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North Carolina Folklore Journal

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Philip E. (Ted) Coyle, Editor

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The *North Carolina Folklore Journal* publishes studies of North Carolina folklore and folklife, analyses of folklore in Southern literature, and articles whose rigorous or innovative approach pertains to local folklife study. Manuscripts should conform to *The MLA Style Manual*. Quotations from oral narratives should be transcriptions of spoken texts and should be identified by informant, place, and date. For information regarding submissions, view our website (http:/paws.wcu.edu/ncfj), or contact:

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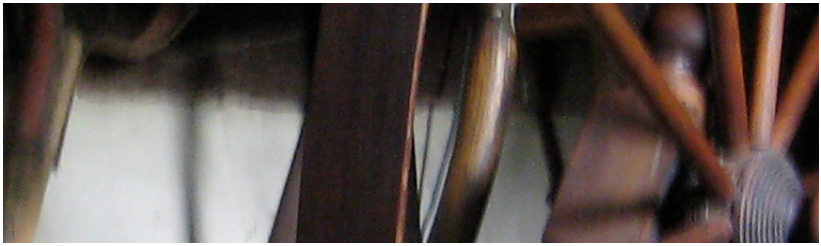

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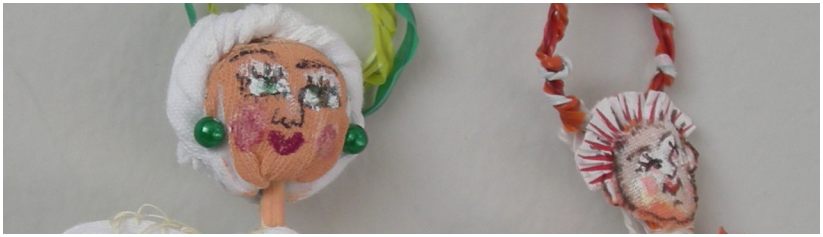
Frame Photograph: An antique spinning wheel stored in the back of a restored log cabin on the Miller property. Photograph by Anne Chesky.

Cover Photographs: Front cover: A stack of finished quilts and blankets stored at Ann Miller's home. Back Cover: Mary Norris' homeplace. Photographs by Anne Chesky.



Editor's Foreword

By Philip E. "Ted" Coyle

The women of Western North Carolina have sustained folk traditions for generations. Often, these traditions have been tied to the domestic realm, where the day-to-day needs of household and family provide a basis for the creative refinement and perpetuation of folklore genres that have become distinctive of the region. The articles in this issue of the North Carolina Folklore Journal focus on some of these genres—cooking, sewing, and ballad-singing—and their transformations as part of contemporary life in the region.

For Lucy Long, the women-centered foodways that have characterized the region of Western North Carolina are precisely what are missing from the new cuisine that has taken root in the culinary tourist restaurants of Asheville. These restaurants emphasize local food and sustainable agricultural techniques, while carefully avoiding any mention of the women who have sustained local foodways for generations. Partly this is to downplay any hint of "the hillbilly," with its unappetizingly associated food-images: possum, grease, and all manner of stewed guts and organs. But primarily, it is based on an attempt to position the food in Asheville's culinary tourist restaurants within what she calls in her recent book, "the realm of the palatable" (33). Hopefully her article will help to open up that realm, so more Asheville-bound culinary tourists might experience the full richness of Western North Carolina's foodways.

Frame photograph: Contemporary folk art by NCFS member Vickie Jo Franks. Vickie Jo reminds us to please spay and neuter our pets and to enjoy our state. Do not litter our highways, by-ways, and waterways!

Anne Chesky returns to the pages of the North Carolina Folklore Journal—following her valuable review of recent writing about Orville Hicks in our last issue—with a report on her oral history research with quilters in Meat Camp, North Carolina. She documents the transition in these women's lives from weaving to sewing to quilting, which accompanied what Karl Polanyi called the "Great Transformation," the transition to market-oriented industrialism that has come to characterize the global economy—and the economy of Meat Camp, North Carolina—since the end of World War Two.

Lillian Blomeley writes about the image of women in ballads, and the reworking of this rather singular and stereotypical image into more complex depictions in recent novels that draw on ballad themes. Her article reminds me of Feinberg's discussion of the distinction between "linear" and "pictorial" styles of speech. Linear styles, such as those found in traditional ballads, where women are portrayed as embodying a few simple—archetypically female—traits, "all serve to create a surface homogeneity out of heterogeneous, possibly conflicting, representations" (15). On the other hand, the pictorial style characterizes the ballad-based novels of Sharyn McCrumb and others discussed by Blomeley. Here Feinberg (16) cites Kathleen Stewart's evocation of day-to-day culture in the coal town of Amigo, West Virginia. "Pictorially reported culture," she writes, "is given to digression, deflection, displacement, deferral, and difference." Similarly, the novels that Blomeley discusses use this "displacement" and "deferral" to explore the textured lives of women in the mountains of Western North Carolina, and other nearby regions.

It is a pleasure to publish these articles in the pages of the North Carolina Folklore Journal.

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Culinary Tourism and the Emergence of an Appalachian Cuisine: Exploring the "Foodscape" of Asheville, NC

By Lucy M. Long

Western North Carolina, home of the Great Smokies and Blue Ridge Mountains, has long been a tourist destination. Beginning in the mid-1800s, its natural resources—scenery, mountains, rivers, climate—and a sense of remoteness and isolation, drew people for recreation and health as well as solace and retreat from the "modern" world. Thus, the history of Appalachia is a history of both the region and perceptions of it. A number of scholars have demonstrated that this public image was used as justification for exploitation, even colonization (Billings, et al.; Fisher). Others have also examined the role of tourism in creating those perceptions (Compton; Martin; Starnes; and Stanosis).

Food was generally not a featured attraction. Visitors could expect to eat hearty and healthy meals, representative of Appalachian hospitality in its generous abundance, but mountain food itself tended to be seen as primitive and simple, reflecting a lack of culinary discernment that was indicative of either the perceived backwardness and depravity

Lucy Long (PhD in Folklore) teaches leisure and tourism studies at Bowling Green State University in Ohio and directs the non-profit Center for Food and Culture. A native of North Carolina, she has done extensive research on the impact of tourism on the music (dulcimer) and food traditions of the Appalachian part of the state.

Frame photo: Author's mother, Peggy Bradford Long. Photo by the author.

of mountain residents or their forced protection from the influences of time and progress (Lundy). Appalachian stereotypes tended to fall into two basic categories. The first was a romanticization of mountain residents, seeing them as survivals from Elizabethan England and holding onto "pure" American culture. The other category characterized them as backwards and inbred, depraved and amoral (Hsiung; Obermiller, et al; Williamson; Whisnant;). "Local color" literature and travel accounts since the latter 1800s stereotyped Appalachian food as consisting primarily of moonshine, cornbread and whatever could be caught in the wild—possums, raccoons, squirrels—or grown in small, hillside gardens—corn, cabbage. These items were not presented as fare suitable for "fine dining" to attract tourists with discerning palates.

Within the last decade, however, southern Appalachia has become a site for culinary tourism, the exploration of culinary "Otherness" as a tourist destination. I use the concept of culinary tourism here as a way to both explore a culture and an industry initiative (Long). Culinary tourism is a newly developed sector within the tourism industry both nation-wide and internationally. The industry has shifted the original scholarly concept, which was a framework for understanding exploratory eating, to one of seeing food as a destination for tourism and the basis for identifying or creating memorable dishes or dining experiences. Since it is tied to industry, profit is a primary goal, and emphasis tends to be on gourmet, high-priced products, usually based in restaurants, but also in wineries and cooking classes. Culinary tourism is also perceived by state and local government as a fresh medium for economic development, resulting in public funding of some initiatives. Restaurants, tourism companies, and other sectors of the hospitality industry promote culinary tourism as a way to increase visibility, customers, and profit. Other efforts at culinary tourism are grassroots, coming from small farmers and individuals concerned with environmental and social justice issues. CSA's, farmers' markets, and farm-to-table initiatives all find that culinary tourism can be beneficial to their support and survival.

Government tourism divisions, official tourist publications, restaurant advertising, cookbooks, festivals, and food tours now promote coming to Appalachia to eat. Asheville, NC is one of the centers of this activity, and I focus here on that city and the surrounding area. I recognize that selecting one city to represent an entire region is highly problematic. Not only does it raise questions about who has the authority to represent a culture, but it also reflects issues surrounding our very understanding of culture. A folkloristic view of culture sees it

as a dynamic resource for interpreting and acting in the world. In that sense, it constantly changes, adapting and appropriating new forms with variations on older forms emerging from individual creativity and innovation.

Food culture is similar. Although it is tempting to see food cultures as static sets of ingredients, dishes, preparation, and consumption methods, etc., they also are dynamic. Food folklorists and anthropologists suggest looking at food cultures as consisting of a core repertoire surrounded by peripherals that, because they are less connected emotionally and psychologically to the identity of the culture, are more open to change. For some Appalachian residents, commercially oriented Asheville would be considered peripheral to the rest of the region. On the other hand, we can also see the city as representing one node in a network, a place where innovation currently seems to trump tradition.

This article summarizes selected venues and products available in the Asheville "foodscape," to borrow a term from Appadurai. Out of this foodscape, there seems to be emerging a new Appalachian cuisine. I use "cuisine" here in reference to a publicly articulated set of dishes, ingredients, styles, aesthetics, and mind-sets that are felt to represent a group's identity through food. This contrasts with "foodways," the total network of activities and conceptualizations around food, in that "cuisine" implies public discussion and celebration of the contents and merits of food. Magazines, newspapers, internet blogs, and daily conversations offer these discussions. This emerging Asheville cuisine emphasizes local natural resources and a specific contemporary ethos blending aesthetic innovation and socially conscious food production and consumption. Tourism highlights this new cuisine and provides a market for it, but this cuisine is also integrated into the lives of local residents, many of whom are recent arrivals.

Where is the Appalachian in all of this? Does this new cuisine maintain any continuity with the cultural history of the region? It, and the culinary tourism that promotes it, seem to be defining the region according to its natural history and resources rather than its cultural ones. The emphasis on locally grown, organic produce redefines the basis for regional identity, so that one's ancestors or the length of settlement there matters less than one's relationship to the land and the way that relationship is expressed through personal food choices.

I suggest here preliminary interpretations of this new cuisine for understanding the place of Appalachia in the larger mainstream American imagination. In essence, the new Appalachian cuisine offers

foods that demonstrate terroir, a French concept of food as literally tasting of place (Trubeck). Food activists, gastronomes ("foodies"), and the culinary world are exploring terroir as a way of reconnecting our food system to the natural world. By highlighting it, the new cuisine represents a repositioning of Appalachia as central to contemporary concerns about American identity, our relationship to food, and even our relationship to nature. In doing so, it is moving Appalachia and its food from a marginal status as "Other" to one firmly centered in the mainstream of American thought.

Stereotypes and Realities

Typical of the tourism treatment of Appalachian food are observations from an afternoon in the Asheville airport around 2003. First, the airport gift shop carried souvenirs, including a can of possum. The label read—"freshly killed on Highway 9; naturally sun-dried…" Then, in big letters—"this is a joke; do Not eat."

While humorous depictions of a culture or place are common features of tourist products, this instance represents a familiar history of mocking Appalachian culture. The Appalachian region has long held a marginal position within mainstream American identity as a place where "time stood still" and modernity was kept at bay, resulting in people who were either "our Elizabethan ancestors" keeping alive the pure culture of the 1600s or depraved and backwards Hillbillies, such as the murderous characters in the movie Deliverance. Appalachian food was often used to "Other" the region, and this souvenir can of possum is typical of the way the tourism industry treated it as something outside the culinary universe of mainstream America.

Interestingly, a small restaurant at the same airport offered soup beans and cornbread along with its otherwise standardized fast-food style menu of hot dog, hamburger, chili, and pizza. Soup beans—pinto beans slow-cooked with some fatback into a thick soup—are a traditional food in much of Appalachia. Served with cornbread, molasses or honey, thick slabs of butter, and some raw onion, homemade pickles or chow chow, it was historically and continues to be a common, everyday meal in many households (Ledfore; Page and Wigginton). The restaurant did not highlight the dish as Appalachian in any way, a fact that could represent its normalcy for mountain residents, but could also imply its lack of value for the tourist market. On the one hand, then, we see a mockery of Appalachian food and culture—it is interesting only as a source of humor, not as a gastronomic experi-

ence; on the other, a dismissal—it is so simple and basic to not even be worth mentioning.

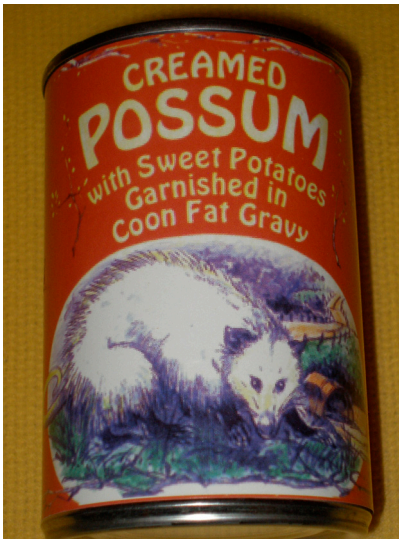
The reality of Appalachian food is that it was historically grounded in British and German traditions that formed the basis of pioneer American foodways. This translated into a meat and starch aesthetic with milk-based sauces, pig and dairy as primary foodstuffs, fermentation and canning as popular preservation techniques, stewing of greens, and other vegetables or fruits as sides. Native American traditions contributed corn (made into bread, cornmeal mush, hominy, grits, and the settler's own adaptation for distilled spirits), beans (dried and fresh), and foods from the wild—fish, birds, game, berries, greens, and roots. Appalachian food tended to be plain but hardy, tied closely to the seasons and to what could be raised at home. It was no different than most pioneer American foodways, except that it displayed some regional variations in ingredients. It has continued in many homes, however, into the present, and therefore tends to be seen as backwards and quaint, playing into the stereotypes of Appalachian culture.

The Asheville Foodscape

Since childhood in the 1960s, I have spent my summers at my grandparent's second home in Montreat (a community started as a retreat center for the Presbyterian Church) twenty miles east of Asheville. Food excursions generally consisted of trips to the Asheville Farmers Market, especially for fresh corn, peaches, and watermelon, to the K & W Cafeteria in downtown Asheville, or to a small hotel dining room in Black Mountain. In my college days in the 70s, we made pilgrimages to Stanley Brothers Barbecue in Asheville, where we would clog dance and stuff ourselves on the all-you-can-eat pulled pork, cole slaw, and hush puppies. If we wanted memorable fine dining, we could go to the Biltmore House or Grove Park Inn; for solid home-cooking—always Southern style—we headed to one of the numerous hotels or bed and breakfasts catering to the many middle class southerners who vacationed in the area.

I started noticing changes in the local foodscape in the mid to late 1990s. To understand these changes, we need the historical context of the area. The city of Asheville in Buncombe County originated in the late 1780s as a small settlement by a few pioneering families. "Nestled" in the Blue Ridge Mountains, it was physically separated from the more stable agricultural areas of the "flatlands." It became,

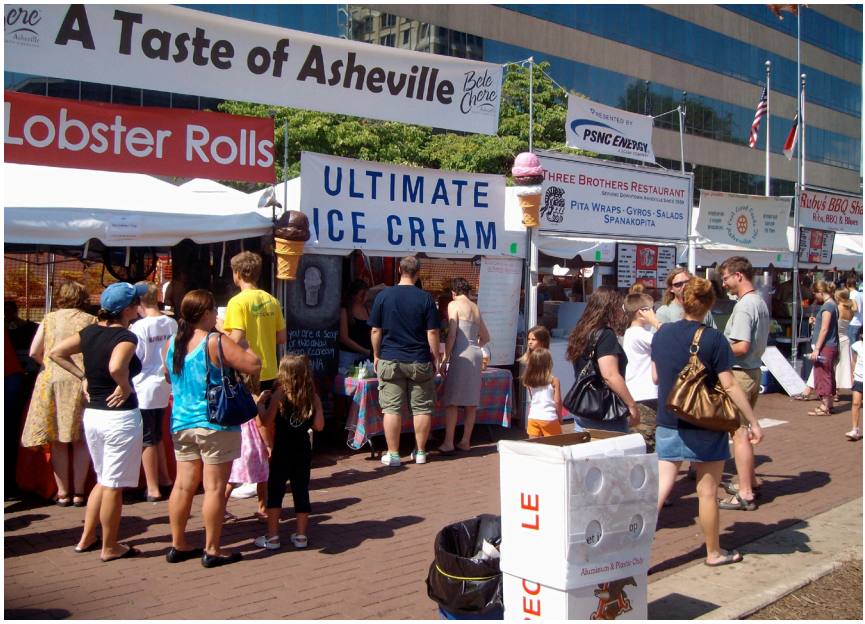
however, a hub of commerce between the southern mountaineers and the lower-lying areas as well as one of the jumping off points for going further west into the mountains. Roads, often based on Native American trails (the Cherokee culture was vibrant in the area during pioneer settlement, and lands still held by the Cherokee nation are



An example of a joking portrayal of a stereotyped mountain dish. A label on the back of the can states that this is not meant to be eaten. Photo by the author.

an hour's drive southwest), were built up by hog-drovers and cattle-drivers taking the animals to markets in the southeast. As early as 1828, these roads connected Asheville to the commercial and social worlds outside the mountains and were the basis of its economy. The roads also brought in individuals seeking the healthy air and retreat offered by the mountains, so that beginning as early as 1851, with the completion of the Greenville Plank Road, Asheville began developing a hospitality industry catering to affluent tourists. The railroad came into Buncombe County in the 1880s, turning Asheville into a second-home and vacation center for the wealthy, including the Vanderbilts, who built the nation's largest private residence, the Biltmore House. Luxury hotels began appearing, catering to wealthy tourists, many of whom came from Northern cities, bringing urban and regional tastes. The Grove Park Inn, built in 1913, is one of the most famous still in use today. Alongside the tourists coming for the social life connected to this extravagant clientele, were "health tourists" seeking

rehabilitation from diseases fueled by the heat and humidity in the flatter regions of the south. Tuberculosis, various "female maladies," and a generally weak constitution could all be cured by spending time in the mountains, and members of lower socio-economic classes could also find suitable temporary lodging or take day trips. Various churches and religious groups in the late 1800s also began establishing retreat centers where their members could go for revivals and



The Taste of Asheville banner at the Belle Chere festival in 2008. Notice the food being offered–lobster rolls, ice cream, pita wraps, gyros–not traditional Appalachian cooking! A BBQ stand is towards the end of the photo. Photo by the author.

spiritual nourishment.

The natural beauty of the mountains surrounding Asheville and the lack of large-scale industrial development were the primary attractions to the area. Although many of the visitors stayed within the confines of their resorts and retreats, many of them also hiked, explored, and in other ways enjoyed this natural environment. This lent an economic viability to preserving this environment, and kept the region's natural resources from being pillaged as they were in other parts of Southern Appalachia.

The Depression of the 1930s affected Asheville tremendously,

destroying the economic foundation of the city. The WPA during this time developed two lasting landmarks and tourist attractions—the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park—both of which maintained the area's reputation for its natural beauty. Even though there was a vibrant arts and crafts movement and an active attempt to revitalize the city through promoting native music and dance traditions (the Asheville Folk Festival and Shindig on the Green), Asheville fell into a decline that lasted into the late 1970s, My own memories of the city echoed those of novelist Thomas Wolfe, writing of his hometown in *Look Homeward, Angel.* Asheville was dismal and depressing, with decrepit buildings and little in the way of the usual hospitality amenities to offer tourists or residents.

A number of forces turned Asheville around so that by 2008 it boasted a population of 78,543 and now holds titles ranging from "Land of the Sky" (given to it in the late 1890s) to the "Boulder of the Southeast" and even the "Paris of the South." The more relevant of these forces includes settlement there in the 1970s of members of the "back-to-the-land" counter-culture generation; individuals who appreciated and wanted to participate in the long-held traditions surrounding music, dance, and crafts; and artists looking for inexpensive housing and friendly communities. This established what is often referred to within the area as a solid "hippy culture" that attracted more individuals interested in experimenting with other cultures, including food. An influx of retirees and second-home owners beginning in the mid-1990s have added to this mixture so that Asheville is now a vibrant cosmopolitan center blending an active involvement in the arts (elite, popular, and traditional), new lifestyles, international cultures, and socially-conscious living. This last translates into an appreciation for organic, community-based food production and consumption. Tourism is still the economic foundation—as suggested by the name of the hometown baseball team, the Asheville Tourists—but local residents are closely involved in shaping the tourism industry.

The contemporary Asheville foodscape directly reflects this historical and cultural background. The city's Farmers Market had always been a commercial hub for farmers selling local produce, but now the producers included Hispanic families selling salsa "mixes" (boxes of selected peppers, onions, garlic, and herbs) as well as "hippies" (the term given to any newcomer who seems to dress or act in a counter-culture manner) selling organic produce and homemade preserves or baked goods. Tailgate markets appear in every community, allow-

ing for smaller producers to find a market, while the produce stands historically run by long-time residents seem to be thriving. Festivals with food components, cooking classes, and new restaurants began appearing in the mid-1990s, and by 2004 Asheville boasted a vibrant restaurant scene offering a wide variety of styles and cuisines: international cuisine, fusion, vegetarian, and vegan. Some of these were up-dating iconic southern dishes, others emphasized locally grown produce and native wild foods. Slow food, an international organization based in Italy that promotes good food as the key to social justice

Menu from an Asheville barbecue place shows the mixture of tradition and innovation. Notice particularly the "jalapeno cheese grits." Photo by the author.

and environmental sustainability, thrives there, and chefs and food producers interested in fresh and local foods began flocking to the area. The Southern Food Alliance, an organization based in Oxford, Mississippi, held its annual meeting in Asheville in 2003 with a symposium entitled "Taste of the Mountains," and has sponsored food tours of the area. Wineries, farms, local food producers, and restaurants are now easily accessible via the Internet and listings in magazines and newspapers. A free publication, Asheville Eats, publicizes area restaurants.

This proliferation of food venues represents the kind of urban renewal that every city dreams of. According to newspaper and In-

ternet accounts, Asheville has turned into a "foodies' paradise." In what ways does this new identity shape the food being offered and its representation of Appalachian culture? Does a consensus over what constitutes good, regional food seem to be developing with iconic dishes, famed chefs, and popular venues? Also, what images and themes are being associated with the food that is now available? What connections, if any, does this food have with the regional culture of the surrounding environment?

I focus here on two sets of data for answering these questions—the local restaurant scene and an annual street festival (the Belle Chere) held in downtown Asheville every August.

There are currently 250 restaurants listed in Asheville proper; many more are in the surrounding area. The longer established restaurants include the fine dining restaurants of the resort hotels as well as the dining rooms of the more middle class hotels and business people's lunchrooms. The former offer mostly refined, continental fare or nouveau American cuisine. If Appalachian dishes are included, they tend to be "fancied up," to use the Appalachian expression, by using expensive ingredients, demanding culinary techniques, or highly trained chefs. The Grove Park Inn, for example, offers "NC Mountain Trout with Herb Beurre Blanc" and an appetizer of fried bean cakes. According to cookbook author, Mark Sohn, the Inn's patties were based on a regional tradition using left over pinto or soup beans, but updated by including a mixture of types of beans and garnishing the cakes with sour cream, chow chow, fox grapes, raisins, and chives (Sohn 20-21).

The more middle-class establishments tend to offer standard southern fare, such as fried chicken, Salisbury steak, mashed sweet potatoes (sometimes with a marshmallow topping), boiled white (Irish) potatoes, vegetables such as green beans, squash, corn, and okra cooked with pork fatback or made into casseroles. Okra and squash are often rolled in cornmeal and fried. Breads include cornbread, biscuits, and soft white breads, while desserts are often times pies, cakes, and cobblers. Sweet tea is the drink of choice, although concerns about sugar intake have caused a switch to including unsweetened tea as a choice. That these restaurants feature southern food is not surprising. Historically, many of the middle-class tourists coming to the mountains tended to be Southerners for whom southern dishes would have been a familiar and dependable food.

Asheville also has newer fine dining establishments with highly trained chefs self-consciously creating new dishes. Many of these uti-

lize locally grown ingredients and follow California cuisine in their emphasis on freshness and quality of ingredients in innovative preparations and recipes. These also offer remakes of southern favorites, for example, fried green tomato topped with fresh mozzarella and basil leaves or grits blended with blue cheese. These restaurants also

Author's mother, Peggy Bradford Long, at a Bed and Breakfast serving Southern-style food. Sweet desserts and sweet tea usually accompany meals. Photo by the author.

feature artisanal breads, cheeses, and wines from local producers.

Barbecue seems to be a relatively recent arrival to the mountains, being more common in the flatlands where there historically were larger populations of African-Americans. Many restaurants in Asheville, however, now include a pulled pork sandwich or ribs, and the city boasts several barbecue "joints." Along with pulled pork and ribs, these offer dishes often thought of as "soul food," such as collard greens, cole slaw, macaroni and cheese, pinto beans, green beans cooked with fatback, mashed sweet potatoes, fried okra, and corn bread. These are also mountain foods, however, since both traditions come out of

histories of poverty and an ethos of "making do." People of varying ethnic backgrounds run the venues, and the clientele includes local residents as well as numerous tourists, especially since barbecue has become an iconic food of the South.

Asheville hosts restaurants offering a wide variety of international cuisines. Many of these are presented in an authentic manner, possibly because Asheville residents tend to be well travelled as well as knowledgeable eaters. Fusion dishes combining ingredients or styles from different cultures are common, as are inexpensive, hole-in-the-wall Hispanic restaurants that cater to local migrant workers, offering excellent fare. This reflects the cosmopolitan character of the city and is in direct contrast to the more isolated and homogenous surrounding areas where the food tends to retain its historical character based on British and German pioneer foodways, relying heavily on pork, corn, and dairy products.

Vegetarian restaurants, or restaurants offering a vegetarian or vegan menu, are also popular. These reflect the contemporary ethos of the city and the current national trend of approaching eating as a political and ethical act. At least one of these offers vegan versions of mountain favorites, such as beans and cornbread, collard greens, biscuits and gravy, along with more exotic items, such as Korean barbecued tempeh. Non-vegetarian restaurants tend to emphasize organic and environmentally-friendly foods, such as grass-fed beef, raw milk cheeses, and homegrown and homemade jams and preserves.

This array of restaurants makes for wonderful eating and draws culinary tourists from throughout the nation. It does not seem, however, to be a celebration of Appalachian food so much as a celebration of food being created in a specific and unique area of Appalachia. The emphasis on local produce does not attempt to connect that produce with the cultural heritage of the area. In fact, that heritage seems to be forgotten so that neither the hillbilly stereotype nor the romanticized Elizabethan ancestor image is referenced in this celebration. This opens up the public identity of Appalachia to a redefining.

An example of an attempt at redefinition occurred in a conversation I overheard at one of the newer downtown restaurants in Asheville. While waiting for my own order, I overheard a waitress explain the menu to some customers, describing grits as "Appalachian polenta." Grits, ground hominy, are an iconic staple throughout the South, probably more common historically in the flatlands, than in the mountains. Grits in the Appalachian region are usually eaten for

breakfast as a side to salty country ham and eggs (fried or scrambled). Fried grits, slices of cold grits dredged in flour, fried and served with syrup, honey, or molasses, are a traditional way to use up leftovers.

Polenta is Italian. Consisting of cornmeal boiled in broth (or water or milk), it is served as a mush or allowed to solidify, then sliced and grilled or baked. Either form is used as a base for savory toppings and is a lunch or supper dish. It has recently been introduced into the American restaurant scene as well as experimental and exploratory recreational cooking.

In the waitperson's explanation, grits were being reframed from not only an object of touristic curiosity, but also an eating experience worthy of money and "fine dining." Translating them as Appalachian polenta suggests that Appalachian foods could not be understood and valued on their own terms. This suggests to me that there is occurring a cultural shift re-defining Appalachian food's identity from one tied to cultural history to one grounded in the natural resources of the region. It is this natural identity devoid of culture that is the basis of a new Appalachian cuisine.

Observations at the annual Belle Chere festival confirm this suspicion and suggest more insights. This free street festival began in 1979 and has grown to a three-day affair, closing off the downtown and drawing over 300,000 people. According to the festival's official website, it is "the brainstorm of a handful of downtown Asheville merchants and business people with the vision of revitalizing our downtown business district, which was largely abandoned as retail businesses and residents moved to the outskirts." Today, it offers free entertainment of national and local acts, all varieties of music and dance, art booths and craft sales, and children's activities. It has spread across at least eight downtown blocks, closing off streets to foot traffic only. Food is found throughout the festival. Much of the food is standard festival fare—snow cones, nuts, popcorn, ice cream, pretzels, and stalls selling tacos, hot dogs, and hamburgers—and vendors seem to be both commercial and non-profit community groups. Alcohol is allowed in designated areas. Two sections are set aside specifically for food. The "Taste of Asheville" section in the center of the festival and held on Pack Square, features local restaurants, while a local grocery store chain sponsors a children's section and includes samples of its own products.

It is more accurate to observe that the "Taste of Asheville" offered tastes of restaurants in Asheville, and that these restaurants represented the city's newer, cosmopolitan identity. Festival goers

could purchase food at these booths, and the area was presented as a marketing strategy to publicize these businesses. There was little if any referencing to the traditional Appalachian culture of the region. Even the barbecue sauces, which reflect southern heritage more than Appalachian, but at least are now a common food found in the region, were drawing upon international and other regional cuisines. Many of these restaurants had won awards in the culinary world, and highlighted their distinctiveness.

Outside of this section was a tent for The Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, a farm-to-table organization in Asheville, NC that promotes locally grown foods. One of its projects is the promotion of local wineries. There are some older ones, such as Biltmore wines that are being publicized as regional producers but some of the newer ones are using native fruits, such as blackberries, elderberries, and grape varieties, Muscadines and Scuppernongs. The Project supports a range of initiatives, but it is telling that wine was being featured at a festival that draws large numbers of tourists from outside the region. Wine historically has been associated in the US with European culinary sensibilities and upper classes. Moonshine, distilled corn liquor, is more traditional to the region, but is associated with the hillbilly imagery stereotyping Appalachian culture. It is generally not available since it is illegal, although it is possible to get a license to make it for personal medicinal use. While that lack of availability could make it highly valued, it is generally not considered a drink worthy of refined culinary tourists. Developing new wines using the native natural resources then fills the niche for local beverages in the new cuisine.

Observations and Implications

What can be considered a new Appalachian cuisine seems to be emerging out of this foodscape. Several themes characterize this cuisine. It draws from a variety of cultural resources—international, ethnic-American, as well as regional—mixing and blending those resources. It also focuses on natural foods—both from the wild (trout, mushrooms, berries) and from small farms. It emphasizes innovation and originality, treating cooking as an art and intentional self-expression. It also acknowledges cooking and eating as political acts and features foods representing a particular ethos valuing local-organic production.

I asked at the beginning of the paper where Appalachian cultural history fits into all this. Terroir might be the key. A great deal of discussion today focuses on Americans needing to reclaim the food

system from the industrialized agribusiness it has become. Scholars (e.g. Marion Nestle, Warren Belasco, and Debra Barndt), activists (such as Michael Moore and Slow Food), and popular authors (like Michael Pollen and Barbara Kingsolver) have brought these discussions into the public arena. Terroir is central to the debates. The argument goes as follows: if Americans can learn to discern taste of place in their foods, they will then demand that their food be grown locally, in humane, just, and environmentally sustainable conditions. This will also ease fears about food safety (such as e-coli breakouts) and food security (citizens will not be dependent on large corporate producers and distributors for healthy and reasonably-priced food).

New Appalachian cuisine is presented as being connected to a place in which Americans have always lived close to the land, with a barter economy outside the influences of the capitalist complex, and in pre- or anti-industrial lifestyles. Historically, these characteristics were seen unfavorably, as evidence of the backwardness or Otherness of the region. Today, they are ideals that all Americans should be striving for—a utopia, almost, of local, place-based food communities closely tied to the natural cycles of resources and seasons. In this way, culinary tourism has a created a public identification of Appalachia as a distinctive cultural region that is no longer "Other" to mainstream America, but a potential centering for a new American identity.

Referring to grits as Appalachian polenta, then, is more than a marketing description. It represents the locating of an American tradition of a healthy relationship between people and their food. Appalachia, then, is no longer a fringe area, marginal, but a region held up as a model for other regions—and proof that there were people here that were living properly all along. The development of culinary tourism in the Asheville area can be read as simply an attempt by the tourism, hospitality, and food service industries to expand their products and markets. However, attention to the cultural implications suggests that it could also represent a shift in Appalachian identity in

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From Sewing to Shopping: Signals of a Shifting Economy

By Anne Chesky

Set unusually close to a winding asphalt road, Mary Norris' cabin was built before modern roads, electricity, or running water were routed through the northwestern part of North Carolina. As I pulled my car up to her house, Mary[1] came out on her porch and waved to me in greeting. At 92 years of age, Mary lives alone, still has no indoor plumbing, and heats her home with a wood-burning stove. I had come today to see Mary and ask her about homesewing during the 1930s and '40s. With a gift of sweet rolls in hand, I walked into the cabin and we sat around the stove chatting. I took notes while Mary, uncomfortable with my video camera, told rambling stories of her family and youth. Her laugh, long and loud, punctuated every sentence. And at the end of my visit, though I had learned little about homesewing, Mary promised that if I visited again she would show me several feed sack dresses her mother had constructed in the early 1930s. In successive visits I never saw the dresses, always promised for "the next time," but I learned a great

1. I will refer to the women and men interviewed for this project by their first names throughout the paper as several of them share the same last name, Miller. Also, each woman introduced herself to me by her first name and asked me to continue to refer to her as such.

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Frame Photo: A pile of unfinished quilts at Margaret Miller's home. Photo by the author.

deal about Mary, her family and friends, and her neighborhood during a period of major economic transition in the United States and illustrated in Mary's home community of Meat Camp.

Meat Camp, located in Watauga County, North Carolina, is a community that operated primarily as a subsistence economy before the 1930s. The Depression affected Meat Camp, though not as harshly as other areas of the United States, or even of Watauga County, which had already transitioned to a mostly cash economy. The transitions occurring in the domestic textile arts—quilting and clothing construction—illustrate larger transitions occurring in the economy and in gender roles in the Meat Camp area from the early 1930s until the mid-1940s.

My first interaction with the people of Meat Camp came at the 5th Annual Elk Knob Headwaters Day at Elk Knob State Park on September 12, 2009. Here community members came to share a potluck lunch, enjoy music, demonstrate traditional crafts, and celebrate their history. I participated in Elk Knob Headwaters Day as a graduate student conducting research for a class—Appalachian Culture and Social Organization—at Appalachian State University. As a hobby weaver myself, I was particularly interested in the history of traditional textile arts in the community and how and why these arts transitioned from being necessities for survival to hobbies and artistic expressions. After conducting a number of oral histories with current and former residents of Meat Camp, it became apparent that it was during the childhoods and teenage years of my interviewees (who ranged in age from 71 to 91) that the domestic textile arts began to transition from necessity to hobby. There are many reasons for this change, some which fall only within the jurisdiction of Meat Camp, while others occur on a nationwide scale.

Economy and Gender in Meat Camp

The census records for Meat Camp from 1870 until 1930 give a general picture of how the region's economy changed every decade. More specific than past censuses, the 1870 and 1880 censuses record the occupations of Meat Camp residents. Most men reported their occupation as "farmer." Male occupations within the community also included one shoemaker, two teachers, one physician, several merchants, and one blacksmith. Most females with a recorded occupation were reported as "keeping house"—no men listed "keeping house" as their occupation. From

these records, I concluded that while residents primarily made their living from a subsistence farming economy, the beginnings of a cash economy were cropping up in Meat Camp. Though blacksmiths, shoemakers, and even stores which operated in a cash economy were present, many interviewees reported trading farm products for services from community members or for goods from the community store.

The 1920 and 1930 censuses identify dramatic changes in not only the Meat Camp community, but also in the way the census was conducted. "Keeping house" was no longer considered an occupation, and women were generally identified as having no occupation. Men were most often still identified as "farmers." The only instance in which women were identified as farmers was when they were considered the head of household because their husbands or fathers were deceased. As Patricia Beaver writes in her ethnography of rural communities in western North Carolina,

> Women's primary realm of responsibility can be viewed as the domestic or familial realm, while that of men, the extradomestic or public realm. For the rural family in western North Carolina, the domestic sphere traditionally included primary responsibility for the children and home, clothing, food purchases, storage and preparation of food, gardening, and a variety of related activities…. The male, extradomestic realm included cash crops, public work, and associations with other men that may be considered the public affairs of the community. The female, domestic realm was culturally seen as subordinate to the authority of the male, public realm. (110)

Based on the oral histories of members of the Meat Camp community, however, it is clear that women in this area, while still keeping up the affairs of the household, also worked the land beside their husbands, sons, and brothers as the economy became more industrialized. Beaver comments on this phenomenon in a section entitled, "Sex Roles and Industrialization":

> Industrialization of the labor force, though unevenly felt throughout the area, seems to have contributed to greater flexibility in sex-role definition. As men increasingly entered the public labor market, their families absorbed their work on the family farm. Their wives and children took responsibility for

> running the mill, plowing the fields, harvesting and marketing produce, clearing new ground, butchering livestock, felling trees and mending fences. (111)

All the women I interviewed for my project recalled working in various capacities on the farm even as children, sometimes taking care of the garden or chickens and other times helping with planting or harvests. Evelina Idol remembers that when she was a child and the crops were completed,

> …we would go to Tennessee to pick beans. My uncle, Dave Mains, would haul riders to the bean fields…. I enjoyed going and could pick 20 or more bushels of beans per day…. We would pick herbs in the summer, pick beans, and trap…. It seemed natural for us to get up very early and make our rounds, to check our traps for muskrats. Then, we would skin them and dry the hides. Wilcox Drug Company in Boone, North Carolina, would pay us so much for each hide, as well as the herbs, including catnip, beadwood leaves, life plant, and snake head.
>
> After school was out, our crops were planted and cared for, until harvest time. Daddy and the five children went to work the fields and Mama would stay home to work in the garden and fix our lunch. (Idol 2009c: 2)

A few reports during this time indicate that men and boys participated in traditional women's work, such as aiding in the creation of domestic textiles. Evelina, for instance, mentioned to me that her father quilted. At the time, this did not strike me as strange, but after realizing the gender roles at play in Meat Camp apparent through further interviews and census data, I called Evelina to ask her more questions about her father's role in the household production of quilts and clothing. She reported that her mother, Ola Mains, taught her father, Lloyd Miller, to quilt in the 1930s. In Meat Camp, males were not traditionally taught to quilt or sew by their mothers; though there are reports of boys learning to sew in school or helping their mothers with quilting or sewing in other parts Appalachia during this time period (Irwin 33). And while there are other records of men quilting out of necessity because their wives had died and they had no daughters, this was not a common practice, and even Lloyd Miller never quilted from

necessity. As Evelina said of her father, "He didn't need to do it. He just enjoyed it. Mother had to make them though to keep us warm in the winter" (Idol 2009b: 1).

During the 1920s, unlike in past decades, more Meat Camp residents began to find work outside the home. Shifts in the economic conditions in Meat Camp also had links to changing gender roles in the Meat Camp community. While it was generally male family members who were employed in the community as

A sampling of doilies and a pin cushion crocheted by Evelina Idol's father, Lloyd Miller, as gifts and decorations for their home. Photo by the author.

merchants, salesmen, carpenters, or day laborers, a few women in 1920s Meat Camp worked as servants in private homes and one woman reported working as a cook in a hotel. Despite the onset of the Depression in 1929, few changes in the occupations of men and women were documented in 1930s Meat Camp. Men were still largely reported as farmers and women's occupations were generally recorded as "none." The most notable changes in the 1930s census in relation to the Depression-era economy in Meat Camp include a woman, for the first time, being reported as a schoolteacher and several men, also for the first time, being reported as working in a factory or a mica mine. The census

records for 1940s Meat Camp will not be released from the National Archives until 2012, but the changes that occurred in occupations during this time will be especially important to recreating an accurate picture of the changing economy during the 1930s.

What can be determined from the available census records, however, tell a story about a community that had not yet embraced industrialization or capitalism, but was on the brink of change in the 1930s. Meat Camp was still largely a subsistence economy during the Depression, which to an extent shielded residents from the effects of the economic downturn. An article from the February 1933 Watauga Democrat, "Bartering Is Old Story to Mountains" reads,

> [m]oney is a rather scarce commodity in the hill provinces and farmers rely, usually on corn and wheat, eggs and chickens, hogs and cattle, and other products of the farm to bring them, by direct exchange, the other necessities of life. The crossroads store, which has flourished many a year with a minimum of money exchanged across the counter, is the object of the mountain farmer when he wants a pair of pants, shoes or something he cannot or does not, make for himself. He brings his hams, chickens, eggs or grain to the store and exchanges it for what he wants. If he fails to take up in trade what his products are worth, he gets a due bill, usually written on plain wrapping paper, saying that "John Jones is due" the balance. (8)

Though this article was written about Asheville, North Carolina, about a hundred miles down the mountain from Watauga County, the same types of bartering occurred in the township of Meat Camp. Asheville at this time was much more developed than Boone and this would have made the "hill provinces" surrounding Boone just as, if not more, reliant on a bartering economy in the early 1930s than those surrounding Asheville.

During World War II, however, many men were drafted into the war, many women worked towards the war efforts, and Meat Camp began its transition into a modern cash economy. Even as early as August of 1933 articles of barter became subject to sales tax. The Watauga Democrat reported that law makers in Raleigh had outlined a series of rules for bartering in stores. Store keepers were required to document "all second-hand or used articles or

repossessed articles on hand," and any items in the store after July 1, 1933, were liable "to the three percent sales tax if they are sold at retail and the wholesale rate if sold at wholesale" ("Articles of Barter…" 4). Adding sales tax to previously unregulated trade was only one of the ways that the capitalist economy slowly trickled into Meat Camp. By 1942, the Watauga Democrat reported that the "farms of Watauga County lack[ed] home-grown foods" and that the farmers of the county were "generally deficient in home production of such essentials as garden vegetables, milk, pork, poultry and eggs." The economic transition of the time can also be seen in the "significant changes observed in spending by rural families" ("Farms of Watauga County…" 5). The previously cited article in the Watauga Democrat also reported that though rural farm incomes were low, $1,664 annually, most of this income was cash. Less than one-third of the $1,664 "represented the value of non-cash income such as that represented by food and other goods produced at home or received as gift or pay and the value of occupancy of the farm house" ("Farms of Watauga County…" 2).

These changing economic conditions paralleled changing gender roles in Meat Camp in the 1930s and 1940s. More women entered the workforce while their husbands, brothers, or fathers were unemployed or at war. At the same time, the women in Meat Camp also continued to work in the home and were expected to produce clothing and quilts for their families until the late 1940s. Beaver concludes, in her chapter on sex roles, that,

> [t]he family's shifting economic viability in an industrializing larger society, the decreasing profitability of agriculture in the mountains, and the increasing cost, value, and tax base of rural land have all contributed to the decline of the family farm; these factors have thus worked to decrease the rural family's control over production and to increase the family's reliance on the public labor market. As men became wage earners, women's roles within the subsistence farming family became more flexible. (111-12)

The decline of the family farm and home production of textiles are intertwined with the rise of the cash economy in Meat Camp. To look at this economic phenomenon's effect on a local community, I chose one aspect of rural culture, the domestic textile

arts—the home sewing of clothing and quilts—and interviewed members of the Meat Camp community who were alive during the 1930s and 1940s about their experiences creating quilts and garments in the home. The oral histories I collected about the domestic textile arts in Meat Camp from the 1930s to the present clearly illustrate the economic and gender role transitions over the last eight decades.

Domestic Textile Arts in Meat Camp

Home Production and Reuse

At Elk Knob Headwaters Day, I began collecting oral histories. My first interviewees were Evelina Idol and her sister Geneva Roark, who had set up Evelina's quilting frame under a tent in the state park to demonstrate the "old-timey way of quilting" (Idol and Roark 1). The sisters grew up very near the state park and shared their memories of quilting as children with both their mother and father. Evelina, born in 1939, and Geneva, born in 1933, like the other women I went on to interview, have distinct memories of being children in the 1930s and 1940s. They discussed with me why quilting and homemade clothing were necessities when they were children, how their family acquired materials for these domestic duties, and when and why this changed.

Before the late 19th century, weaving to produce fabric was popular in Meat Camp and many interviewees recalled a relative with a loom who did weavings. When asked if she wove, Margaret Miller of Meat Camp told me,

> No, but they said my great aunt used to. I knew her, but I didn't ever see her do that. But they said she could shear a sheep and take the wool and spin it and make the yarn and loom it and make the fabric and then make the garment. Daddy used to always tell us about her working on the loom weaving stuff, but I didn't ever see her do that. She was my grandfather's sister. Her name was Francis Miller. (Miller 1)

Mary Norris of Meat Camp, born in 1918, remembered, "My grandmother had a spinning wheel and what all went with that, loom and all of that. I've got a coverlet here that my grandmother made. And she kept geese and she plucked them and every room in this house has a featherbed in it" (Norris 1).

Once the construction of railroads, paved roads for automobiles, and factories made ready-made fabric available inexpensively at community stores in the Meat Camp community, as well as in the county-seat of Boone and other surrounding towns, domestic production of woven fabric declined dramatically, and no interviewees recalled a relative or acquaintance who wove after the turn of the century. While a few women and men interviewed in Meat Camp studied weaving at Cove Creek High School in the 1950s and 1960s from a popular teacher, Mrs. Strother, these students only produced fabric as a hobby and never for any real need—personal or commercial (Jarrell 1). All six women I interviewed, however, recalled quilting from ready-made fabrics and fabric scraps as a domestic necessity.

Evelina began by telling me that when she was growing up in the 1940s "[quilting] was one of the first things that our mother taught us and we made our own quilts to keep us warm. That was the purpose of them. [They were] made out of scraps that we would have left over from clothes or whatever." Her sister, Geneva recalls, "the first quilt [my grandmother] ever gave me was made out of those little tobacco [pouches], where you pull the drawstring…They were all off-white so she dyed them colors, green and red, but she made a quilt out of them" (Idol and Roark 1). While some women created intricate patterns that are well known in present-day traditional quilting, quilts in Meat Camp were made for more practical purposes. When I asked about the patterns she was taught by her mother, Evelina replied, "Now, honey, we didn't have any fancy quilts like we've got displayed here. They would just, ever how big that square was, [Mother] would fit that into a pattern. She would not waste any material. She would have some small and some large." Geneva added, "We'd do patchwork. That was what we did best" (Idol and Roark 2). Though fabric was generally affordable, Meat Camp residents living in a subsistence economy during the Depression were careful to use all of the fabrics for which they had paid cash. Utilizing tobacco pouches or feed sacks for quilting or clothing fabrics was also popular so that fabrics would not have to be purchased.

When asked, all the women interviewed from the Meat Camp area reported using scraps and feed sack material for quilt construction. Before the 1840s all farm and food products were shipped in wooden barrels (Rhodes 123). By the turn of the 20th century, cotton sacks—much lighter, stackable, and thus

transportable—replaced barrels as food containers. Women soon after began utilizing these sacks for quilt construction and other fabric needs. When cotton's price dropped dramatically between 1914 and 1929, partially due to the popularity of synthetic fabrics

Evelina Idol showing a quilt that she and her sister, Geneva Roark, constructed over the last three years. Photo by the author.

for ready-made clothing construction, even more companies began using cotton for packaging. The first feed sacks were made from plain unbleached cotton from which women would have to remove the company's labels before using for clothing construction (Valentine 260). Once the feed and flour sack manufacturers realized how popular these sacks were becoming with women who used them for fabric, they began to manufacture sacks with colorful prints as early as 1925. The companies also made the labels easier to remove. By the late 1930s, creating the most desirable feed sack prints became a marketing strategy as women often bought flour, sugar, beans, rice, cornmeal, and even feed and fertilizer based on which patterns they favored (Lasansky 106).

Feed sacks themselves even became tradable and sellable products within subsistence and cash economies. Extra feed sacks could be sold back to the store where they were purchased. Peddlers often went town-to-town selling feed sacks to women who wished to pick from a wider variety of colors and prints. Feed sacks were even traded between women to get matching patterns for a larger project (Brackman 131). Evelina related a story to me about her childhood in the mid to late 1940s:

> Now this is interesting. And this was way back. It would have been in my early childhood. Instead of buying a lot of material to make our clothes, we farmed, so we would buy, we called it chop, or corn in cloth bags, feed bags, and we would get to go to the mill in Union Grove and us girls would get to go with my dad when he would get a supply of the chop for the cattle. These feed bags were print and we would pick maybe two or three of the same pattern because we knew that they would be washed up and then we could use that material and our mom would make us a dress out of it. So we would do that and just be thrilled. To get to go and then bring it back and know that when the chop would get gone we would get a dress made out of that and you know back then we were not ashamed of having a chop sack dress… A lot of other people around us had that so we didn't think anything about being poor. (Idol 2009a: 2)

Evelina's experiences, as she states, were similar to many girls in Meat Camp. While boys' and men's clothing was generally purchased ready-made from local stores or mail order catalogs—as the male ready-made industry was popular well before the women's—women's clothing was still generally constructed in the home until the 1950s in Meat Camp (Strasser 134; Norris 1). Much of this clothing was made from feed sacks and all of the women interviewed recalled owning clothing made from feed sacks.

Margaret Miller, born in 1922, has resided her entire life in Meat Camp in her family's home, now on the National Register of Historic Places. When I asked her where her family bought materials for the dresses her mother made for her and her sisters, Margaret replied,

> [w]e used to get feed bags some times. They printed them in pretty designs made especially for you to use and make your

> dress and you'd go to the store with your daddy to buy the feed and you'd pick out the kinds you like and the colors and patterns and the one you liked best for your dress. You usually needed to get two of the same kind so you'd have plenty enough because if you went back later you might not find it [the same pattern]. (Miller 3)

Margaret also remembered going with her father to a store in Sands, about a mile from their house, to buy the feed sacks. One time after returning from the store with her father and over the next few days, sewing a dress for herself, her younger sister insisted that she too wanted a dress exactly like Margaret's. Margaret told me, "I'd been too generous with mine and I had a hard time getting her one out of what was left, but she had one like it too" (Miller 3).

While some of the women reported going with their fathers to pick out which patterns they desired for their dresses, other girls simply had to trust their fathers to pick out patterns. Despite the feed sack manufacturers marketing to women, men's preferences for their daughters and wives clothing should have also been taken into account as men primarily did the shopping for animal feed. Ann Miller, born in 1926, also from the Meat Camp community, when asked if she picked out the feed sack prints with her father, recalled, "I don't think we ever did that. I think we just took whatever come. The young'uns would fuss about the sacks when we got them. One would want this one, and then the other one'd want it" (Miller and Braswell 1).

When I asked if she felt she was looked down upon because she wore feed sack dresses, Margaret replied, "No, I don't think so because the prints were made so you could use them. They were pretty prints and stuff. That's what they was for so I didn't ever think nothing about it. And everybody had them and everybody wore them sometime. We were glad to have one" (Miller 4). She continued, "One time my younger sister had this little dress made out of bags and she trimmed it with red braid and she wore it to church and the lady said she had such a pretty dress and she said, 'It's just an old feed sack'" (Miller 3).

Mary Norris's mother also made clothing for her daughter out of feed sacks, many of which Mary still has in her home today. Her mother died, however, when Mary was 13, and neighbors in Meat

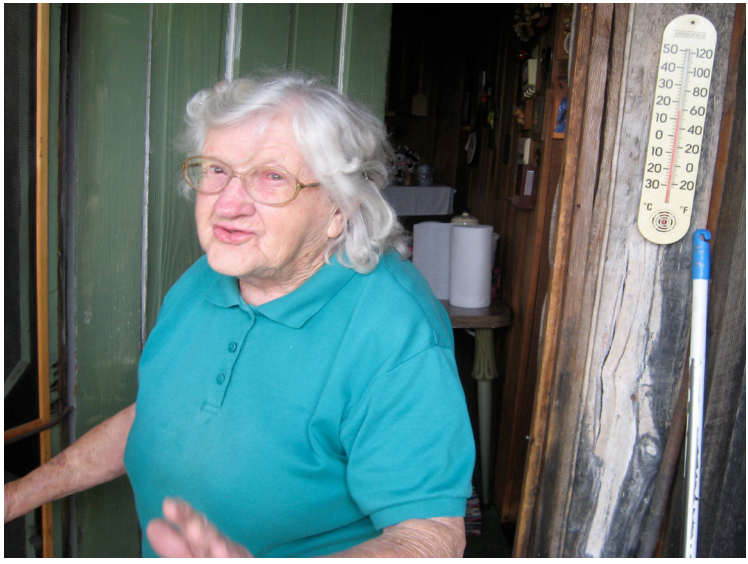
Camp made clothes for her and acted as surrogate mothers (Norris 1). Community networks were also a vital part of the subsistence economy. When times were hard, or crops failed, the subsistence economy was able to persist because of the connections between kin and neighbors. Even in today's cash economy these ties have persisted. Ann Miller reported that "times was hard back in the '20s, '30s, '40s. Didn't have much work around for anybody to do," but lots of people would help their neighbors for free during hard times. Ann told me,

> I sewed for just about everybody on Meat Camp…I just did it to help them out. I didn't charge anything for doing it. I sewed for Thelma Miller's girls. I sewed for all my nieces and Holly's girls and Ola's girls [Evelina and Geneva] and just anybody that needed something done. And Trudy's granddaughters. If they needed something done they'd bring it to me. (Miller and Braswell 6).

Geneva reported similar occurrences: "We made quilts growing up and if someone's house burned, and burned up all their stuff, my mama, she always had stacks and she always gave them to them" (Idol and Roark 2). And while Ann said that this neighborhood bond still exists in 21st century Meat Camp, it is not as strong as it used to be. She said, "The church helps a lot of people. Well, if you need something done, your neighbor will come in and help you if you ask them. A lot of menfolk have helped [my husband] with his building just in the last month or two" (Miller and Braswell 6). Cash, unlike goods or services, appear to be less likely to be shared among neighbors.

Though in many parts of the United States feed sacks were considered a way for women to provide for their families during the hard economic times of the Depression, the women of Meat Camp told me that they used feed sacks because they had always used scraps for quilting and making clothing. An article in the January 14, 1932, edition of the Watauga Democrat reported on women's sewing clubs reusing old clothing to make new garments. Miss Willie N. Hunter, a clothing specialist at North Carolina State College, was quoted as saying, "Old packing trunks and attics are being searched for out-of-date garments of good material which can be used again. Discarded garments are being reexamined for

future use" (7). This practice, however, was not a new phenomenon in Meat Camp. Fabric had always been a precious commodity—before, during, and after the Depression was no different, that is, until the traditional subsistence economy transitioned to the present day cash economy. The women of Meat Camp related to me that sometime in the 1950s and 1960s they began making fewer goods at home, finding work outside the home, and primarily purchasing items rather than sewing them. Parallel to this trend,



Mary Norris standing in the doorway of her home. Photo by the author.

beginning in the 1950s, paper bags cost much less than cotton. Though the feed sack industry fought against their demise, by the late 1960s most companies no longer used cotton sacks (Waldvogel 66).

Buying Fabrics for Home Production

Feed sack material is ever present in the clothing and quilts constructed during this time period. Fabrics, however, were also commonly purchased from stores in the area. Commercially produced fabric had become so affordable before the 1930s that the time it took to weave fabric was better spent working in the garden or collecting herbs to generate income to purchase fabrics

from the community stores. When I asked where her mother may have acquired fabric for the construction of quilts[2] and clothing, Evelina replied, "Well, there was a store down in the Sutherland community. It was called Stephens' store, and I think you could get fabric from there" (Idol 2009a: 2). Margaret said that her mother also shopped at Stephens' store. She told me, "There was a little country store down here we used to go to…At that little country store down there they had groceries and a little bit of everything, some clothes." Ann told me that she was able to copy patterns directly from the catalogs. She said, "The girls would get a big old catalog and they'd pick out what kind of dress they wanted and I'd make a pattern and that dress turned out just like that picture." For Ann's family, her skills as a seamstress were vital to saving money and still being fashionable. A 1937 article in the Watauga Democrat urges, "Rural women shall soon need to decide on clothing for spring and summer. Their decision should be directed by materials, designs, and colors that are favored by fashion" (McIver 3). Because Ann had so many children, seven that survived past their tenth birthday, she said, "you know I had to make everything. Couldn't buy" (Miller and Braswell 3).

But some people in Watauga County could afford to buy ready-made clothing from the town or country stores. The ready-made clothing industry for both men and women in Boone was already prevalent at the beginning of the 1930s as seen in ads sprinkled throughout the Watauga Democrat. Almost every issue of the paper during the 1930s includes an advertisement for local stores selling men's pants, boots, and hats and ladies' coats, dresses, and shoes. These same issues of the local newspaper, however, also include articles on home sewing for the "rural woman." One article in the January 28, 1932, issue of the Watauga Democrat reports that "equipment is needed for home sewing" and reads,

> Time and worry will be saved and better work done if the farm woman who makes her own clothes and most things for the family will collect a supply of working tools and arrange them in a convenient place. Time spent looking for scissors, thread and needles could be put to better use. ("Equipment is Needed…" 6)

2 While quilt tops were often pieced from small scraps, the linings required larger bolts of fabric. Also, I found that women often wanted a larger variety of colors and patterns than they could find in the scrap basket.

For farm women, time was a commodity. Home production allowed women to spend time instead of spending money. There had to be a strict balance between producing goods at home, which could be time consuming, and paying others to produce these goods because both cash and time were limited.

Ready-Made Clothing

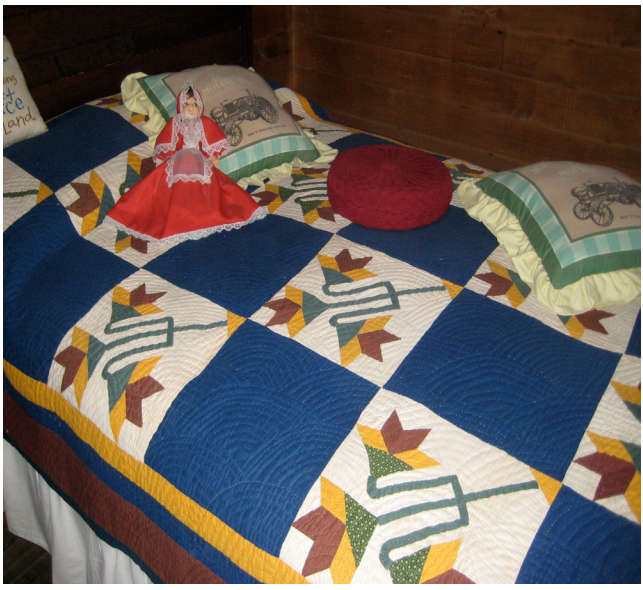
Rural electrification as early as 1935 provided American farm women with the electricity needed to escape some of the drudgery of farm life. Though 90 percent of American rural homes had power by the end of the 1940s, Evelina recalled that "we didn't get electricity 'til we were almost up out of high school" in the 1950s (Idol and Roark 2). Ann and her daughter Imogene had similar memories of electric power. Ann commented, "You girls were still doing your homework by lamps I know…, so it was probably the late 40s or early 50s when we got electricity" (Miller and Braswell 5). Despite both Evelina's and Ann's inability to remember the exact year of electrification, which appears to indicate that electricity did not have an initial dramatic impact upon their lives, during the early 1950s the transition from home production of textile goods made the transition from domestic necessity to hobby, and shopping began to trump sewing.

Margaret recalled one of her experiences buying a dress from the community store,

> I remember Mama sent me down to buy her a dress one time and she nursed the baby. And she told me to get her one that buttoned down the front. This little man [Grant Stephens], he was bald headed and I thought he was old. He was 52 and I was 17 or more, but anyway he was bald headed and he'd blush red back over his head. He showed me this dress and I'd say no and he show me another one and I'd say no and finally he just asked me cause I guess that was what everybody did those days is nurse their babies, so he finally just asked me, "Is she nursing a baby?" I said, "Yes," and then he got me a dress I could use. (Miller 1)

Based on Margaret's year of birth, 1922, I placed this story occurring around 1940. The 1930 Meat Camp census reports Grant Stephens' occupation as a merchant at a general store.

Margaret's recollection of buying a dress for her mother is an important memory in the recreation of the economic conditions of Meat Camp. Because Margaret's mother sent her older daughter to buy the dress while she was nursing a baby, and also based on Margaret's report that she had nine siblings, I came to the conclusion that the emergence of the ready-made industry in the area eased the burden on mothers trying to perform their domestic



The quilt on Mary Norris' bed was made by her aunt out of feed sack material. Photo by the author.

duties as well as care for their children. Margaret also remembered, "I'd wash the dishes or watch the baby…" because she could not make the tiny stitches required for quilting while her mother would, "quilt as fast as she could with what little free time she had" (Miller 2). Time was precious and so, while her mother continued to make clothing for her girls and quilt in her free time, she bought at least some clothing for herself and all of the clothes for her sons and husband from the store, usually either Belk's or Smithey's department store in Boone.

According to Evelina, ready-made blankets were also always available and affordable from the town and country stores, and her family began buying them as early as the mid-1940s. Ann told me that she began buying blankets from Belk's in the '50s and '60s. To explore when the transition from a subsistence economy to a cash

economy began to more fully occur in Meat Camp, I asked all the women I interviewed when and why they stopped making clothing for themselves and their children. Evelina answered that she probably began wearing store-bought clothing in high school in the early 1950s. During this time she also remembered taking Home Economics at Cove Creek High School and making garments as part of that class. She told me,

> We'd go to Mountain City, Tennessee, or we come in to Boone and buy material and then in high school I also took Home Ec, so I definitely I got to buy quite much material. I guess I took Home Ec probably two or three years, so I would get to pick that material out. It was store bought and so was the pattern. (Idol 2009a 2)

Similarly, Margaret responded that though she continued making dresses for herself and her sisters, it was mainly as a hobby and that it had been at least 40 years since she had made any garments. She also told me about when and why she thought her mother stopped making clothing for their family, "I doubt if she ever made any after the 40s…. I guess it was just easier [to buy clothes]" (Miller 2). Ann said that she stopped making all her family's clothing when she started working, not because she no longer had time to make clothing, but because she had more money. She said,

> The first work I ever did was for Bonnie Proffitt making catnip mice and filling boxes and things at Wilcox's Drug Company in Boone. I did that work at home. But then in the '60s I went to work at the Shadowline [lingerie manufacturer in Boone] and I worked there for 35 years. That's how I built my house. And sent the young'uns to school. (Miller and Braswell 3)

The Shadowline Lingerie Company was a major employer when it came to Boone in the 1960s. Ann told me that she worked at the sewing machines. She said, "I was supervisor for five years, but I didn't like that so I went back to sewing. I'd rather be doing the work than telling somebody else what to do" (Miller and Braswell 3). Evelina's husband and many other members of the Meat Camp community were employed by Shadowline until it closed in the 1990s. When I inquired about whether Ann was able to save scraps from Shadowline to use for piecing quilts, she replied, "Well, we'd

get some [scraps] sometimes, but they'd throw most of it away instead of letting you have it…. They'd rather throw stuff away than give it to their employees…the way all these companies do" (Miller and Braswell 4). Though Ann continues to sometimes sew outfits for herself and her daughters, when I asked if she still made her own patterns she replied,

> No, I don't make them now. When I could afford to buy things I bought them. There was a time when nobody couldn't buy nothing. We had to raise our own food and the only things we could buy from the grocery store were coffee and sugar and flour and we raised grown corn for meal and spices and things like that. (Miller and Braswell 4)

The little cash they had to buy things from the store, including fabrics, needles, and thread, came from her husband's work selling tobacco and working in his sawmill until Ann found a job outside the home and began bringing in cash that could be used to buy more and produce less in the mid- to late-1950s.

Conclusion

All the women I interviewed—Evelina Idol, Geneva Roark, Margaret Miller, Mary Norris, Ann Miller, and Imogene Braswell—told me they grew up in homes without indoor plumbing or electricity, and all now, with the exception of Mary Norris, live in "modern" homes with multiple bathrooms, bedrooms, and even flat-screen televisions. Margaret Miller still lives in her family's original home, which is now on the National Register, but has since added an indoor toilet, electric heat, and other modern conveniences. Mary also still lives in her family's historic home. Unlike the other women interviewed, however, she uses an outhouse and heats her home with a wood stove. While I was interviewing her, I helped a local man unload a truck-full of wood donated by the high school so that Mary could heat her home during the upcoming winter. She has no television or radio. She has since added electricity for lighting, but began the interview by telling me a story about how she was almost taken advantage of by a man claiming to be with the electric company. She told me that because her mother died when she was young, she never learned to sew and all her adult clothes are store bought. She no longer produces food on the 64 acres she still owns, rarely cooks

on her wood stove, and a neighbor drives her to town to shop for mostly prepackaged food once a week. Even, Mary, one of the more "subsistence" individuals left in Meat Camp, has made a full transition to the modern cash economy of the 21st century.

As local community and town stores closed and larger chain stores, like Belk's, Roses, and Walmart, began to overtake the economy from the 1970s on, most clothing was purchased and, even the fabrics used for hobby quilting or clothing construction were purchased from these corporate department stores. The community stores once prevalent throughout mountains communities have long since closed, and many are now merely memories of collapsed buildings. With an increasingly mobile population who found work off the farms and outside of Meat Camp, the subsistence economy that relied on these stores for barter and a few cash items, transitioned into a cash economy during the period from 1940 to 1960 that no longer needed stores nearby their homes for survival. Though Meat Camp was slower to embrace the cash economy than residents of more urban areas like Boone, where fewer residents produced their own food, it was not far behind in embracing the initial "easiness" that came with the ability to purchase ready-made clothing and blankets rather than spending hours constructing these items in the home from found materials.

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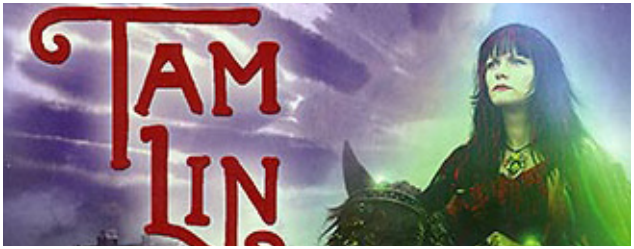

Defying Gender Roles and Challenging Stereotypes: British-Appalachian Ballads and Their Literary Adaptations

By Lillian Blomeley

Most women in ballads are subtle in their resistance to patriarchal social standards, if they are resistant at all. Many women are, in fact, victims. For example, the character of Peggy in the ballad "Pretty Peggy O" is subject to the whims of the soldier who is courting her and as a result is in danger because she refuses his advances. The titular character in "The Knoxville Girl" is murdered by her lover for no reason. The younger of the two sisters in "The Twa Sisters" is victimized by her jealous sibling who shares her love interest. However, some women in ballads, such as the heroine of the Scottish ballad "Tam Lin," known in most variants of the tale as Janet, are far from subtle in their defiance of her society's rules regarding the behavior of unmarried women: specifically, the rules governing their sexual conduct. The modern literary revisions of these four ballads — "Pretty Peggy O," "The Knoxville Girl," "The Twa Sisters," and "Tam Lin" — share many themes and characteristics, such as the melding of the past with the present world and ambiguous endings, but the most important similarity they have is developing their female characters beyond the often

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Frame Photo: Tam Lin*, by Pamela Dean.*

one-dimensional stereotypes depicted in the original.

The first novel in Sharyn McCrumb's Ballad series, *If Ever I Return, Pretty Peggy-O,* takes inspiration from several different ballads, including "Little Margaret," "The Knoxville Girl," and "Pretty Peggy O," from which the novel gains its title. The novel tells the story of a folk singer who moves to the small Appalachian town of Hamelin, Tennessee and finds herself the target of a killer who may be someone from her past. Margaret "Peggy" Muryan suspects that her ex-fiancé and singing partner Travis Perdue, presumed dead, might be stalking her when she receives a postcard containing the following lyric from a song they used to perform together: "IS LITTLE MARGARET IN THE HOUSE, OR IS SHE IN THE HALL?" (McCrumb 69). She understands it as a threat because she knows that the next lyric is: "Little Margaret's sleeping in her coal-black coffin, with her face turned to the wall" (70). The character of Little Margaret is a revenant, which is a folklore term referring to someone who dies and comes back to life (70). As Peggy points out to the sheriff of the town, "the point of the message is that Little Margaret is dead" (70). Peggy comes to believe that Travis is her own revenant, coming back to haunt and kill her.

One of the key themes of the story is that of the past coming back to haunt the present, a theme strongly reflected in the novel's structure. Overall, there are three different narratives occurring throughout the text, by way of alternating chapters. In fact, both this style and theme are found throughout the Ballad series; the modern plots are always influenced in some way or another by the events of the past storyline (Miller 62). In one of his essays on McCrumb's work, Danny L. Miller discusses her inspiration to write this way. McCrumb's choice is mainly based on the genre in which the Ballad series is partially set: Southern literature. McCrumb states, "Anybody who deals with Southern literature concludes that you can't make sense of anything without the past to provide context" (Miller 62). Appalachia, much like the South, is a region that continues to hold ties with the past and tradition, even in this modern world; the fictional town of Hamelin is no different. On writing about McCrumb's realistic view of Appalachians, critic Sharon A. Russell says this about the characters of Hamelin: "The people who live in Hamelin, Tennessee, are different because they have remained connected with their past, their history, but are not

reconciled with it" (62). This statement is especially relevant to the characters of Peggy-O and efficiently summarizes the main problem the people of Hamelin share.

The first and most frequent narrative is the one following the "present" storyline: a third-person omniscient point-of-view following Peggy, Sheriff Spencer Arrowood, and various other characters throughout the main plot. Meanwhile, the past is represented through another perspective provided by the letters Travis sent to Peggy during his time as a soldier fighting in the Vietnam War. Finally, the third narrative comes from the perspective of Peggy's stalker, someone clearly living in the present who is obsessed with the past—the Vietnam War, to be exact. This narrative is peculiar because while it is definitely from the point of view of the stalker, it does not keep the same perspective throughout, but rather will shift from first person to second and third, sometimes within the space of a few paragraphs. This instability gives us the impression that the revenant is so out of touch with reality that he cannot even control his own thoughts or keep a firm grip on his sense of self. The following quote, in which he stalks and kills Peggy's dog, is a fine example of this phenomenon:

> Nothing to be scared of. We have met the enemy, and they are us. And yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, 'cause I'm the meanest son of a bitch in the whole damned place.
> And I am stoned.
> The Objective is a few hundred yards in the distance. Breathing loud in the quiet. Unseeing, Move quiet, Point Man. Let the mosquitoes drown you out. Let the wind in the grass be louder than the rasp of steel easing from leather. Let the songs in your head be louder than the little voice that says "Kill." (80)

Passages like this suggest that the revenant has more than one personality, including that of the rogue soldier. This particular combination of perspectives adds greatly to the story as a whole: we are given a fairly well-rounded look into the minds and motives of the characters as well as the events that take place.

Peggy is certainly not the only character struggling to reconcile the past—a few of the other characters, including the sheriff, have their own Vietnam-related ghosts to battle, and the main subplot

involves a high school reunion that resurrects old emotions and troubles for many of the characters. However, Peggy's problems with the past are not only the most relevant to the main mystery, but also the strongest example of this particular theme, likely because the past takes on a more physical and dangerous form for her.

Peggy's revenant acts as a physical representation of two different periods of time melding together to form a conflicted and unstable whole. It becomes clear from reading the revenant's narrative that this is an unhinged individual. In the first section from his perspective, he is reading through an old Army manual on constructing weapons such as napalm and dubs the text "Hell's Cookbook" (37). The gleeful anticipation he displays when thinking of all the damage he could inflict is unsettling, as are the final lines of that chapter:

> A very informative little book. The possibilities were endless. Just the sort of homemade stuff the VC rigged up in Vietnam, and here were all the instructions sent to him in a neat little book, so that he could continue the war.
> Right here in the mountains of Tennessee. (38)

This character takes pride in his role of revenant. In fact, when describing himself he either portrays himself as a soldier or a vengeful spirit. In a later chapter, the revenant is observing Peggy from his vantage point in the woods outside her home, but is otherwise "absent from his mission," an action that is later described as "ghosting" (275). The term, according to the text, is one that was used by soldiers in Vietnam, but the supernatural context of the term is uncannily appropriate.

The most significant way this novel has departed from the source material of the ballads is in the way women are depicted and how their characters are developed. Peggy herself seems to be the spiritual descendant of a few different ballad women, particularly the titular character of "Pretty Peggy O" or as it is sometimes called, "Fennario." The story of this ballad correlates strongly with the plot of the novel: during the course of the present story, it is revealed that Peggy had broken off her engagement with Travis in order to pursue her singing career. Travis had joined the army after her rejection and fought in the Vietnam War, but reportedly died in action. Similarly, "Pretty Peggy O" tells the tale of a soldier who

falls in love with a girl named Peggy but is rejected because of his lack of fortune. The soldier swears vengeance should he survive the fighting ahead of him:

> If ever I return, Pretty Peggy O,
> If ever I return, Pretty Peggy O,
> If ever I return, the city I will burn down,
> And destroy all the ladies in the Ario. ("Pretty Peggy O" 17-20)

While Travis' letters to Peggy contain many sharply-worded phrases that sound like he is condemning her, ultimately his feelings towards her remain friendly, even affectionate. In his last letter, Travis is not anticipating his revenge on her but rather his death. It is this last letter, shown shortly before the story's climax, that shows us that he could not be Peggy's stalker, for he has already made peace with himself and their past. He writes:

> THE PEOPLE OVER HERE SAY THAT GHOSTS ARE PEOPLE WHO WENT TOO QUICK, BEFORE THEY GOT USED TO THE IDEA. I THINK I'M JUST WANDERING OFF, LIKE SOMEONE LEAVING A BIG SUNDAY AFTERNOON GARDEN PARTY. I'LL JUST KEEP WALKING, AND I'LL NEVER BE MISSED.
>
> IT'S OKAY IF YOU FORGET ME, PEG. SOMETIMES I EVEN FORGET MYSELF. (233)

The revenant, however, feels differently and takes on the role of the ballad soldier in this scenario. In the ballad, the fate of the soldier is left unknown, as are the ends of Peggy and her city and ladies, but in McCrumb's novel, Peggy's revenant kills a local teenage girl as a part of his message. This crime not only relates to "Pretty Peggy O," it also incorporates another far darker ballad into the plot: "The Knoxville Girl."

The ballads of British-Appalachian culture have not always been friendly towards women, but murder ballads have an especially enhanced theme of misogyny. Several of these ballads feature scenarios in which a woman is killed by a man, usually in a brutal manner, and the reason why is sometimes left unexplained. However, as Peggy points out to Spencer in the novel, the desire to cover up an accidental pregnancy is often a motivation for the

murderer:

> "Isn't it funny how in the American versions, they never say why he kills her," she mused. "She's pregnant, of course." Peggy had a faraway look, as if she had forgotten that he was there. "So many songs about that. 'Omie Wise.' 'Poor Ellen Smith'…So many murdered girls. All pregnant, all trusting." (191)

Such is the case with "The Knoxville Girl." This ballad is an American adaption of the British "Wexford Girl," which was based on the earlier classic "Oxford Girl." All three versions share the same basic storyline: young man takes his sweetheart out for a walk, only to inexplicably bludgeon her to death with a stick. He then throws her body into a nearby river and tries to cover up his crime, only to be caught and executed for it. The ballad usually ends with just an implied condemnation of the killer's actions, and only rarely does the reader find a version that delivers a straight-forward moral of "don't kill your girlfriend." The version used in the text has one of the "implied condemnation" endings, which could have acted as a form of encouragement for the revenant, who could easily have ignored the moral subtext and proceeded with the killing.

The novel features two characters based on the women from these two ballads, both of whom are given far more development in this literary adaptation than in their original ballads: the first being Peggy and the other being the "Knoxville Girl," young Rosemary Winstead. Very little is known about ballad Peggy, mainly because most variants of "Pretty Peggy O" are told solely in the perspective of the soldier courting and threatening her. There are a few variants that include a verse from Peggy's point of view wherein she gives her reason for rejecting her suitor, which happens to be lack of fortune. But while ballad Peggy is portrayed as a lady concerned solely with wealth and security, McCrumb's Peggy goes much deeper than that.

Peggy Muryan is definitely a product of her time: the 1960s corresponded with her youth, which made her more open to the folk music revival of that decade as well as the women's rights movement. The movement's emphasis on female independence is reflected in Peggy's choice to pursue a solo music career on her own rather than marrying and making music with a man she does not care for (not as much as he cares for her, anyway). As one of the novel's main characters, Peggy is obviously given her fair share

of perspective in the present narrative, which in turn gives the audience a chance to thoroughly observe and analyze her, as well as come to sympathize with her. She is not a one-note character, but rather a person with a layered personality and an unpredictable edge: she seems calm and quiet, yet sharp-witted; the story's climax reveals both strength and a boldness that surprises the reader.

The second ballad-inspired woman of this novel is actually fifteen year-old Rosemary Winstead or, as her murderer the revenant refers to her, "the Knoxville Girl," despite the fact that she is actually a citizen of Hamelin (275). Her ballad counterpart is portrayed as just an innocent young woman who happened to love the wrong man. Unfortunately, Rosemary herself is depicted similarly, although she does receive a little more characterization than that, starting with an actual name. The description given by her peers portrays Rosemary as a good, intelligent, but rather ordinary teenage girl (254). From what we know of her, she has committed no crime or done anything particularly wrong. However, she possesses one trait that both attracts the revenant to her and ultimately leads to her tragic end: she resembles a young Peggy Muryan. The revenant later admits that he noticed Rosemary's likeness to a picture of Peggy on an old album cover and figured that as long he is playing the part of Travis, he might as well have a Peggy of his own (299). Unfortunately for him, Rosemary does not sympathize with his desire for murderous revenge and so, to keep her from telling his secret, he kills her and dumps her body in the French Broad River in Knoxville, making another ballad connection:

> I took her by her golden curls
> And I drug her 'round and 'round
> Throwing her into the river
> That flows through Knoxville town.
> ("The Knoxville Girl" 17-20)

In relation to the plot, Rosemary's murder is undeniable proof for the other characters that the revenant is truly dangerous and that Peggy is in more trouble than anyone realized before. While given slightly more humanity, Rosemary is not truly her own character but a plot catalyst. She, like her many predecessors in the murder ballads, is simply a poor murdered girl to mourn and later only

remember in song. As Peggy says, "There's always a new dead girl to sing about. Always a dead girl" (191).

The ending reveals that the killer was a local boy named Pix-Kyle Weaver, who is obsessed with both murder and the Vietnam War and decides to stalk Peggy after discovering Travis' letters and MIA bracelet at a rummage sale (297-299). A few days after Rosemary's murder, Pix-Kyle decides to bring his reign of terror to an end by raping and murdering Peggy, only to be subdued after Peggy overpowers him with a gun. Soon the sheriff arrives to arrest him, but Peggy makes the decision to shoot and kill the boy even though he is no longer a threat to her. This action is the catalyst for the novel's morally ambiguous ending — Spencer is left with the option of arresting Peggy for murder or justifying the shooting by calling it self-defense. When Spencer tells Peggy that Pix-Kyle was just "a kid," she responds:

> "He was a vicious bastard, and a killer, and he broke into my house. Do you think a Tennessee jury will convict me of anything for shooting him? Me–a poor helpless woman?"
> "But it wasn't self-defense," he whispered. "You murdered him."
> Her smile was bitter. "Prove it, Sheriff." (303)

Spencer decides to call the shooting self-defense and spends his last scene dealing with the consequences of the evening, including having to tell Pix-Kyle's parents that their son is dead (309). Spencer is clearly disturbed by what has happened, which in turn disturbs us. We cannot simply decide that what Peggy did was right; we have to take into account not only Pix-Kyle's actions and Peggy's ordeal, but also factors such as the law, ethics, and the feelings of the murderer's parents, whose refrains of "Not my little boy…" haunt Spencer in the conclusion of the novel (309).

The ethically troubling ending of McCrumb's novel echoes the morally ambiguous endings common in traditional ballads. As questionable as the ending is, it is a reasonably accurate scenario of what would happen if the victimized gained the upper hand over their oppressors: in a situation that mirrors a typical British-Appalachian murder ballad, the traditional victim kills her would-be attacker. Out of the entire text, the conclusion best illustrates both the similarities and differences between the original tale and

the modern adaptation: while both share the same ambiguous tone, the novel's reversal of power makes the text more palatable for its contemporary audience. McCrumb ends Peggy-O in this manner for a reason. Like Peggy, McCrumb is also familiar with the victimization of women in murder ballads; in an interview with Charles Silet, she reveals that she wanted to write a story where the woman won, for a change: "I just thought it was time somebody shot back," she states (Jentsch and Miller 98). While this type of ending returns power to women of the ballads, it does not necessarily attempt to justify it. Readers are left to wrestle with the meaning of morality in this tale just as they are in another famous traditional ballad concerned not with a faithless lover but with fatal interactions between women, "Twa Sisters" or "Cruel Sister."

Patricia C. Wrede's short story "Cruel Sisters," based on the ballad "The Twa Sisters," also takes a traditional murder ballad and through adaptation not only changes the story but opens it up for a deep analysis of its morality. The basic plot for both stories involves a pair of sisters fighting over one man who favors the younger sister, which leads to the elder sister pushing the other into a river, causing her to drown. A passing musician then discovers the younger sister's body and decides to turn the girl's remains into either a harp or a fiddle, depending on the version. The musician then brings the corpse/instrument to the home of the girl's family, where the haunted instrument plays a song by itself in which the dead sister names her murderer. But while the ballad only tells the story of the murder and the aftermath, the adaptation offers background information on the sisters' rivalry that turns the younger sister's death from a simple crime of passion into the tragic yet inevitable result of many years of familial discord.

Meg, the overlooked middle sister of the titular siblings Anne and Eleanor, is the narrator of "Cruel Sisters." The first thing she does in her introduction is correct a misconception about her sisters: "The harper would have you believe that it was all for the love of sweet William that my sisters came to hate each other so, but that is not true. They were bitter rivals from the time we were very small" (Wrede 184). As Meg tells us, Anne and Eleanor had no love between them, preferring to torment and play "spiteful tricks" on each other (185). One incident in their past, however, is used to both exemplify their relationship and act as an omen

of what is soon to come: Eleanor spills ink on one of her dresses and tells the girls' tutor that Anne ruined her dress (186). Anne is whipped for this offense and in revenge she threatens to throw Eleanor's best dress in a briar patch (186). In order to get her dress back, Eleanor tricks Anne by claiming she will tell their tutor the truth, only to take it back once she regains the dress (187). Anne retaliates by pushing Eleanor into the briars, stating her reason as thus: "Now the things you told Master Crombie are true, after all, […] I have made them so" (187).

As in Pretty Peggy-O, the events of the past play a significant role in the present. The struggle between the sisters described in the previous paragraph is paralleled in two different places. First, in the circumstances of Eleanor's death, Anne, the only witness, describes it as an accidental drowning and claims that she (Anne) had struggled through the briars along the bank in a failed attempt to rescue her sister (193). Then, some time later, the court gathers to celebrate a feast when the nameless harper arrives with a harp made from Eleanor's bones (197). As with the ballad, Eleanor in harp form sings a song accusing Anne of murder; Anne's reaction to the song is to grab the harp and smash it (198). As the harper tells her that she has murdered her sister for a second time, Anne simply replies: "Then that much of what she sang is true, now" (199). If these scenes are any indication, Anne and Eleanor's relationship seems to be based on the old cliché, history repeats itself. They are doomed to reenact the same scenario over and over again until it ends in the destruction of them both.

Afterwards, Meg interrogates the harper as to his motives: when he states that he wanted to "find out the truth," Meg claims that Eleanor was a constant liar, especially when it came to Anne (200). Now, we have to call Eleanor's accusation into question. Whereas in the ballad there is no doubt that Anne's character was the murderer, in the adaptation there is no such certainty. Eleanor's reputation as a liar leaves her word untrustworthy and Anne never confesses to the crime nor does she deny Eleanor's words (201). Furthermore, the first-person style narrative is rarely unbiased, so even Meg is an unreliable narrator. So, we are left wondering what actually happened that day by the river. The traditional murder ballads are set up in a way that clearly delineates the victim and the criminal; by breaking this rule, Wrede forces us to analyze the sisters and their relationships with

each other in order to form an idea about what really happened to Eleanor.

Wrede's siblings benefit from the depth she gives them. By promoting both the sisters and their relationship beyond their role in the ballad as tools of the plot, Wrede makes them more sympathetic and complex. The first notable difference between the ballad and the adaptation is the fact that all three of the sisters have names, even if they only get one. Names are vital for creating well-rounded characters because humans tend to attach more value to a person or creature if they have been named; it personalizes the being involved and makes others perceive them as more worthwhile. The fact that the middle sister, Meg, gets a name at all is surprising, considering that she does not even exist in most variants of the tale. While Meg herself notes her absence in the song (184), in her notes Wrede states that her inspiration to make Meg the narrator came from hearing one of the rare versions of the ballad that mentions three sisters, although she adds that the third sister mysteriously disappears after the first stanza (232). This certainly seems to be the truth: in Francis James Child's collection of English and Scottish ballads, only one version of twenty-one mentions a third sister:

> There was a king of the north countree,
> Bow down, bow down, bow down
> There was a king of the north countree,
> And he had daughters one, two, three. ("The Twa Sisters" 1-4)

In the ballad, Anne and Eleanor's characters are usually distinguished by their age and coloring, which is supposed to reflect each sister's true nature: "One grew as fair as in the sun / So cold, dark, grew the elder one," referring to Eleanor and Anne, respectively ("The Cruel Sister" 3-4). The notion of using their complexions to define their characters is subverted by Wrede's story; Anne's darkness could be indicative of both her serious nature and how she is overshadowed by her youngest sister, but Eleanor's bright exterior seems like a sham concealing the liar inside.

While the ballads previously discussed portray women as having little or no power over their own lives, "The Twa Sisters" both supports and contradicts this statement. Although the murdered

sister has no power over her fate, her murderer is another story. Normally, a woman whose lover has abandoned her for her another would not be left with many options for remedying the situation, having been basically rendered powerless to change things, but the older sister in this story has found a way around that. She, while certainly committing a horrible crime, is exercising what power she has over both herself and her younger sibling to devastating effect. While this should not be celebrated as a feminist victory by any means, it is an example of a woman taking charge of her life in any way she can. The canon of British-Appalachian ballads is full of other stories like this one wherein an otherwise powerless woman manipulates a desired ending for herself: Lynn Wollstadt writes in her article, "Controlling Women: Reading Gender in the Ballads Scottish Women Sang," that ballad "narratives not only deal with a woman's lack of control over her own life, but they demonstrate by example ways of circumventing that lack" (296). Although a dead sibling is not what most would think of as a desired ending, the elder of the "Twa Sisters" makes what could have been a happy conclusion for herself with what skills she had, even if the skill in question was shoving her sister into a river.

The relationship between Anne and Eleanor is also represented differently in the two versions. Little is known of the ballad sister's relationship other than the fact that it all went to hell after their suitor came into their lives. In the adaptation, however, we see that Anne and Eleanor's relationship soured long before William arrived. It is implied that the main reason for their rivalry is that they have always been incapable of maintaining a friendly relationship. Eleanor in particular finds it amusing to goad Anne by reminding her of all the ways she falls short when compared to Eleanor, including their literal differences in height (185). However, the incident when younger Anne shoved Eleanor into the briars for lying to their tutor is the moment when the sisters became a collective time bomb, just waiting for an excuse to go off. The excuse in this case, obviously, is "sweet William." While we can question William's exact relevance to the plot, from analyzing Wrede's text, we can be certain that had he not been there, it would have been another suitor of Anne's to set things off. Eleanor, by all description, is the instigator of their most important fights, if not all of their arguments: she not only lies about Anne destroying her dress, she also made a conscious decision to hurt Anne by stealing William. Meg tells us so:

> I should have guessed what would happen. Gossip travels on the air in a king's hall; even in the school-room, Eleanor must have heard of Anne and William and their coming handfasting. Coming, but not yet concluded. Hating Anne as she did, as she had for so long, it was inevitable that she would try to spoil her happiness. (191)

Overall, both ballad and adaptation portray their female characters in a darker light than most. These sisters, the eldest in particular, belong with the other female antagonists of ballads —including characters like spouse-killing Frankie Silver and Mary Hamilton, who committed infanticide—all of whom are condemned as complete villains and serve as cautionary tales for their audiences. Characters like this, however, are necessary for well-rounded depictions of women in literature to be achieved; if a certain group is not represented to the full extent of its nature, positive and negative aspects included, then that group risks becoming stereotyped. Whether the stereotype is negative or positive, it still keeps characters belonging to that group acting more like plot devices instead of people. Anne and Eleanor, as morally ambiguous as they may be, contribute to the cause of further developing not only the women of British-Appalachian ballads, but literary women in general.

Unlike the ballads "Pretty Peggy-O" and "Cruel Sisters" were based on, "Tam Lin" has a distinctly anti-patriarchal theme. It acts as an example of the way original ballads resist patriarchy and model feminine agency. The basic plot of this ballad tells the story of Janet, an heiress who decides to visit the property her father has set aside for her despite the warning that the land is guarded by Tam Lin, a young man who is supposedly a member of the fairy court. According to legend, Tam Lin charges a toll of sorts to any female virgins who visit that property; they must give him "either their rings, or green mantles, / Or else their maidenhead" ("Tam Lin" 5-6). Not all versions of the ballad mention exactly what Janet gave Tam Lin in exchange for passage to her land, but her subsequent pregnancy in all of those variants make it clear that she gave him her virginity. We could interpret their encounter as Tam Lin forcing himself on Janet, were it not for signs that she had planned for such an encounter.

Many of the original "Tam Lin" variants include a stanza in which Janet dresses and styles her hair for her trip to her property. Several versions described her donning a green outfit and combing her blonde hair. These details may seem like mere aesthetic features, but they reveal pertinent things about Janet's character. Her hair color, for example, denotes her sexual status as a virgin: Martha P. Hixon writes in "Tam Lin, Fair Janet, and the Sexual Revolution," that blonde hair often represents virginity in ballads, which acts in contrast to the combing of her hair. In the context of a ballad, combing indicates "readiness for sexual activity" (Hixon 73). Janet's choice to wear the color green can be seen as a reflection not only on her character but on the events to come: while green is traditionally associated with bad luck and fairy magic in ballads, Hixon suggests the color may also represent sexual activity because it is often associated with nature and fertility (73). Describing Janet's appearance in this way may not mean anything right away to a modern audience. It is likely, however, that audiences a few hundred years ago were more knowledgeable of the symbolism used in this passage, so this stanza would be an immediate indication that they were dealing with an unusual heroine. In traditional tales, "passivity and docile endurance" were the preferred traits for female characters (Weigle 200), characteristics that Janet seems to lack.

Pamela Dean's novel adaptation of this ballad, Tam Lin, both underscores the original ballad's feminine agency and also updates the ballad so that it speaks today. Dean's novel is set in an American college campus in the early 1970s; all her characters feel the after-effects of both the sexual revolution and the women's liberation movement. Because of the time period in which this story is set, it is expected that the characters hold more progressive attitudes towards the matter of sexuality; Dean's Janet Carter does not disappoint in that regard. Like her predecessor in the ballad, she takes charge of her own sexual destiny not only through her choice of partners but also by taking advantage of modern forms of birth control. Whereas the ballad Janet was an unorthodox protagonist for her time and not very well developed, this Janet is quite a conventional heroine for both the period in which she is written and for contemporary audiences.

Along with taking control of her sexuality, Janet asserts her own agency regarding her reproductive choices. In a few variants

of the ballad when Janet's pregnancy becomes obvious, she is approached by one of her father's knights, who tells her that if she does not name her child's father, then all of the knights will "be blamed" ("Tam Lin" 43-46). Janet rather sassily tells him to keep quiet and that while she may choose any man for the father of her baby, she will not choose any of the knights: "Father my bairn on whom I will, / I'll father nane on thee" (47-50). By asserting herself in this regard, she is also accepting full responsibility for her condition, which is both brave and unusual considering her circumstances; Janet could have easily lied about how she became pregnant, claiming either seduction or rape, to take the blame off her shoulders. However, when she confesses the pregnancy to her father, Janet tells him that she alone will "bear the blame," going on to state that she would not trade her elfin lover for any of her father's knights, despite the fact that this kind of proclamation could set her up for many social difficulties, including accusations of both harlotry and insanity.

For Dean's Janet, pregnancy has a different stigma attached to it. The prospect of being an unmarried mother is not the worst problem she has; what she has to struggle with is the shame of getting pregnant when she should know better as an educated young woman. Dean writes in the novel's afterword that her inspiration to set her story in a college environment came from her reading the ballad and remembering how much she feared pregnancy as a young student because, to her, an accidental pregnancy would mean that she was ultimately stupid and worthless: "And suddenly it all reminded me of college, where the fear of getting pregnant collaborated with the conviction that you weren't nearly as smart as you'd thought you were, that you would never amount to anything practical even if all your professors thought you were a genius, and that the world was going to hell so fast that you'd be lucky to have a B.A. to show the devil when it got there" (460). Dean's Janet is in her last year of college when she becomes pregnant, which makes her planned out future suddenly unstable.

When Dean's Janet confesses her pregnancy to her parents, their reaction is overall more positive than ballad Janet's father, as well as more supportive of Janet's decisions regarding her future. Both parents make it clear that they will give their daughter any kind of support she needs regardless of the choice she makes, although they are obviously biased towards the option of keeping

the baby (442). The entire conversation revolves around the idea that women are capable of making their own decisions without outside influence. The most notable example of this is the parents' continual emphasis on Janet's choice, but there is another instance of this theme: when her mother suggests that she watch the baby while Janet attends graduate school, Janet initially expresses dismay at this idea and states that her mother should not want to be burdened with a grandchild when she still has two children living at home, only to be told by her father, "Your mother knows what she wants and always has" (442). However, novel Janet's father does abandon his "modern and enlightened attitudes" (441-42) and transforms into the traditional patriarch when he becomes obsessed with learning who impregnated his daughter (442). This connects back to the ballad's concerns over the sire of Janet's child, although the novel father is remarkably angrier about this mystery than the ballad's "meek and mild" patriarch ("Tam Lin" 52). It also relates to the idea of blame: Dean's father wishes to know the identity of the "young man" in question because he has decided that this mystery man is entirely at fault for Janet's predicament (441). Unlike her ballad counterpart, novel Janet does not directly claim responsibility for her condition, but by silently ignoring her father's inquiries and keeping the conversation focused on her and her decision, she makes the subtle statement that she alone is accountable for this situation.

When analyzing fiction from a feminist perspective, it is important to not only investigate the female character's agency but also question the effect that men have in a woman's story. Janet's agency has already been discussed in some detail, but there is still the matter of how much of her decisions were wholly her own. For example, it could be argued that Janet's decision to keep her pregnancy was strongly influenced by Tam Lin, who needed her to stay pregnant in order to save his life. Both the novel and most variants of the ballad show that Janet considered aborting her pregnancy through herbal methods, yet in all of these instances she is talked out of it by Tam Lin. But how much influence does he really hold over her?

Because of its necessary brevity, the ballad does not offer much detail regarding the motivations of its characters, so the audience is left to infer what they can from the lyrics. What can be inferred from the ballad is that after displaying such independence to her father regarding her pregnancy, Janet is pressured by Tam Lin

not to induce an abortion, but rather stay pregnant to save him. However, Janet has already proven that she is not a weak-willed person; rather, it would take an enormous amount of power to force her to do something she does not wish to do—she defied her father, after all, who would have been considered her lord and master in her time. Plus, it is not like she is picking the easy choice by choosing to save Tam Lin: the trial required to earn his freedom involves her embracing him as he transforms into a snake, a lion, and a red-hot iron, among other such pleasant things ("Tam Lin" 130-146). Janet would be far safer to take the abortive herb of her choice and go on her merry way. So, when interpreting Janet's decision in relation to her motives, the most likely conclusion we can come to is that she feels a genuine emotional attachment to Tam Lin. Janet seems to hold little regard for the idea of marrying simply to save her honor, but if she is in love with the father of her child, that apparently makes her willing to endure strenuous trials so that they may be together. So while it may seem like Tam Lin forced her to save his life, it was really Janet's choice in the end.

As for the novel, Janet has the power. While Hixon claims that Dean's version of Tam, Thomas Lane, intentionally impregnated Janet in order to manipulate her to save him, an examination of Dean's text seems to show that this could not be further from the truth (Hixon 77). For one thing, Janet, perhaps like her ballad predecessor, was the one to initiate the sexual encounter that led to her pregnancy. Also, while he and Janet are on their first date, Thomas makes a point of placing a time limit on their relationship with no explanation: fifty days, to be exact. Janet accepts this rule with only a little confusion, and they make love later that night. Later, though, as Janet discovers that she became pregnant from that same encounter and Thomas tells her the truth about him and that he will be sacrificed on Halloween, the 'fifty-days' rule suddenly becomes relevant. According to the text, Thomas made that proclamation on the third week of September, roughly fifty days before Halloween and his scheduled execution. This chronology implies that he put an expiration date on their relationship so that Janet would not expect anything more from him beyond that time. It does not seem sensible for Thomas to make Janet aware of that time frame unless he was planning to die. In the scene where he tells Janet the whole truth, Thomas also acknowledges that two of the men previously sacrificed had purposefully impregnated their lovers and expresses clear disdain

for their actions, claiming that they deserved to be killed: "Picking out nice sensitive intelligent neurotic types because it's easier to pull the wool over their eyes, and then cackling like some fucking Victorian villain and saying, ha-ha, you're pregnant so you have to do what I say. Every once in a while Medeous picks someone who deserves it" (Dean 430).

The sacrificed men before Thomas and their lovers also factor significantly into the way the past and present times of Tam Lin interweave. The betrayed women, Victoria Thompson and Margaret Roxburgh, both committed suicide rather than aid these men, mainly due to a lack of options in their times but possibly also as a final act of defiance in which they lambast their deceitful lovers. After their deaths, both women haunt the university. Victoria in particular becomes very active every Halloween, throwing textbooks out of the window of her old dorm room at around midnight. All through her years at the university, Janet is drawn to the stories of these two women, and when she ends up in a situation similar to theirs—pregnant by an elfin knight—she becomes more sympathetic to their choices. Janet even snaps at Thomas while he is explaining the difficult challenges she would face in order to win his freedom, "My God, no wonder those girls killed themselves" (436). Unlike Victoria and Margaret, however, Janet has the benefit of living in a time where she has more options than dying or living in shame. Both her better circumstances and her love for Thomas are Janet's motivations for enduring the trials necessary to free him, but after they defeat Medeous, it is suggested by Thomas that this act may also free Victoria and Margaret from their tormented hauntiing. Janet, representing the present, redeems the past.

Like the works previously discussed, Tam Lin ends on an ambiguous note. The story, however, is not amoral. Rather than a moral lesson, the security of the lovers' future is at stake. At the end of both versions of the tale, the Queen of Faeries puts a curse on Janet and Tam/Thomas after Janet succeeds in rescuing her lover. The ballad actually ends with the curse: the Queen proclaims that Janet shall die an "ill death" ("Tam Lin" 174), then tells Tam that if she had known of his betrayal, she would have "taen out they twa grey een,/And put in twa een o tree" ("Tam Lin" 179-80). Or to translate into modern English, she would have "turned him to a tree," as Queen Medeous puts it (450). The novel goes a little further than the curse; even as Janet and Thomas makes plans for their future, including an impending marriage, there is a threat

hanging over their heads. Before Medeous and her court leave the lovers to their victory, she tells them that she will be back in seven years' time and will take "two dearer," insinuating that she will take two of Janet and Thomas' family, the two of them and their child (450). With that threat, we are left to wonder if this is actually the end of Janet's adventures or only the beginning. Author Marta Weigle writes that, while generally marriage is considered a reward for both men and women in folktales, for a man it usually "comes at the end of his trials, while for the woman it often marks the beginning of her tests" (200). This testing means two different things for Janet: the fact that she won her future husband by enduring Medeous' tests could make her triumph a feminist subversion of this trope, but the implication that she may have greater dangers ahead of her also defines her as a traditional heroine. This definition of her character, then, is as murky as her future.

"Tam Lin" and the other ballads reflect their times. However, they also indicate a pre-feminist awareness that makes them relevant to modern audiences. Ballads have always been considered a source of "popular" entertainment, meaning that they were considered "entertainment of the people" (Miller 66). The themes and plots used in the ballads — such as unrequited love, supernatural happenings, and murder — tend to draw larger audiences than most of the literature commonly studied by academics (67). The general populace has always had the most influence over the formation and continuation of oral traditions, and balladry is no exception. It is important to adapt these tales and explore the different themes that can be found in them. Thus, the portrayal of gender and particularly how women are depicted matters because it preserves the tales for newer audiences and provides an opportunity to evaluate old values and forge new ones. Thus, these ballad revisions redefine women, granting them dignity, agency, and depth, a vision of womanhood commensurate with modern women's lives.

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