Bradley had seen the strip mine, too. "I can't understand anybody doing that," he said, and when she looked at his face she saw that sadness lived there. "Tearing up the land like that. It just kills me." (270)

If Saul represents connection to the natural world through his refusal to clear Redbud Camp for Tate Masters' coal company, Aaron represents the modernizing influences of the twentieth century. Much like the divided worlds of the mountain and the "smoke and steam and bustle and greed of the Twentieth Century" below in Fox's *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* discussed in chapter three of this dissertation, Saul and Aaron bifurcate their Appalachian homeland (Fox 39). Saul is intimately connected to the land—he does not want to clear the redbud trees—while Aaron is always talking about going to work for the railroad or the new coal mines, clear symbols of encroaching industrialization. Yet House complicates this bifurcation in that while Saul values the

land, he *does* work for a timber company and, initially, was hired to clear land for a coal company, though he refuses to do so.

Saul's taking the job with one conduit of industrialization, the local sawmill, leaves Vine vulnerable to Aaron's (and everything he will come to represent throughout the trilogy) destruction. When Saul takes a job at a sawmill, Aaron spends all his time talking with Vine. She explains,

Aaron was a dreamer, full of foolish notions that he thought might come true...He'd say that he wasn't going to break his back in no sawmill, that he wasn't going to spend his life behind a plow and tending bees, like his daddy had. He might go to East Tennessee, where they had found a big vein of coal...He talked about going to out west and being a railroad engineer and getting rich. (31)

Notably, even when he discusses working for the coal company, Aaron separates himself from the land: Aaron "figured he was smart enough to make an office clerk for the mine supervisors, since he was a good hand to figure math" (31). This characterization of Aaron foreshadows his eventual violence toward Vine. Vine is raped by Aaron, after which she kills him for fear that he will hurt her daughter, Birdie. These events precede her family's eventual removal from Redbud Camp when the coal company leaves them no choice, and they beget a legacy of exploitation and violence that will continue for generations, as explored in *Coal Tattoo* and *Clay's Quilt*.

Readers of these novels will see that Aaron's eventual rape of Vine in *Parchment* symbolizes the family's relationship to the land and establishes a loose analogy between mountaineers' loss of their mineral rights to coal companies and Native Americans' loss of their land. In the chronologically later installments, House's trilogy demonstrates the

coal industry's progressively greater devastation of the land and people. In *Coal Tattoo*, Altamont Mining Company comes to cash in on the mineral rights to the Sizemore property (earlier, the Sullivan property), planning to strip mine the top of Free Mountain. We learn that Easter and Anneth's uncle, Aaron, had sold the mineral rights to the land nearly fifty years before, a fact not revealed in *Parchment*. Easter tells the coal company representative (who happens to be married to her sister, Anneth) that Aaron had no authority to sell the mineral rights and that he had disappeared shortly thereafter. Readers of *Parchment* know that rather than disappearing, Aaron was killed by Vine after he raped her. Moreover, we also learn that Aaron was actually only Saul's half-brother, the son of their father and the woman with whom he'd had an extra-marital affair. In light of the mineral rights dispute in *The Coal Tattoo*, Aaron's origins seem part of House's effort to characterize everything Aaron represents as illegitimate. Anneth's marrying a coal man brings Aaron's actions full circle, and her death at the hands of another man whom she met through this earlier marriage underscores this nexus of exploitation and usurpation. *Clay's Quilt* reveals that Anneth is murdered by Glenn Couch, her third husband, as she attempts to leave him. Anneth meets Glenn while visiting her friend, Jewell, who is Glenn's sister and another of his victims as she eventually tries to defend Anneth. Anneth would never have met Jewell and, subsequently, Glenn had she not married Liam. Liam, again, is the head of Altamont Mining Company, and Anneth's move to the mining camp in what was once her grandmother Vine's Redbud Camp completes the tragic cycle of devastation.

As we learn in *Coal Tattoo*, Aaron sold the mineral rights to the land via broad form deed. The broad form deed allowed coal companies to purchase the mineral rights to wide swaths of lands for acres on the dollar without having to pay taxes on the property because the original owner of the land was technically still the owner. For example, a compendium of Kentucky land grants from the same period as the fictional texts this dissertation examines shows that by the 1890s, a handful of business interests had purchased, through broad-form deed, the mineral and/or timber rights to large swaths of Appalachian Eastern Kentucky lands from the state government for mere dollars on the acre (Jillson).³³ While the state government sold this land, much of that property had actually been held for all intents and purposes by individual families. Moreover, in the rare cases in which a mountaineer had legal documentation that he owned the land a company proposed to buy, the company usually bought only the profitable mineral and/or timber rights to the land—reassuring the seller that the land was still his—which left the mountaineer to pay the taxes (Caudill 2094). The true ownership of mountain lands has been contested ever since. In fact, the various lands that were conveyed as part of a deal commonly known as the DeGroot Patents have been in legal dispute as recently as the late 1990s³⁴. Eller further explains,

Some buyers offered to purchase only the minerals under the land, leaving the surface to the ownership and use (and tax liability) of the farmer. The land would be disturbed at some future date, but it was difficult for the mountaineer to

³³ The broad-form deed is a particular legal document that gives the holder unrestricted use of the land covered by said deed. The broad-form deed entails general use (specifically, mineral and lumber rights) rather than outright purchase. (Whilden 1)

³⁴ Adair et al. v. KLE Mineral Holdings, et al.
<http://opinions.kycourts.net/coa/2006-CA-000128.pdf>

envision the scale and impact of industrial change. These “broad form deeds,” as they were known in eastern Kentucky, effectively transferred to the land agents all of the mineral wealth and the right to remove it by whatever means necessary, while leaving the farmer and his descendants with the semblance of land ownership. It was not until the railroads penetrated the district that those who had concluded such deals realized their mistake. Not only had they lost all rights to minerals below the land, but they had also relinquished such other rights to the surface of the land as to limit its use for residential or agricultural purposes. (55)

According to real-life coal industry attorney, John Rhorer,

Most broad form severance deeds, in keeping with their name, grant broad surface rights to the coal grantee, including the right to use the surface to support the mining of coal on adjacent or other properties controlled by the coal owner and including the right to haul foreign coal across the surface. (Rhorer)

The generational legacy of the broad form deed is not merely a literary trope. As recently as 2011, the Kentucky Supreme Court upheld the rights of coal companies to cash in on the mineral rights secured through broad form deed, even though “the 1988 Amendment to Kentucky’s Constitution disallowed the right to conduct strip mining under broad form deeds (under most circumstances)” (Rhorer).

Aaron’s decision in House’s novels to sell the mineral rights comes home to roost almost 50 years later when Anneth’s second husband Liam comes to tell Easter that the company will now be taking advantage of their right to the Sizemore’s land’s coal. “Do you know what a broad form deed is, Easter?” Liam asks. Easter responds, ““That’s what a mining company uses to mine coal on land that don’t belong to them,’ she said, and then she realized that’s why he had come”” (238). Liam attempts to assuage Easter’s disdain for the coal companies by telling her that

“Mining companies buy the mineral rights to a piece of property, and this is all written up on a broad form deed. Your great-uncle—Aaron Sullivan—sold the mineral rights to the mountain that runs behind our house, that whole ridge that runs between Free Creek and God’s Creek.” (238)

Easter responds that Aaron subsequently disappeared and was not authorized to sell the mineral rights in the first place. “This is nineteen *sixty-six*, Liam. That was almost fifty years ago. He didn’t even own this land,” Easter tells him (emphasis original).

When Easter inquires where the company will place the entrance to the mine, Liam tells her,

“[T]he coal business is in bad shape now, Easter. The boom is over. So they’re all turning to strip mining. It’s cheaper. They’ll cut down all the trees and then they’ll come in and doze the mountain down until they get the coal. There won’t be a mine entrance. The whole mountain will be dozed.” (238)

Aaron’s actions have finally culminated in the raping of the land his family has held for generations.

Readers of all three novels will realize that Clay is unable to find a field of wildflowers atop the mountain behind the family homes mentioned in his late mother’s letters is because it has been destroyed by the coal company. As recounted in *The Coal Tattoo*, Easter, Anbeth, and another family member were nearly killed in the process of stopping the company from dozing the mountain, but the wildflowers were destroyed in the process (Chapter Thirty, “Something Ancient”). At the end of *Clay’s Quilt*, Clay and his small daughter find a cleared space with just a few flowers beginning to grow.

Readers of the trilogy realize that this is the beginning of regrowth and the result of his aunt and mother’s having fought the coal company and won, even though he does not

realize he has found the field of wildflowers (291). Clay's inability to find the field of wildflowers points to a generational legacy of loss. He cannot find the field because it has been all but destroyed by the coal company. Though, importantly, Clay finds no strip mine because his family had successfully stopped the company from mining the mountain. The coal company gained access to the Sizemore land mineral rights because Aaron sold them; Aaron's raping Vine, then, has its symbolic parallels in first the removal of Cherokee people from Redbud Camp (where Anneth would eventually live with her second husband, not insignificantly), and secondly, two generations later, in the attempted rape of the land through strip mining.

As mentioned above, *Parchment* reveals that Aaron's disappearance was actually because Easter's grandmother Vine killed him after he raped her. We further learn in *Coal Tattoo* that Redbud Camp, the place where Vine and her Cherokee family had lived, is now the location of the Altamont Mine Company. Aaron's raping Vine graphically symbolizes the coal company's devastation of Cherokee land, and even though Vine has killed him, his violence persists over half a century when the coal company attempts to cash in on its mineral rights to the Sizemore land. Again, in *Coal Tattoo*, Anneth actually lives in what was once Red Bud Camp, the former home of her Cherokee grandmother Vine, while she is married to Liam. While Anneth's literal marriage to the coal company does not directly result in her death in *Clay's Quilt* (the first novel in the trilogy to be published but the latest chronologically, being set in the 1970s through the 1990s), it is while living there that Anneth meets Jewell, through whom she meets her third husband,

Glen. Glen would eventually murder Anneth for leaving him. Thus, House illustrates the intergenerational effects of the violence enacted upon both persons and families.

While William G. Frost, discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, saw modernity as a potential harbinger of the end of the Appalachian mountaineer, more recent scholars have read a more nuanced connection between Appalachia and the processes of modernization. Eller argues that

modernization, as an urban industrial process, begins in core areas and spreads outward, extending employment opportunities into the outlying or peripheral areas but essentially using those areas to the core's advantage. Thus, a peripheral area like Appalachia may experience short-term growth without development and suffer the long-term consequences of dependency, inadequate social services, and a colonial economy. (xxv)

Indeed, in contrast to Frost's admonition for mountaineers to modernize, mountaineers' participation in the process of industrialization did not put them on equal footing with their urban counterparts. Moreover, uneven modernization or, as Eller calls it, "a particular kind of modernization" (xxiv), created pockets of disenfranchisement throughout the region. As Eller continues,

modernization does not affect all areas of the periphery with equal intensity. In Appalachia, industrialism altered some communities more dramatically than others, and throughout the region many aspects of the traditional or premodern culture remained intact long after they had disappeared from the rest of the country. (xxv)

Importantly, however, the communities that maintained traditional folkways did not remain independent from the modernizing forces that infiltrated other areas; rather, traditional folkways began to hold less value and, as Eller has it, "by the eve of the Great

Depression, all were bound together by their common loss of autonomy and by their common relationship to the new order” (xxv).

What House’s novels supply to this historical narrative of interloping industrialists is that Appalachia’s fits and starts of modernization did not mark the end of “authentic” Appalachian culture. Even projects that set out to protect such “authentic” culture such as home mission societies and settlement schools, as Whisnant documents in *All that is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region*, actually ended up codifying and modifying that culture:

Clearly, cultural intervention is a complex process which has taken many forms and whose results are subject to a variety of interpretations. We will begin to understand these episodes and processes in our cultural history only when we look at them in detail *as* intervention, and not as benign incidents which produced a collection of slave songs, or a revival of the politics of culture. (15)

Appalachian culture, then, like any other, cannot be removed from these “interventions,” as it is a living thing shaped by even forces such as the coal companies that have had such devastating effects on the land and people.

House’s novels, like Smith’s, place Appalachia in a national and international context. Excepting Vine’s rape, the event with the biggest impact on the Sullivans is the United States’ entry into World War I. Saul must go away for a year to work for the sawmill, which sees increasing demands for production with the war’s onset: ““Boss has opened him a new mill over in Laurel County. A big mill right at the foot of Wildcat Mountain,” Saul tells Vine. ““They’s a million pine trees there. He’s going to cut them all down to make into turpentine, for the war...You know President Wilson is already talking

about us getting in on it” (83). The insertion of an international conflict and industrial labor here is important because it marks both of these as directly impacting Appalachian life, in contrast to the idea that Appalachia is entirely removed from such events. Further, Saul’s absence allows Aaron to prey upon Vine, and as we have seen, Aaron’s legacy, in particular his selling the family’s mineral rights to the coal company, reverberates for generations. Thus, in contrast to Oakley Fox’s statement in Smith’s *Fair and Tender Ladies*, that events such as the Depression “don’t make no difference up here,” both Smith’s and House’s novels overall make clear that, in fact, Appalachia had already been deeply imbedded in national and international contexts through increasing industrialization (203).

The similarities between the revisionist work of Smith and House is not surprising given Smith’s mentorship of House, which began at the 1995 Appalachian Writers Workshop at the Hindman Settlement School in Hindman, Kentucky (Brosi 12). Both authors work to celebrate the culture of their home regions, creating in their novels characters who transcend stereotype and give voice to the complexities of a region long portrayed as being peopled with homogenous hillbillies destined to, as Frost once famously put it, “give place to foreigners and melt away like so many Indians” (319). As their novels attest by virtue of their existence—i.e. Appalachian mountaineers are writing about themselves—and their revision of the stereotypes codified in turn-of-the-century local color texts, mountaineers are here to stay. Moreover, their identity, just as that of Americans in general, is complex and ever changing, defying easy classification and refusing condescending dismissal.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Jon Cryer is the co-star of the popular television show *Two and a Half Men* and is perhaps best known for his portrayal of Duckie in *Pretty in Pink*. He is also the host of “Addendum,” the weekly supplement to the *Undisclosed* podcast. *Undisclosed* began in response to the popular *Serial* podcast, which detailed the potentially wrongful conviction of Adnan Syed for the 1999 murder of his ex-girlfriend, Hae Min Li. Season two of *Undisclosed* takes on another potential wrongful murder conviction, that of Joey Watkins. Cryer comments that podcaster Susan Simpson must have an easier time understanding the folks interviewed about Watkins’s case given her familial connections to Rome, Georgia, a small city in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in which this crime took place. Following this exchange, Cryer’s exact words are, “I have a very hard time understanding the accents as they are presented, like that policeman Stanley Sutton, unfortunately, sounds like a human didgeridoo to me.” He follows this comment with a wordless impression of Sutton that is really just an impression of a didgeridoo. Simpson merely laughs and tells Cryer that posters on social media have made similar comments and laughingly adds, “In the future, I guess, we’ll try to provide translations.”

What is important here is the residual legacy of Othering Southern Appalachians that took place in the early texts this dissertation has covered. Even as modern texts such

as House's and Smith's have sought to revise mountaineer stereotypes, such unchecked denigration of people from Appalachia speaks to the persistence of these stereotypes. In fact, perhaps the greatest rhetorical success of the hillbilly stereotype is the erasure of bigotry. In other words, while an outright racist or misogynist comment would not have been readily accepted by the other presenters on this podcast, a dehumanizing statement about an actual human being—not a character—gets nothing more than a chuckle and a promise to provide translations in the future.

The wild popularity of J.D. Vance's memoir, *Hillbilly Elegy*, also attests to the fact that ideas about the racialized and anachronized mountaineer persist. More importantly, these ideas have been codified as fact, and as with the texts of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, perceived as ethnographic data rather than as caricature. The very title of Vance's memoir, in its inclusion of the word "elegy," traffics in the idea that Appalachians are doomed to disappear. Moreover, Vance embraces the notion that Appalachian mountaineers are Scots-Irish transplants whose culture has changed very little in the intervening centuries since their forbears came to this country:

The Scots-Irish are one of the most distinctive subgroups in America. As one observer notes, "In travelling across America, the Scots-Irish have consistently blown my mind as far and away the most persistent and unchanging regional subculture in the country. Their family structures, religion and politics, and social lives all remain unchanged compared to the wholesale abandonment of tradition that's occurred nearly everywhere else." This distinctive embrace of cultural tradition comes along with many good traits—an intense sense of loyalty, a fierce dedication to family and country—but also many bad ones. We do not like outsiders or people who are different from us, whether the difference lies in how they look, how they act, or, most important, how they talk. To understand me, you must understand that I am a Scots-Irish hillbilly at heart. (3)

It may be that Vance engages in what scholar Sara Webb-Sunderhaus refers to as “strategic essentialism” (24). In a September 2016 article in *College English*, “‘Keep the Appalachian, Drop the Redneck’: Tellable Student Narratives of Appalachian Identity,” Webb-Sunderhaus observes “strategic essentialism” in Appalachian college students’ personal narrative writing, through which one student “quite purposefully performs...an Appalachian identity via a narrative that she intuited would appeal to her professor” (24). In other words, the student performed Appalachianness by repeating tropes her professor would recognize. Notably, the professor praised the student’s knack for “pastoralism,” while the student readily admitted to Webb-Sunderhaus that the narrative had been embellished (23). Perhaps Vance similarly engages in “strategic essentialism,” to gain an audience and thereby a platform for his pointed calls for individualized reform. If this is the case, he has certainly succeeded.³⁵

Yet Webb-Sunderhaus argues that this student and others use this “strategic essentialism” to “create their own tellable narratives of Appalachian exceptionalism” that run counter to “tellable narratives the wider culture circulates about Appalachians—particularly narratives concerning incest, racism, and violence” (24). In contrast, while Vance has succeeded in gaining an audience, his “strategic essentialism,” as far as I can tell, is not in service of any alternative or redeeming narrative, other than his own personal success story (24-25). Moreover, the “tellable narrative” he begins with is not

³⁵ Vance has been interviewed dozens of times by news outlets from MSNBC to NPR. See his author page for links to selected interviews, at <https://www.harpercollins.com/cr-123194/j-d-vance>. As of 26 October 2016, *Hillbilly Elegy* is number four on the *New York Times Bestseller List* of “Hardcover Non-Fiction.”

wrought from positive Appalachian stereotypes—connection with and respect for the land, for example—as the aforementioned student’s was. Rather, Vance relies on negative perceptions about Appalachia such as drug abuse and a propensity for violence to engage his audience.

Vance’s reiteration of Appalachian stereotypes also shares similarities with certain components of the “vanishing Indian” motif as delineated by Dippie and Romero. Romero notes of *The Last of the Mohicans* that

Cooper incorporates the racial other as an earlier and now irretrievably lost version of the self. Perhaps this is part of the reason why our culture has come to regard *The Last of the Mohicans* and other nineteenth-century Anglo-American frontier fictions as “children’s literature.”...Cooper conflates racial difference and temporal distance on an evolutionary continuum of human history. In other words, it is as though for him aboriginals represent a phase that the human race goes through but must inevitably get over...[I]n equating the savage and the juvenile [the novel] starts by assuming that certain Americans must vanish. (39)

Vance places his memoir in this lineage by painting Appalachia and its inhabitants as an infantile predecessor that must progress beyond their “evolutionary...stage” and, as I discuss below, “wake the hell up” (Romero 39, Vance 255). Indeed, the stereotypes established in works such as Murfree’s, Miles’s, and Fox’s are only slightly altered in Vance’s 2016 book:

We’re more socially isolated than ever, and we pass that isolation down to our children. Our religion has changed—built around churches heavy on emotional rhetoric but light on the kind of social support necessary to enable poor kids to do well. Many of us have dropped out of the labor force or have chosen not to relocate for better opportunities. Our men suffer from a peculiar crisis of masculinity in which some of the very traits that our culture inculcates make it difficult to succeed in a changing world. (4-5)

The mountaineer, in Vance's configuration, is still incompatible with modernity, still entirely separate from the rest of the nation.

Hillbilly Elegy does contain an important concession that I hope Vance uses his powerful voice to elaborate on in the national media. "There is an ethnic component," he writes,

lurking in the background of my story. In our race-conscious society, our vocabulary often extends no further than the color of someone's skin...but to understand my story, you have to delve into the details. I may be white, but I do not identify with the WASPs of the Northeast. (3)

Vance also makes several parallels throughout his memoir between the plights of ethnic and racial minorities and that of Appalachian mountaineers. However, he does so almost entirely through looking at life circumstances rather than causes. In other words, he is right to point to similarities between marginalized peoples, but if he is going to make even a passing case for Appalachians as a distinct ethnic group, he should follow up with an analysis of the similar interplay among racial/ethnic stereotypes and material realities. Instead, his memoir is mostly a "bootstraps" tale, urging Appalachians to "wake the hell up" and stop blaming others for their problems (255). I offer that in order for the problems faced in some Appalachian communities to improve, writers who purport to speak for the region must unpack stereotyped portrayals rather than reinforce them. One cannot simultaneously present "hillbilly" attributes as facts of life to be overcome and then blame "hillbillies" for their own marginalization.

The rise of Donald Trump as the Republican candidate for president has made Vance's book, which deals most specifically with working white Appalachian out-migrants to the Rust Belt, a media darling. Many are desperate to understand Trump's support among the white working poor. Thus, Vance has been adopted as a spokesperson for "these people" and has been interviewed by the likes of Terry Gross and Fareed Zakaria. In some ways, his platform for a much-maligned segment of the population could be productive. However, I hope that Vance will use his newfound celebrity to give voice to the complexities of the regions he writes about (Appalachia and the Rust Belt) alongside his main theme of highlighting dismal economic conditions. So far, he has not done so.

Satterwhite rightly cautions against casting white mountaineers in a victim role, noting that such narratives implicitly endorse white supremacist rhetoric, wherein the rights to being/of whites have somehow been eroded by people of color (224). I do not wish to perpetuate such notions or risk placing my study in the vein of white victimhood. What I do hope, however, is that this dissertation has illuminated some trends in American literature's pivotal role in granting and/or denying access to normative whiteness. Further, I hope to have made clear both the connections between mountaineers' rhetorical and economic disenfranchisement as well as that phenomenon's similarities to the "vanishing Indian" motif of the nineteenth century. When we illuminate the rhetorical processes by which a population is marginalized, we take the first steps to ameliorating the devastating effects of that marginalization.

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