

CHICKEN AND DUMPLINGS: THE MOTIF
OF FOOD IN APPALACHIAN
LITERATURE

by

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ABSTRACT

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Food is an important element of literature. It can help to establish setting, conflicts, a hero and heroine, relationships with nature and other humans, comfort to readers as well as characters in fictional texts, class structure, and survival of a culture. For the reader, Appalachian literature invokes a sense of home, memories, and family. Appalachian food is also a catalyst for infamous stereotyping of the culture in the United States.

The names of Hawthorne and Thoreau represent New England; Twain and Faulkner represent the South; and authors like Robert Morgan, Silas House, and Charles Frazier represent Appalachia putting it on the literary map to become canonical and studied outside of its own region with the appeal of not only the pastoral setting, but also the quality of hero and the memories provided by the details in the preservation and preparation of the food.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the different aspects of the food motif frequently appearing in Appalachian literature: the struggle of the hero to grow and

hunt food as seen in novels such as *The Dollmaker*, *Cold Mountain*, *Gap Creek*, *The Kentuckians*, *A Parchment of Leaves*, and *Jayber Crow*, relationships surrounding the production or eating of food seen in the same novels, but also in memoirs such as *Growing Up Hard In Harlan County* and *Addie: A Memoir*, and stereotypes derived from certain types of Appalachian foods as illustrated not only in short stories from Chris Offut and Chris Holbrook, but also in articles in anthologies such as *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon*, *White Trash: Race and Class in America*, and *Food and Culture: A Reader*.

This dissertation will also address larger elements in relation to food and its production such as coal, timber, and moonshine production, as well as the importance of salt to an agrarian society, using texts such as *Salt: A World History*, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*, *The United States of Appalachia*, *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945*, and *Cornbread Nation 3: Foods of the Mountain South*. While researching, I gained momentum reading such texts as *Salt* like *Food In History*, *Kitchen Literacy*, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, and *Food Is Culture* because each validated what I was finding in the fictional texts. Furthermore, these authors had studied food, or elements of food production, in ways that allowed me to apply my chosen Appalachian texts to predetermined food theories such as the importance of salt and the adoration of sugar - the food binary that became thematic. Food is one of the most defining characteristics of Appalachian literature and as important as Appalachia's geography and history in placing a text in this region of America.

Another purpose of this dissertation is to insure that homage is given to the mountain people who have maintained the skills of food production and cooking as demonstrated in *Foodways*, *Smokehouse Ham*, *Spoon Bread*, & *Scuppernong Wine*, *The Foxfire Book of Appalachian Cookery*, and *Appalachian Home Cooking: History, Culture, and Recipes*. Chapter Eight expresses the homage in the form of a personal reflection of

stories and experiences I have gathered while researching. It explains the origin of my commitment to this topic and hopefully demonstrates the respect I have for my family history and the people of the Appalachians.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Food is symbolic of many things in literary history. With the inception of the realistic novel post Civil War, food has been a recurring theme representing specific regions and its people. Just as Sarah Orne Jewett created a scenic Maine, Mark Twain propagated a southern dialect, and Bret Harte accurately portrayed the Old West, Appalachian writers have used food and its production as the central theme in literature. Regardless of historical placement throughout the last four centuries, Appalachian texts tend to rely on the production of food in the mountain regions to symbolize success for the people in that region, various types of relationships, survival of a culture, and a class structure contributing to modern stereotyping of the people in this region.

The American government continues to impact impoverished countries all over the world. Is the impact always positive? With economic growth and expansion, change occurs at a great price to the environment including upheaval of its residents and loss of culture. We can use Appalachia as an example in our own country as to what policies and development might do to these countries. Appalachia is a region continuously plundered by “outsiders.” Therefore, a postcolonial critical evaluation seems relevant when analyzing this region’s texts.

Most texts used in this dissertation are written by those who have experienced this colonization of the Appalachians as those being “colonized.” Fortunately, however, it seems as though pockets in Appalachia have been able to avoid a complete colonization into the American dream. It is as though society, as those outside of the hills see it, does not exist in the confines of the region. As Ronald D. Eller states in his introduction to his

2008 text *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945*, “Appalachia endures as a paradox in American society ... because the region’s struggle with modernity reflects a deeper American failure to define progress in the first place” (3). Eller further explains, “We know Appalachia exists because we need it to exist in order to define what we are not. It is the ‘other America’ because the very idea of Appalachia convinces us of the righteousness of our own lives” (3).

This “other America” is not only a wealth of coal, timber, bourbon, and mountain people, it has produced a plethora of writers who are dedicated to preserving its culture. However, it appears that little literary criticism has included the region’s food. Albeit a helpful source for the methods of hog killing and a variety of other techniques, cookbooks like *Foxfire* and its predecessors typically only include recipes and anecdotes for mountain living. While essays have been written about food and its importance in society as a whole, it appears that little literary analysis exists to better understand food in the Appalachian culture. I hope to combine recipes, knowledge and skills of mountain living, and literary analysis to determine why food is a motif of the contemporary period. Whether the texts are based pre- or post-Civil War, the motif is the same. Food is important, in different aspects, to the mountain people both fictional and real.

Frequently appearing in twentieth century literature of the region is the struggle to grow and hunt food on one’s own land. Historically, growing and raising food is the reason mountain people rose in the morning. It was their job. Even if the husband worked outside the farm, it was the responsibility of the rest of the family to grow and raise the families’ food. The Civil War, World War I, the Depression, and World War II, came and went with the greatest effect being the loss of loved ones to war. The loss of a family member meant that another would be responsible for more work. This is represented in Charles Frasier’s *Cold Mountain*, as Ada struggles without knowledge and survival skills after the loss of her father. While many outside the eastern mountains of

the United States did not have enough food to eat during the Great Depression, those in the mountains thrived on traditional skills learned from previous generations as demonstrated in Silas House's novel *A Parchment of Leaves*.

Inside the Appalachian Mountains, food shortages seemed to be a rare issue. Outside of that community, in the cities and towns, food became less important, because families relied heavily on grocery stores for necessities. Looking for work outside of the mountains became prevalent beginning in the 1940s. By the 1960s, a large number of mountain people had migrated north to Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania seeking factory work. The migration to large cities may have solved the problem of work for many families, but it created another problem: having to rely on money for food. Harriet Arnow's *The Dollmaker* published in 1954 is an example of this new struggle. The protagonist has the skills passed down for many generations to be self-sustaining on her farm. Her idea of success is to no longer be a sharecropper, but to own her own land. The husband, being mechanically skilled, wants to apply his trade outside of the mountains. His success is tied to money. Other examples of this are found within the mountains in the coal mining and timber cutting operations. Men found work off the farm while women and the children worked producing food for the family.

A character's close relationship with food is a close relationship with the culture and region. The hero, male or female, has a special symbiotic relationship with nature if he or she is successful. Nature includes the geographical contributions of the region with its wild plants and herbs, the wild game for hunting, and the seasons themselves that provide the ritual or routine for planting, ripening, and consumption. The hero also has a special relationship with certain cultural objects such as cooking utensils, farm implements, and working animals. The hero's relationship with animals continues with the growing of animals for food products – hogs, sheep for mutton, and cows for milk products to name a few. And, finally, the hero has a relationship with society in which

food is an important element. Whether it is a church social, a funeral “lay-out” or a family reunion, food is the center of this society. Food is a source of communication in this region as well. Food may lift a barrier between two people or families, or it might be the only thing two people have in common.

Food is also a symbol of the survival of an Appalachian culture. Although food is not typically used for bartering in the majority of the region in the late twentieth century, it was certainly used as a source for trade well into the 1970s in some areas. The ability to grow many things in great abundance allowed farmers to trade for staples like sugar, salt, and coffee.

When the land cannot sustain the family in twentieth century Appalachian literature, and a character leaves the mountains in search of work, she does not leave behind the method of cooking learned as a child. Although procuring the food occurs in the grocery store instead of the smokehouse or garden, the method used to prepare the food is the same. When removed from the mountain culture, it is difficult for older women to adjust when they have been the provider and responsible for growing food for the family. The food and the land are closely knitted and are the foundation of the Appalachian culture.

In the mountains, class structure was based on land ownership. Some families relied upon renting their land making it difficult to “get ahead,” but even so, the families were self-reliant with food for their own use. Outside of the mountains, food became a signifier of class distinction. In literature, food is used to display class and culture. Class structure within the mountains is according to the amount of land a family has in order to produce food. Families in the bottom lands or valleys typically had better crops due to the richer soil deposits. Families on the mountains had less topsoil and grazing land. Therefore, those in the valleys or “hollers” held a higher rank in social classes. Class becomes an even bigger barrier when the characters are removed from their own culture.

While families living on and at the bottom of mountains shared the same tastes and grew the same types of food, the mountaineer's tastes are considered peculiar to those outside of the region. For instance, animals considered vermin in most parts of the country may be staples on the table in some mountain homes.

The United States has its own food culture, but within that culture exist the various sub-cultures including that of the Appalachian region or, more specifically, mountain people. First, the Appalachian region must be defined. According to the United States Geological Survey, the Appalachian Mountains begin in northern Alabama and reach as far north as Newfoundland for a distance of approximately 1,500 miles. The range varies from 100 to 300 miles wide. The highest elevation (6,684 feet) is located in North Carolina ("Appalachian Mountains"). The Appalachian states of concern for this dissertation are South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. These states also all contain coal deposits. Gaining relevance during the literary period known as "Realism" post Civil War, these states were infamously divided by differing morals within families. With the upswing of the industrial revolution occurring shortly after the Civil War, the coal fields in Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia became a setting of Appalachian literature in the twentieth century. Farming, logging, and coal mining were the three main careers of the mountain man. Those who wanted more than these trades had to offer were forced to leave the mountains.

Those living in the mountainous coal filled regions became known as hillbillies, a group stereotyped as poor and uneducated in popular culture. These people were mostly descended from Scotland, Ireland, and England. Many Irish and Scottish arrived during the American Revolution to support the colonists, but even prior to that historical event, many "orphans, debtors and criminals" came to the New World as indentured servants to the Southern plantation owner. Among them were good men and women who could

simply not pay their debt in England. Those who did not die on the plantation or escape to the seas to become pirates, sometimes rose to be plantation owners or ambled toward the interior of the continent (Caudill 5-6).

Slowly, in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth, these backwoodsmen increased in number. Steadily, newcomers pushed in from the coast regions and the birth rate must have been ... prodigious. Thus by 1750 or 1775 there was thoroughly established in the fringes of the Southern Appalachian chain the seed stock of the "generations" whose descendants have since spread throughout the entire mountain range, along every winding creek bed and up every hidden valley. The family names found in eastern Kentucky today are heard over the entire region of the Southern mountains. They bespeak a peasant and yeoman ancestry who ... came from England itself and from Scotland and Ireland. (Caudill 6-7)

Among the names Caudill lists, two belong to my direct ancestors: Begley and Sizemore. These are the men and women who became the earliest "Southern mountaineers," and my concern for this dissertation (Caudill 6).

One significant stereotype of the mountaineer is the food they consume. Rarely is the mention of poke sallet greens ever mentioned outside the confines of the Appalachians. Few convenience stores in the United States outside of the Appalachian region sell pigs' feet from a jar on the counter, next to pickled boloney (or bologna) and/or pickled eggs. Squirrel, possum, raccoon, and rabbit are considered common fare on the hillbilly tables throughout the twentieth century, but these and other examples have created a stigma of the hillbilly in the United States.

This lifestyle is a cycle perpetuated by the hard work required in a mountain home. Appalachian literature portrays these relationships and this difficult lifestyle as

heroic. The character in the mountain family who is strong backed, silent, and in tune with the land is the true hero. Texts such as *Gap Creek*, *The Dollmaker*, *Cold Mountain*, and *A Parchment of Leaves*, to name a few, contain these heroic characters who know how to survive in the mountains. Food is an unchanging element in mountain literature. Whether the text describes the earliest beginning of Kentucky or the late twentieth century coal mining political wars, there seems to be one constant in many Appalachian texts ... food. Why is food still an important quality in modern Appalachian literature? We know that food is a means of survival for any culture, but why is the production of food so important in establishing a hero in Appalachian literature?

Perhaps the foundation of the State of Kentucky is symbolic of a culture based on food. Janice Holt Giles in her novel *The Kentuckians* explains, "Seemed like by 1774, the year of Dunmore's War, there was a wild craze in everybody to go to Kentucky ... The Virginia land law said any man settling in the country and building himself a cabin and raising a crop of corn was entitled to four hundred acres of land" (Giles 6). Planting that first crop on his own land established future generations of Kentuckians.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the different aspects of the food motif frequently appearing in Appalachian literature: the struggle of the hero to grow and hunt food as seen in novels such as *The Dollmaker*, *Cold Mountain*, *Gap Creek*, *The Kentuckians*, *A Parchment of Leaves*, and *Jayber Crow*; relationships surrounding the production or eating of food seen in the same novels, but also in memoirs such as *Growing Up Hard In Harlan County* and *Addie: A Memoir*; and stereotypes derived from certain types of Appalachian foods as illustrated not only in short stories from Chris Offut and Chris Holbrook, but also in articles in anthologies such as *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon*, *White Trash: Race and Class in America*, and *Food and Culture: A Reader*.

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CHAPTER 2

GENDER ROLES

2.1 The Appalachian Hero

In no other American literature is the hero judged on his ability to tend land, raise animals, and produce food. The American hero changes from literary period to literary period. After the Civil War, romance was a thing of the past. There was no time for romance - much like colonial and revolutionary literature. During the modern period the hero became disgruntled with government and the American dream. The hero became disillusioned. This hero is not necessarily likeable, but he has skills and is righteous. This hero is typically on a quest to right a wrong and serve justice. In the contemporary period, he may not have a family. In this case food may be unnecessary to the plot and development of the character, but when the outside world rarely intervenes and survival of the hero is a direct relation to the production of the land, the hero, regardless of literary period, is the same. Single, or with family, the mountain hero is linked to the mountain for better or worse. With that love/hate relationship is the satisfaction of having enough to eat. When that need is not met for the entire family, little else matters much to the mountain hero.

In his 2004 book *Food Is Culture*, Massimo Montanari states, "The fact is that the domestication of plants and the taming of animals in some way gives man the power to make himself the ruler of the natural world, to proclaim himself exempt from the relationship of total dependency in which he had always lived ..." (Montanari 4). The preparation of food separates man from animals. Many food items do not exist in nature, but man creates them from plants or animals. Man is the only one who knows how to

make bread for instance. Because of this, "Bread therefore symbolizes man's exit from the animal kingdom and the establishment of 'civilization,'" states Montanari (6).

Among Appalachian people, food and the preparation of food are representative of the place and the roles of men and women in this place. These people take pride in growing and preparing quality food, because skill is required to be successful. Previously, and in some places still today, this success is needed to provide for a large family. Without the knowledge and skills to grow or raise food, the family would starve. Therefore, both men and women are heroes in their homeland when they are successful at providing for this large family. This heroism in the Appalachian Mountains dates back to the early Cherokee in the region. White settlers who arrived in Appalachia were typically from the cities in England, Scotland, and Ireland. They knew nothing about hunting wild game and struggling to provide for their families in economically poor areas in these cities. Many knew absolutely nothing about agriculture. Many of the skills and ability to live in a harsh environment were derived from co-existing with the Cherokee. The ability to live in the wilderness made them almost as physically tough as any Native American.

The white backwoodsman had learned, perhaps from the Cherokees, how to build cabins, and had improved the structure by the addition of a crude chimney. His "old woman" could endure hardships and privation as well as the Indian squaw, and was far more fruitful. Having never been exposed to the delights of civilization, she was willing to follow her husband where ever wanderlust and a passion for untrammled freedom might take him. And the mountaineer needed few implements and skills to live by kingly standards (to him) anywhere in the Appalachians, or in the rolling meadowlands beyond. (Caudill 8)

Thus, the mountain family flourished as they learned how to clear the valleys to plant corn, squash, potatoes, beans, and tobacco. With the sale of skins and other products provided by the land – eventually including coal and timber, the mountaineer lived on the geographic contributions of the area. However, wasteful agricultural methods that had been resorted to in the New England colonies beginning in the mid-seventeenth century due to abundant land were also resorted to by the Indians who rarely planted the same land twice due to their nomadic lifestyle. This does not mean that the colonists were not good farmers. They were, but were also spoiled with the new abundance of land. Therefore, no one really knew how to develop a productive long-lasting relationship with the land. But the white men who moved into the Cumberland Plateau frontier from the New England area were able to survive on the antiquated farming techniques that they continued to use and natural game of the area because of the abundance. These men who forged into the Cumberland region from the cities of England, Scotland, and Ireland were the precursors of a new Appalachian culture. By cultivating the skills learned from the Cherokee and testing them in the mountainous wilderness, these new American heroes established a lifestyle in a land abundant with game that is still strong in the Appalachians today.

In classic literature, heroes are distinguished by completing romantic quests like long ocean voyages, courting females, and finding a whale. In twentieth century American literature, a hero may be on a quest to battle his addiction or a war hero who returns to face citizens who do not respect him. In twentieth century Appalachian literature, heroes may complete quests, but the plot and setting revolve around the land and the food it can provide. The food itself is an important attribute to the setting and personality of the characters. The mountaineer is judged by the home he creates for his family, his hunting skills, and the way he treats his animals and his woman. As large families settled the Appalachians, a distinct hero was created – the mountaineer who

worked the land. As previously stated, the man living in the fertile valley had an easier life than the man living on the thin, mountain topsoil. However, both were judged by his ability to provide food for his family.

Historically, the man's role was to provide, and the woman's role was to prepare food and nurture her husband and children. If needed, the woman could help the man tend the crops, but mostly the woman had many other tasks to complete while the man worked in the fields. Man is also a hunter, while woman is a gatherer. Sometimes these lines were crossed for various reasons, but, as throughout history, the roles are commonplace. Possibly these roles are a result in habits of men and women. In his 2005 text *Appalachian Home Cooking: History, Culture, and Recipes* Mark Sohn states, "The diets of men, who continued to travel and hunt for game, remained high in meats, nuts, and wild greens" (13-14). Women, who were supposed to tend the crops, "consumed greater quantities of starchy foods such as corn," according to Sohn (13-14). Harry Caudill states, "Corn and meat were the staples – and the two were certainly of equal rank" (Caudill 23). Symbolically, these two staples represent the historical roles of woman and man. Both were equally important in the survival of the Appalachian culture, but corn must be planted and nurtured much like a homestead, while meat must be hunted or slaughtered. The role of corn was vast, because it could be pounded into nutritious bread, made into hominy, or many other edible uses. The man's role was to tend the fields, crops, and animals, while the woman would help with harvesting and preparing. Success of the family, although depending upon both genders, relied more heavily on the man. Without his ability to prepare the fields correctly for planting, there was no harvesting for the woman to do. The man's role also included building a home for his family and furnishing it. The woman's role was to make that home warm, inviting, and comfortable for family, friends, and others who may pass by in need. Men were, and to an extent still are, judged on the overall successful existence of their families.

Janice Holt Giles's 1953 historical novel about the early days of Kentucky, *The Kentuckians*, provides an example of hero and villain. Judd, the antagonist for the protagonist David, treats his wife as poorly as he treats his animals. Early in the novel, the reader is introduced to Judd, a secondary character who disappears. Initially, the reader might think Judd is briefly juxtaposed to David to show the protagonist's heroic qualities. While drunk around a fire with several men one night, Judd slits the throat of his own pet wolf because it annoys him, and then proceeds to strip the skin loose from the meat to cause the wolf extreme discomfort. David, the hero, kills the animal to put it out of its misery and offends Judd. Judd tries to attack David, but he is too fast and sends Judd, sprawling, into the fire. Later, David falls in love with a woman who ironically is Judd's wife, sold into marriage by her father. Judd's treatment of his woman differs little from the treatment of his pet wolf and his work animals. Later David comments about Judd, "Nobody denied he was a good man in the woods, better than most. He was a dead shot and he could trail good as a redskin. He always came in from hunting with a full load. And he was stout and could turn his hand to any needed thing. He was mean to his animal. He was mean to Bethia" (Giles 115). David maintains his distance from Judd's wife Bethia, until he learns that she has been left alone on Judd's land claim with rampaging Indians all around. David is furious and travels to their home to save her. He judges, "It wasn't much of a place. He hadn't cleared more than five acres and it looked like he hadn't even bothered to make rows for his corn ... just scattered it helter-skelter, and he had a skimpy stand at that" (Giles 135). For the house, "It appeared he'd just tossed a bunch of saplings together and laid some branches across for a roof, without tying them down" (Giles 135). Because of these things, David judges Judd to be a bad husband for Bethia. He does not build and furnish a solid home for his wife. David passes judgment because he feels Judd does not properly provide for the woman David loves. Whether Judd is harshly judged by David because of his love of Bethia or not,

according to Appalachian tradition, Judd is the antithesis to David. David is the symbol of a true mountain hero.

Typical characteristics of a male Appalachian hero are: farmer, hunter, soft spoken, spiritual, honest, strong, and knowledgeable of maintaining a relationship with the land. Single men can be heroes, but often find it difficult in the eyes of the town women who want all single men and single women to be married. Many Appalachian texts show the relationship of a single man or woman who must cross over into the roles of the opposite gender to survive. Wendell Berry's 2000 novel *Jayber Crow* displays a variety of heroic men including the title character. Jayber is the town barber in Port William where he was raised by an aunt and uncle. In a small mountain community in which "income varied according to weather and stages of farm work, and state of local economy," it is difficult to be a barber and single (Berry 122). It is even necessary for the single man to tend a garden to make a sustainable living. Thankfully, Jayber's aunt had taught him how to garden as a child, and with property located on a river, he is doubly blessed. Jayber's garden and the contributions from the river provided him an enviable life even though he does not have a family. His lack of family places him in a different class – "And so, in a society that was in some ways classless, I was in a class by myself" (Berry 123).

Other bachelors are not quite as adept as Jayber in caring for themselves. Some men feel it is beneath them to complete womanly chores such as cooking. "My mama still had to pack meals to my bachelor uncle over on Redbud, as he would have died and split hell wide open before putting a skillet on the stove," says Vine in Silas House's novel *A Parchment of Leaves* (54).

A more typical example of a male Appalachian hero is also a character in Berry's novel. Athey Keith is a farmer who uses his land conservatively. He recognizes that without protecting the land and overusing it, it will not produce for his family in the future.

Athey feels, "The farm, so to speak, desired all of its lives to flourish" (Berry 335). Athey feels there is a mutual respect between the land and him. The land is a motherly figure who wants her children to grow and obtain nourishment from her. If not cultivated properly, however, the relationship will end. Furthermore, the older generation of farmers distrusted debt having survived two world wars and the Great Depression; therefore, they only grew what they could afford to grow. However, new generations believe in borrowing money for farming, which leads to the downfall of many farms, not only in the Appalachians, but across the country. Athey Keith's son-in-law is an anti-hero in this respect. He is given land to farm to provide for his family, but he does not appreciate the relationship that has been established between Athey and the land previously. He overextends himself and the land.

This hero and anti-hero relationship is seemingly about the differences between two men, but it is really symbolic of the differences in generations, and ultimately, what has led to the demise of big family farms in parts of the Appalachian Mountains. Many farmers like Athey's son-in-law overused the land in the twentieth century while eliminating practices of crop rotation and other farming techniques learned in previous generations. Forests were reduced during the world wars for turpentine and other products needed for the war efforts. Coal mining is another misuse of the Appalachian land that began at the turn of the twentieth century. Coal companies from outside the region used the mountaineer and his land to make money. When the coal supplies were empty, companies moved to other locations leaving the mountaineer and his land depleted. New methods of mining in the late twentieth century, like strip mining, essentially continued the destruction. Within the last ten years, mountaintop removal has become prevalent in Eastern Kentucky. Developers want the land to be flat for housing. It makes building easier and more houses can be developed in a smaller space. Between raping the land of its timber and coal and removing the mountaintops for

development, the generational failure began with this relationship based on disrespect for previous generations like Athey Keith and his son-in-law.

Even though a man should be successful providing for his family to be heroic, it is not always the success that makes him a hero. It might be the struggle he is willing to go through to put food on the table. Robert Morgan's novel *Gap Creek* is a wonderful example of a husband and wife relationship where failure is the norm. As newlyweds, the couple faces hardships that are Odysseus-like to the point of ridiculousness. Between renting from an old man who lives in the house, losing a job, a flood that wipes out the animals and the food stores, and death of a baby, the couple endures and fights back to get on their feet. The husband is adamant about the roles of the male and female hero. He is embarrassed when he is unable to provide food or money.

In the mountains, it is difficult to produce enough to sustain a family unless the land is the bottom land with richer and deeper soil. This theme of being tied to the land is both negative and positive. Owning land was important to sustain a family, but in times of desperation it was also a burden in the early twentieth century. Younger generations alive in the twenty-first century may still struggle to maintain land that has been in the family for a century. Between taxes, repairs, and insurance, it is sometimes impossible for the modern mountain family to stay on the farm. Many still need the land for subsistence farming, but only grow enough for food, and therefore must work to maintain the land to pay the taxes and other bills associated with owning a home and land. It is not uncommon for a man to feel desperate enough to commit a crime to earn money for food to support the family. In Appalachia, one of the most popular illegal incomes is the production of marijuana. In the Chris Offutt short story "Horseweed," a man named William grows a crop of marijuana on coal company land. One night while checking on his patch, he sees a man wandering around. Instead of following his instinct to kill him, William watches him. As he is watching, the man encounters a snake and is bitten.

William decides to help the injured man. For William's sympathy, the snake bitten man will not tell anyone he is growing marijuana. While returning to the house, William is "suddenly glad he'd had no sons. The responsibility of land would end with him" (*Kentucky Straight* 67). He feels that owning land had become a burden.

Men's lives ran in bursts of work, drink, and quick death, while women wore down slow and steady, like a riverbank at a sharp curve. He'd urge his daughters to move, but they'd probably stay and give him grandsons. One day William would be old and telling a boy about helping a coal man who didn't deserve it. He wondered what the state would find to outlaw in his grandsons' time. (*Kentucky Straight* 67)

In other Chris Offutt short stories men are left alone to tend to families and forced into women's roles. In "Nine Ball," a hog farmer is widowed and takes on the role of the female. His son Everett has lost respect for his father's work, because he wants something besides pork to eat every night. His father only knows how to make one meal. This is another example of generational disrespect. Instead of helping the father and taking on the mother's role, Everett complains. In "A Good Pine," the narrator states, "The transmission of certain knowledge required a lineage of men, but he was in charge of cooking now, cleaning the house, and raising a child – matters he considered the province of women" (61). The main character is responsible for his granddaughter. He does the best he can and plays both roles, but he is not happy about it.

Offutt, a product of the 1970s, explains this generational problem in his autobiography.

The men of my generation live in the remnants of a world that still maintains a frontier mentality. Mountain culture expects its males to undergo various rites of manhood, but genuine tribulation under fire no longer exists. We've had to create our own. The completed road linked

the world to the hills, but failed to connect us to the world. (*Same River* 19-20)

Men in Offutt's generation and after had no way to become true heroes. Born in 1958, Offutt missed Korea and was not old enough to fight in Vietnam. The mountains were already "tame." The lessons they had been taught by fathers or grandfathers, either of the Civil War or world wars, seems to mean very little to them as they feel they are outdated. There is no territory to be explored or civilization to be created for those men growing up since the late twentieth century. It is difficult to be heroic.

The characteristics of the twentieth century male Appalachian hero vary by generation, but the underlying needs and desires are the same. In the first half of the twentieth century, the mountain hero may have only wanted "A rifle and a pistol, a good horse or two and some 'factory' clothes for his wife ... beyond the shelter of his cabin and the rough food which his fields and livestock afforded him" (Caudill 62). In the second half of the twentieth century little changed. Instead of a good horse or two, he may want a truck. Instead of a cabin, he may want a manufactured home. Ultimately, it is a stable life for his family that the male Appalachian hero wants and to be able to pass down the skills he learns to his sons. Without the family continuing, his work will be without meaning. As generations continue, the skills being taught are fewer and fewer. In Chris Holbrook's 1995 short story "The Lost Dog," a truck-driving father regrets that he is not home enough to teach his son the "valued" skills like hog killing. The father says to the son, "It's not your fault you can't do much, Joe. You've not been taught" (Holbrook 30). Joe is bothered by the smells and sights of butchering a hog until he begins to learn and become part of it. Metaphorically, it is this relationship between generations that is important now to the Appalachian hero. It is valuable because the culture is quickly losing the generation that maintained the self-sustaining old ways. This relationship for both males and females revolves around one core element – food.

2.2 The Appalachian Heroine

To further Massimo Montanari's theory of man separating himself from animals because of his ability to prepare food, women must be considered as well. He refers to the text of *Gilgamesh* from Mesopotamia around 4,000 years ago. Montanari states that the text

Tells of a "wild man" who left his status as a minor only at the moment when he learned of the existence of bread, something revealed to him by a *woman* – in fact, a prostitute (granting the female figure in this way both the role of guardian of food knowledge and that of custodian of sexuality). Furthermore, all of this "literary" material seems to correspond to historical reality. Indeed, scholars are pretty well in agreement in acknowledging a *female* priority in the work of observation and selection of the plants that accompanied the birth of agriculture around the first village settlements. (Montanari 7)

He further states that culture is a place where "tradition and innovation intersect" (Montanari 7). Tradition includes knowledge, values, and skills. Both male and female heroes are responsible for holding these traditions, but certainly the heroine of Appalachian literature is the historical container for the knowledge of food preparation. These traditions of food preparation "require hour after hour of highly specialized labor carried out daily by women (the eternal heroines of the kitchen and custodians of the techniques that define cooking), all this handed down by practice and imitation ..." (Montanari 32).

There seems to be a trend for strong female characters who have overcome great adversity to become the "man of the house" and sole provider for the family. It stands to reason, that food is a motif that occurs in this genre, because in Appalachia,

women represent sustenance. The female heroine is asked to set a fine table and provide plenty of food.

The white woman proved her ability to produce children in numbers unsurpassed anywhere in the world. Hospitality was the mountaineer's noblest virtue. Whatever his degree of wealth it was a point of honor and courtesy to offer food, drink and shelter to any caller. Perhaps this trait originated in the Scottish Highlands, where it still prevails, but whatever its source it became a folk habit on the frontier. "Come in and eat with us, and take a drink." (Caudill 78)

Females, even more so than males, are tied to the land and the food. As stated earlier, the land itself is a motherly figure. "Like other agrarian cultures, most Appalachians raised, gathered, and prepared foods within the family, and mothers passed these traditions down to their children," according to Sohn (Sohn 9). Women are responsible for holding the family together. Therefore, the heroic characteristics of women include: variety of skills, patience, understanding, the ability to nurture the family, and to provide an abundant table through the use of the land. For many who have left the mountains, their memories revolve around the kitchen and their mother preparing meals. These meals provide sensory memories. According to Marjorie Devault in her essay "Conflict and Deference," "marital 'bargains' were often based on taken-for-granted notions of men's entitlement to good food and domestic service" (184). Devault's studies took place in the mid-1980s and encompass the same age group of which Chris Offutt is a member. While Offutt suggests that there is no "rite of passage" for Appalachian men born in the second half of the twentieth century any longer, that is certainly not the case for women. Marrying and having someone for who to plan and prepare a meal is the female's rite of passage. According to Foxfire,

There is something about the foodways of the mountains – that is undeniably compelling, even graceful. Perhaps it has to do with the power of experience, for older mountain women, of first having learned to cook and then of the act as a rite of passage in their lives, through which one of their more important roles, right or wrong, was legitimized and certified. (Page and Wigginton xiii)

Her role is legitimized, of course, by her husband and children, because the importance of mothers is the food. To provide the food is labor intensive.

The first Kentucky women, who arrive just at the onslaught of the American Revolution, work constantly in Janice Holt Giles's novel *The Kentuckians*. With work divided by men's work and women's work, women still often found themselves doing both while the men were hunting or defending their land from Indians. There was always cooking to be done. David explains a daily routine for the women in the forts of new Kentucky: "The womenfolks had to grind hominy every day, dress out the meat we killed and brought in, and see to it there was something to fill empty stomachs with all the time" (Giles 148). Women did not make the first trip to Kentucky. The men, like David, went ahead and built a house and started the crop of corn. Forts were also necessary due to the onslaught of Indians antagonized by the British. When the women arrived, homes were made out of the forts and houses.

Glory, but it was something to watch those women take over. They went around for two or three days just sniffing the new clean smell and spreading out their blankets and robes to air and dry in the sun, hanging up their belongings and setting out their pots and kettles and settling themselves and their younguns down. Old hen making a nest. (Giles 175)

A woman could not make it in the frontier by herself. According to Giles, there were a “dozen men to one woman in the country” (Giles 176). Not only were there few women, but the ones who were there needed to be stout. Giles creates a balance of male and female heroes; balanced in the sense that without men, women would not be able to survive, but without women, men would be without civilization. Kentucky would have never survived without the initial invasion of both men and women into the unexplored territory. While men might abandon what they built to continue west, women would stay and create a community. David and the other men in the new country recognize this, respect their women, and talk about them affectionately.

It was the kind of talk a man makes about his woman when he sets such a heap of store by her he can take a little leeway in speaking of her. Stubborn Esther Whitley might be, and set in her ways, but she was a power for dependance and stoutheartedness and none knew it better than Billy [Whitley]. Jane Manifee was another one like her, and in a quieter way Ann Logan was just as stubborn and stouthearted. Give her own chance I figured Bethia would hold up as good as any of them. All told, we had more of their kind in the country than the weeping, wailing ones. If we hadn't, we'd never of pulled through. (Giles 221)

Perhaps the strong female is depicted in *The Kentuckians* because the author is female, but the necessity of the female in early Kentucky is undeniable. Births, deaths, weddings, and holidays were all carefully prepared for even in the remote new country. The women brought these elements of civilization to the frontier and created “tribal”-like communities establishing the earliest societies in the untamed land.

Hortense Powdermaker's 1997 article “An Anthropological Approach to the Problems of Obesity,” published in *Food and Culture: A Reader* is a discussion of tribal communities and their production and consumption of food. Tribal communities are

much like that of a mountaineer family, “Food is the center of a complex value system and an elaborate ideology centers about it. Religious beliefs, rituals, prestige systems, etiquette, social organization, and group unity are related to food” (204). Family rituals such as “laying out” of the dead, family reunions, and marriages bring people together to partake in various foods. The women who bring the most food or the best recipe are placed in a substantially higher status than the other women. Older women, known for particular dishes, hold a higher place in the social organization of the family or community. The hierarchy that is created around food is important to the mountain culture. A younger woman does not dare bring fried chicken to a ritualistic event when a matriarch always brings the chicken. It is disrespectful to the elder, but also may be detrimental to the reputation of the younger. It is a challenge.

Strong, heroic females are also found in Wendell Berry’s *Jayber Crow*. “Aunt Cordie was always surrounded by food that was growing or getting fat, or being gathered or canned or cured or dried or cooked,” according to Jayber (Berry 20-21). It was also her job to keep up the fires, maintain the lamps, cook, clean fish, dress poultry, wash the dishes, wash the clothes, clean the house, work in the garden, and put up food for the winter (Berry 23). She is also a wife and a mother to her nephew Jayber. Women are also responsible for charitable acts by the family. Aunt Cordie brought food for funerals and needy families (Berry 190). Berry’s respect for strong female heroes is evident as he has two other fictional heroines, Lyda and Mattie, in his novel. They are present to recognize the next generation after Jayber’s Aunt Cordie to show that traditions and skills were still being passed down. Jayber says, “Lyda was a good cook, they always had a lot to eat, and it was a fact that one more mouth didn’t make much difference there” (Berry 317). Mattie, with many of the same qualities as Lyda, was the daughter of Athey Keith. Her husband destroys the land that her father has so lovingly maintained for years. Mattie represents the female who stands by her husband whether she agrees with

him or not. Because most decisions being made in a family revolve around food or money to obtain food, it is important to recognize this attribute in someone who feels responsible for the food on the table and how difficult it must be for a woman to stand by and allow decisions to be made without her input.

Females are sometimes forced to take on the masculine roles. The crossover for women completing manly chores seems to be greater than that of men completing womanly chores. There are many reasons why women must take on these roles: war, death, the husband must leave to work off the farm, or the husband is unable to support the family or work.

Charles Frazier's 1997 novel *Cold Mountain* is an example of two women being left alone to survive in an environment where it is crucial to have the skills to grow and raise a maintainable storage of food. The narrator comments, "When men were killed in this harsh land women were left to till the land and raise children. They must plow and plant and harvest without help except for the small hands of those whom they toiled to feed" (40). This novel takes place during the Civil War in a Carolina setting. It is a valuable example of women forced to take on the role of men. Although the setting is the nineteenth century, these factors still existed late into the twentieth century and could be argued that they still exist for women whose husbands are currently fighting in Iraq or stationed elsewhere in the world and unable to tend to the manly duties at home.

Ada, the main character, loses her minister father to illness, and the only other man (Inman) in her life to the war. She quickly realizes that she is ill-equipped to exist alone in the unforgiving Appalachian Mountains due to her upbringing in society. Her sensibilities clash with the mountains. This clash represents the conflict between the Appalachian culture and the Northeastern society. Like most post-colonial or imperialist literature, Appalachian literature frequently contains curious outsiders infiltrating the region for land or its people. In Ada's case, her minister father brings faith and

knowledge to the small mountain community. He does not impose his beliefs unnecessarily on his congregation. In this case, instead of the mountains suffering, it is the outsider who suffers. Ada suffers from a lack of skill to survive in this alternate culture. Her savior, unlike many texts, is a woman named Ruby who is a surprising heroine. Ruby becomes the “man” of the household teaching Ada how to survive. Without Ruby, she cannot survive. Ada’s skills revolve around polite, womanly entertainment as her late mother and father taught her. Because she was moved to the hills of North Carolina in a rural town to her father’s new church, those skills are not much use.

Ada was perpetually hungry having eaten little through the summer but milk, fried eggs, salads, and plates of miniature tomatoes from the untended plants that had grown wild and busy with suckers. Even butter proved beyond her means, for the milk she had tried to churn never firmed up beyond the consistency of runny clabber. She wanted a bowl of chicken and dumplings and a peach pie, but had not a clue how one might arrive at them. (28-29)

Ruby, on the other hand, was forced to learn survival skills at an early age when her drunken, abusive father abandoned her. She grew up in the mountains, learned of their geographical contributions, and the routines and seasons. In her essay “Gender and Food,” Marcie Cohen Ferris says that during the Civil War, “southerners redefined traditional roles connected to food production and preparation” based on a scene from Frazier’s novel (Ferris 60). She describes the scene when Ada is distraught over the “pesky rooster” that has “terrorized” her for weeks. Ruby immediately captures and beheads “the unruly beast and soon has it in a stewpot surrounded by gobs of biscuit dough” (Ferris 60). Ruby’s experience proves far more relevant than Ada’s classical piano training in this case. The juxtaposition of the two women is crucial in Appalachian

fiction. Ruby represents the resourcefulness needed to survive while Ada represents the sensibility of women and civilization.

Food is the sub-plot when Ada is left alone to fend for herself in *Cold Mountain*. There are many descriptions of meals prepared by Ruby and Ada, but also those that Inman has on his way home from the war. Inman encounters a group of men camping on Balsam Mountain. With good surrounding views and a trout stream nearby and “for several days they cooked enormous meals of fried corn bread and trout and stews of game animals over a large fire ... They washed the food down with every manner of corn liquor and apple brandy and thick mead so that many in the group laid up drunk from one dawn to the next” (18-19). Ruby makes a meal for her worthless father Stobrod later when he first makes an appearance. She will not allow her father in the house, but tells him to wait on the porch while she makes biscuits, grits, eggs, fried side meat, and gravy from the side meat drippings (286). When camping in the woods on their way to rescue Stobrod, Ruby and Ada prepare a meal: “She fried a piece of side meat and forked it out of its grease and put it on a flat rock. Then she added water to the grease and cooked a pot of grits and took the side meat from the rock and crumbled it into the pot and stirred it into the grits” (380-381). As they enjoy their meal with tea, Ruby tells of the time she gave Stobrod a handful of tea in a cloth to take on a coon hunt. He came back and complained that it was not very good and he preferred other types of greens.

Many authors who include strong female roles base the women on characters in their own lives – grandmothers, aunts, mothers, sisters. In Mary Lee Settle’s biographical account of her grandmother’s life called *Addie* first published in 1998, Settle is proud of the knowledge and skills her grandmother had for supporting a large family after the untimely death of her husband. Never re-marrying, Addie became a force within the community, providing for many when they could not provide for themselves.

She decided that to keep a whole acre of garden in flowers was, in the words she used for such things until her death, “a piece of foolishness.” In the place of flowers in the garden, she planted and cared for vegetables – potatoes, squash, onions, house corn as opposed to field corn, tomatoes that she called love apples, peppers, teepee after teepee of green beans, peas – that made the right side of the garden beyond the grape arbor look like the Indians were once again camping where they had camped so often ...she put a new chicken run, and began to raise her favorites, white Leghorns, some guinea fowl, a few bantams, and white turkeys. (60-61)

Settle’s grandmother was forced into the male role, but fortunately had the needed skills to provide for her family. These had been handed down from her mother. “All her life she loved Jesus, ghosts, my grandfather, and food. Her dinner table was always laden with food, and she looked at it as if it might disappear,” says Settle about Addie (10). Because Addie experienced the basic struggle to obtain food, she knows its importance. Addie received “... bitterness from men whose skills aren’t needed anymore ...” (Settle 12). Addie was a strong female in a time when strong females were not acceptable. Many Appalachian women fell into this category, because there was no time to be “proper” sophisticated ladies. A family needed food, because there is nothing “proper” about starving as seen in Morgan’s *Gap Creek*. Settle also tells of her grandmother’s role as Mother Jones when the mines in the area shut down.

... the men couldn’t pay their rent, but she made them plant gardens. That was her rule. She would go along inspecting the gardens of tenants who hadn’t paid a red cent of rent for as much as a year, she said, and who would have gone hungry if she hadn’t watched them. Addie not only made her tenants keep their gardens, she worked her own garden, hoed

along the rows of snap beans and peas that had crawled up dead branches ... she raised enough vegetables to feed the brood that worried on the porch and “lay down for awhile” in the afternoon, sometimes in the hammock, sometimes flinging themselves across their beds with sick headaches. (Settle 161-162)

Addie could outwork most men and certainly her own children who benefited from her knowledge and skills in the garden. Addie was a motherly figure to these impoverished miners and gave them what they needed to sustain their own families. They would offer to share their beans, fatback, and cornbread with her and she refused to eat anything that they could not afford to eat.

Silas House also bases his strong female characters on women in his family. In his novel *A Parchment of Leaves* set in 1900s Kentucky, Vine’s husband leaves to cut timber in Laurel County. They are newlyweds when he finds this opportunity, and he must take it. He moves Vine from her family’s homestead in Redbud to be close to his mother, then leaves. Having been taught planting, storing, and preparing by her Cherokee mother, Vine is equipped to maintain the household in his absence. Vine realizes, “Raising a garden and keeping a marriage in shape are not that different” (House 210). In Vine’s case, her husband is still alive and therefore visits as often as possible, but it may be several months between visits. In taking on a temporary male role, Vine symbolically tastes moonshine and notices that the other women at the party are not drinking it.

Published one hundred years after its setting takes place, there is a role reversal in the 1999 novel *Gap Creek*. Set in the hills of North Carolina at the turn of the twentieth century, the plot of *Gap Creek* is the food problem for Julie. Whether Julie is preparing, growing, eating, dreaming, or performing her wifely duties, her motivation is food. Many meals are described throughout the text. After losing her spoiled younger brother and

her father to illness, Julie Harmon becomes “the man of the house” with three sisters and a mother. While her father is alive, she helps him with most of his chores. When he is dying, she does them completely. She states, “Any man that just wanted a woman who could cook and bring in firewood would either be a cripple or too old to be any count ... When a man gets beyond a certain age he’s no account for a woman” (Morgan 20). Ironically, she does marry a man (Hank) who by all rights is “no account,” because he cannot provide for his family having been spoiled by his mother. Although he works, he loses his job and becomes hard to hire and depressed. Julie struggles to cook an ample meal for her husband and landlord (Mr. Pendergast) and must ration what little food stores she has, because Hank is out of work. This struggle for food separates the couple. Hank is upset and feels less of a man, because he cannot provide for his wife. Julie, in turn, must provide and has the knowledge and skills to do so.

The first meal Julie and Hank share at her family home, prepared by her mother and sisters, is chicken, rice, peas, peaches, and cornbread. They drink coffee and eat coconut cake for dessert. Later Julie’s sisters bring a coconut cake when they visit the couple on an unexpected visit. This second coconut cake supplies fond memories for Julie before her marriage. This first meal shared by Hank and Julie is important in the courtship. Hank learns that Julie comes from a family of cooks. The women prepare a chicken before church that morning for their Sunday meal. Julie feels fortunate that they had prepared the chicken, because they did not know that Hank would be joining them.

The first breakfast she prepares when they move in with Mr. Pendergast is a trying time for Julie. She fixes Hank some biscuits with butter and jelly for his lunch. Mr. Pendergast is particular about his food and wants poached eggs for breakfast. Because Julie is responsible for outside chores, she really did not know how to cook many things. Hank explains to her that a poached egg is one that is just slightly boiled. She prepares the egg, but Mr. Pendergast is late for breakfast. She eats her own breakfast, but still he

is not there. By the time he arrives, the meal she painstakingly prepares just for him is completely cold, and he complains. The grits have a dried skin on them, so he accuses her of making them the night before. The egg is not poached the way he wants it, and he treats it like a “rotten tater.” Ultimately, he only eats biscuits with molasses. Her first meal is a disaster. This is the first opportunity to establish a relationship with their landlord, and Julie has not performed as she wanted. Morgan’s details of Julie’s first meal provide an ongoing motif in the novel. Each meal is meticulously designed to represent, not only an Appalachian family, but that of a poor family. Furthermore, the author uses food to establish the uncooperative relationship between Julie and the landlord. This initial failure leads to Julie’s lack of self worth that continues throughout the novel. She is first unable to feed her landlord properly and ultimately loses a child due to her inability to properly feed it.

For dinner that first evening, Julie wants to serve cornbread and sweet potatoes. She must ask Mr. Pendergast where the potatoes are, although she is sure they are in the cellar. Instead of retrieving the “taters” for her, he sends her into the dark, cobweb infested cellar where she finds the taters along with other food supplies and varmints – snakes and mice. Then she needs to make cornbread. She says, “To make cornbread, to make good cornbread, I had to have some buttermilk, and I knowed the buttermilk would be in the springhouse ... The floor was water, except for a row of stepping stones from the door. And in the water set jars of milk and pitchers of cream, butter inside tin pails” (Morgan 65). She encounters a mink in the springhouse while retrieving the milk. Julie does become a good cook and Mr. Pendergast recognizes her for a hard worker. Their relationship is based solely on food. She cooks for him and keeps the house, and he gives them a place to live in return. The task of cooking this particular meal seems to be a small test for Julie as a larger quest to please both men in her life.

Trying desperately to provide for her husband during his job loss, Julie is insulted by the mother-in-law when she arrives for a visit. Hank's mother ridicules and lectures Julie about being prepared for guests. The lack of food is ever present in Julie's thoughts. While making love with Hank, she sees a variety of things to eat in her mind. When she learns that she is pregnant, she is even more concerned about the lack of food. After surviving flood and famine, she realizes that,

It's shameful to admit that you have been hungry, that you have been hungry as a grown woman, as a married woman. It's even more embarrassing to admit you've been hungry while carrying a baby. We made do with what we had on the place and what church members give us. But there was a time in the late winter when things got lean and hard, and we just had to outlast them. I discovered hunger don't make you resentful. Hunger makes you slow and brooding, like you are just waiting and waiting. (Morgan 264-265)

Ultimately, her child does not survive. She is strong enough to survive but could not produce milk to feed her baby, because she is malnourished. She is defeated. The hunger continues to affect her life completely. It is all-consuming.

Harriet Arnow's Appalachian novel *The Dollmaker* is a classic tale of a husband and wife leaving the mountains for the promise of a better life, but realizing they should not have left. Gertie is the strong caregiver and provider. She works hard, because she has hopes of owning land. Her husband Clovis is mechanically inclined and feels that he can make more money in a city. He moves to Detroit to work in a factory leaving Gertie at home with the children. The family is content without Clovis. There is plenty to eat and lots of chores to keep them busy. She says, "Supper without Clovis seemed more natural than dinner and breakfast ... The hominy making, the gathering of walnuts, and their other regular chores in the clear sharp weather had given them all good appetites"

(Arnow 91). When they move to Detroit, there are no similar chores and the food must be purchased, not grown. This passage describes a typical mealtime in Kentucky:

Gertie, sitting at the foot of the table with a lard bucket of sweet milk on one side of her, buttermilk on the other, a great platter of hot smoking cornbread in front, and other bowls and platters within easy reach, was kept busy filling glasses of milk, buttering bread, and dishing out the new hominy fried in lard and seasoned with sweet milk and black pepper. It was good with the shuck beans, baked sweet potatoes, cucumber pickles, and green tomato ketchup. Gertie served it up with pride, for everything, even the meal in the bread, was a product of her farming.

(Arnow 91)

Later, in Detroit, Gertie is embarrassed by her inability to produce a meal of this same quality. Clovis is upset and expects more from her meals. She is unable to afford things that she once grew in her own garden. She is in debt with the milk man instead of milking her own cow. Clovis comments, "I ain't had a bite a fried meat, seems like, since I got up here ... I'm figgeren on some good eaten. You ought tu have a heap a ration points. You never used none at home" (Arnow 187). Detroit is supposed to be a better, more abundant way of life. Clovis's argument that she never had to use her ration points at home makes the argument for Gertie. She was not forced to rely on the government or the mercy of an employer to feed her family at home in the mountains.

Clovis, she saw, was displeased with the food. He looked resigned and disgusted as he had used to be when she left eggs out of the cornbread in order to have a few more to sell. Some of Sophronie's beans were left, and they were good, better than her own scrambled eggs and cornbread. The eggs had stuck for lack of grease and the bread, badly

baked to begin with was dry and hard and lifeless, as the meal that had gone into it. (Arnow 187)

In the passage describing the supper at home, Gertie brags that even the “meal in the bread” was prepared by her. In Detroit, she complains the “meal that had gone into” the bread is “hard and lifeless.” This meal she purchases from the store. This household staple symbolizes all of Gertie’s problems when removed from the mountains. Gertie is unable to adjust immediately to the lack of food supplies she has available to her in Detroit. She wants to have an abundant meal for her family, but is criticized by her husband instead, even though she did not want to move to Detroit in the first place, for her efforts. A shift has occurred in Detroit, because now Clovis is responsible for the food. He must earn the money to buy it, but in Kentucky, Gertie is the provider. She identifies her success with making good food for her family, and she has lost that ability.

It wasn’t the way it had used to be back home when she had done her share, maybe more than her share of feeding and fending for the family. Then, with egg money, chicken money, a calf sold here, a pig sold there, she’d bought almost every bite of food they didn’t raise. Here everything, even to the kindling wood, came from Clovis. (338)

Her role as the domestic hero has been taken from her by her husband. She can buy the food from the grocer and face the debt that accumulates from lack of money, something that Clovis does not have to do because he works. In Kentucky, she is proud of her ability to provide good meals for her family, but in Detroit, she is ashamed to ask for money and ashamed by the meal she produces. Gertie eventually realizes why her neighbors seem to be trapped, because she too has moved from abundance in the hills of Kentucky to another confined environment where money is more important. Unlike the confines of Gertie’s hills, the equally confining slum of factory workers must rely on obtaining food from the local grocer that must be purchased from the money her husband

earns. Now Gertie's lifestyle is juxtaposed to that of the wealthy factory owner, and she is made to feel less of a human being by living in a box and relying on others to feed her family. In the hills, those living in the hollers rarely saw people who were monetarily wealthy. Their idea of wealth was land and the ability to abundantly feed the family. Although she may not realize or care about the class distinction, she does care that she is unable to provide for her family as she did when living in Kentucky.

In Chris Holbrook's 1995 *Hell and Ohio* stories, the women are always moving whether they need a distraction by working in the kitchen, or whether it is out of necessity to feed the family and prepare the garden vegetables for the table. Holbrook's women are busy waiting on husbands and family. This iconic female busily caring for her family is a motif not only in Holbrook's stories, but most Appalachian literature. Harry Caudill explains,

But it was in the faces and hearts of the women that the land's tragedy, folly and failure were most deeply etched. In their world the man was a tyrant who ruled his house with medieval unconcern for his wife's feelings or opinions. She rarely sat down to eat a meal with him, it being her duty to "wait on" him. When a stranger was present she stayed discreetly out of sight. As a girl she saw her brothers and father "laid away," the victims of feuds, quarrels, logging accidents or disease. Her girlhood was spent in graceless toil and crowned by an early marriage. Wasted by a quarter-century of child-bearing, she saw a row of graves dug for her children. Often she survived as a widow to fend for the remainder of her brood. She could rarely influence the impetuous decisions of her husband and sons, and, never far from the family graveyard, mourned through long years the results of their errors. (Caudill 80)

This mythic female, spanning generations of Appalachian heritage, often did not eat at the table with the family, because she was busy tending to the table and the needs of the family. G.C. Jones, in his memoirs published in 1985 titled *Growing Up Hard in Harlan County*, recalls memories of the females in his life revolving around food and the comfort provided by that food in the atmosphere the women create. Only his mother, his sister Artie, Mrs. Walters, and eventually his wife, are necessary females in his autobiographical account. Frequently, however, when conducting business, he is invited into the home of an associate. "We heard Mrs. Ford call from the kitchen that dinner was on the table and for him [Mr. Ford] to bring JoJo and me along. That suited me fine. Now, Mrs. Ford set a mighty fine table. There were at least twenty different things to eat on that table," says Jones (Jones 30). He measures Mrs. Ford's importance the moment he sees the table, and when he is writing this account years later, he remembers her for that reason. Because he receives no affection from his mother, Jones finds comfort with different females he encounters who do provide him with food. He seeks shelter in his friend JoJo's home whose mother gladly offers him a place and some food. He remembers, "Mrs. Walters was a kindly woman, always listening to someone else's troubles and never saying anything about hers. She led me to the kitchen and offered me a chair, then a big glass of cold milk with a large piece of dried apple stack cake" (Jones 73). Again, he remembers a woman in his past by recalling memories of the generosity she showed with food. Jones's most important female encounter, however, is with his otherwise estranged mother. Jones does not learn for many years that the ridicule he receives from both his father and mother stems from his and his sister Artie's biological father. He knows that he is treated much differently than the other children but does not understand why. At a young age, he ventures on his own to make a living. Even though he has been shunned from his parents, he feels an obligation to help them financially. When he does, his mom actually shows sign of affection for him by repaying

him with food. She offers to make a “big apple cobbler for supper and fry some chicken.” When she does, Jones is shocked. He says, “That sure did shake me up. Never before in my life could I remember her asking me if I wanted anything special to eat or hearing her speak to me in such a kind voice” (Jones 64). He also remembers that his mother stood at the stove offering her place to him, but Jones could not believe this treatment from his own mother.

Modern Appalachian texts whether set in the nineteenth, twentieth or twenty-first centuries, have displayed the roles of females in a variety of ways, but the greatest thing they accomplished is paying homage to the mountain woman as a literary hero. Her quest is not as heroic as a man’s nor is she a great, memorable literary hero, but it is a quest to sustain her family with food that she grows and prepares, and this has provided many generations with fond memories of their home and family in Appalachia.

CHAPTER 3

RELATIONSHIPS

3.1 The Mountain Hero and the Land

We recognize a variety of signs including stop signs and business signs. However, signs also include a person's body language, clothing, and cultural artifacts. In *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray define a sign as "anything that conveys information to others who understand it based upon a system of codes and conventions that they have consciously learned or unconsciously internalized as members of a certain culture" (360). Food is a sign of iconic relationships in Appalachia. Food is a sign of the Appalachian culture learned both consciously and unconsciously. Those outside the culture may not understand it. Some have criticized and changed the food signs for the mountaineer. A sign of success and prosperity for the Appalachian became a sign of ridicule and the source of stereotypes outside the culture.

The relationship between man and food is represented in a variety of ways. There seems to be a relationship between the hero and nature, the tools he/she uses to produce or prepare food, and the animals provided through hunting or farming. Food is also symbolic of the relationship between the hero and society.

To procure land by Virginia law, white settlers had to show improvements to their piece of land and within one year raise a crop of corn. David, the protagonist in Janice Holt Giles's novel *The Kentuckians* stakes his claim in the new land, fights Indians, and becomes one with his land.

I'd walk on it and build on it and plow it, sweat over it and maybe curse it and hate it, and maybe love it and bleed over it, till it would come to be part of my own bones and sweat and blood. And I've done all those things, like I thought I would that night. And the land has got to be part of me, till there's no separating us one from the other. (Giles 59)

David admires his first corn crop, because it is the "first living thing" he has ever tended. He enjoys it by just looking at it and listening to it.

Folks that say growing things don't speak a language of their own don't know what they're talking about. Corn makes a rustling sound, even when there's no wind blowing, like the blades unwrapping sigh on leaving the seed. And if you look close you can fairly see it taking on height, shooting up slim and tall. Corn is a proud-growing thing. (Giles 77)

In this excerpt, corn is personified by the protagonist as masculine and proud. He understands that his existence and that of his descendants depends on this first crop of corn. As he admires it, he transposes human qualities upon it to display its significance. He is alone in the Kentucky wilderness and perhaps needs these human characteristics, but more importantly, he needs his corn to be successful. Corn is masculine because man (not woman) must have it to establish land rights. Therefore, man and corn are tied together. The corn, like man, has a voice and it is proud. David plants other crops when he has success with his corn. He has bean seed and squash that he drops in between the rows of corn, but "wood varmints got the most of the beans" (Giles 90). He is able to cook "several messes" of beans from watching his mother years before. He tries her same method to prepare squash and says, "I don't know whether I fixed it wrong, or whether that's the way squash is supposed to taste, but it was a dish I couldn't say much for, and I've never tried it again. I gathered the things up fast as they yellowed and fed

them to the horses” (Giles 90). Even though he feels unsuccessful with squash, he is able to use the distasteful vegetable as horse fodder and does not let it waste. However, he equates the horse’s “puny spell about then” to her having eaten the squash. David says, “Apparently it’s not a fit food for man or beast” (Giles 91). Having no better luck with his beans, David remembers his mother’s preparation and preservation of them from his childhood.

I recollected that my mam used to lay beans by for the winter by snapping them and drying them out in the sun. Thinking back I recalled she always waited till the vines were just about ready to quit bearing, so when the leaves on my vines began to wither and turn yellow I took a morning and picked off all the beans. Then it took me all afternoon to string and snap them. When I’d done I spread them out on my blankets to dry. I never thought to bring them in every night out of the dew wetness, and the next time I went to see about them they’d all mildewed and softened and turned green with mold. They stunk worse than a polecat. I had to take the blankets down to the river and wash them to get the mess off. I figured I’d better stick to meat from then on till I had a woman knew how to take care of such. (Giles 91)

Although he is able to remember the process, he is missing important instructions in the method. He is ill-equipped with the skills and says that he will wait until he is married to deal with beans again. Corn appears to be a masculine crop because it is a necessity to establish the land as mentioned earlier, however, the beans are distinctly feminine. Only a female has the knowledge to grow beans. It is not the geography or the mere shape of corn and beans that make them distinctly masculine or feminine. Beans arrive only after corn is established like women arrive after men establish a territory for their women. Beans seem to be below David, because he is proud, strong, and does not need to bend

over to the bean. Women bring beans for the garden only after the male has solidified his corn. This reminds me of Henry David Thoreau growing beans at Walden. He spends five hours a day hoeing his seven miles of bean rows. He complains of all manner of problems including bugs and weeds. Hoeing in the garden tends to be a female quality, as well as preserving and preparing the beans. Nature acts as an antagonist for David. He applies the skills he has, but nature still teaches him a lesson that will not be forgotten. However, his success with his corn is enough to substantiate his land ownership.

G.C. Jones, in his memoir *Growing Up Hard in Harlan County*, best summarizes the relationship of the hero and the region: "My family were good livers. We raised nearly everything we ate, and plenty of grain and fodder for our stock. A good size stream flowed near the barn. This is where we penned our butchering animals" (Jones ix). In Appalachia, food symbolizes a close relationship between hero and nature. The geographical contributions of the land in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were extremely important to the Appalachian hero, because he/she relied on so many things that the land provided including: wild fruits and vegetables for consumption and medicine, wild game, and changing seasons that initiated routines for the mountain dweller. When choosing land to settle, it was important to consider the "availability of game and of soil that could be easily cleared for a corn patch," according to Caudill (9). It is almost impossible to grow anything on the thin topsoil in the hills. It is definitely hard work. Many gardens and fields are planted on the side of the hills, therefore planting, weeding, and harvesting are difficult. Dabney calls these gardens "perpendicular" and says there is an "art of growing food on a mountain" (51). To accommodate the land so it would reciprocate, G. C. Jones discusses the burning process his family did to prepare the land for the next season.

All the trees and undergrowth would be piled and burnt. This was where he [Jones's father] raised beans and all other vegetables for canning and drying. If a bad season came, Mom would have enough food stored for another year, with plenty to spare. He always made do with what he had to do with ... Dad and Amos would burn brush piles on top of stumps. This left a dark, rich soil; you could grow anything on it. Some folks would say it was so rich you could raise doorknobs on it. (Jones 70)

In his article titled "Appalachian Foodways" published in the 2007 text *Foodways*, Fred Sauceman states,

Offerings on Appalachian tables are governed, in large part, by the cycles of the seasons. As a first sign of spring, Cherokees herald the appearance of ramps, a pungent wild mountain leek, the first green plant to pop through the leaves on the forest floor ... Strawberries, spring's earliest fruit, have been found in archaeological contexts in the Southeast dating to around 500 B.C., and the first bowl of sugared strawberries in early May is still cause for celebration ... Spring's first lettuce and green onions are picked from the garden and 'killed' with a mixture of hot bacon grease and vinegar ... ("Appalachian Foodways" 19-20)

These fruits and vegetables and many others are not only seasonal signs, but gifts from land well tended and respected. With the abundance from spring, often, Appalachian summer tables will be "devoid of meat" ("Appalachian Foodways 20). Corn, tomatoes, potatoes, and cucumbers adorn tables in the summer.

Bo Ball's short story, "The Garden," provides many examples of what the earth can provide to the hero. The story is about taking what the earth provides all year long, season by season. Some seasons the mountains produce less than others. The point is

that the mountains do provide. The hero must have the knowledge and skills to recognize what nature gives, thus the relationship is formed. Ball uses berries as an example of what the seasons have to offer.

Raspberries came next ... Dewberries came right at the end of raspberries and the beginning of blackberries ... We didn't have to search for blackberries, they came crawling to us ... Last important berry – huckleberry – rare once the forests had been razed for sawmills and mining props. They grew high in the mountains, and they ripened late in the summer when snakes were the meanest. Huckleberry is related to blueberry. (197-200)

This excerpt demonstrates the abundance of berries to be found in the mountains in the different seasons. They are not planted by man; they are simply wild.

Other food items that mountain people relied on include: nuts - chestnut, hickory, hazel, walnut, beech, butter, black, chinquapin; wild greens - creesie, sarvis, dandelion, broad-leaf plantain, white dock, wild radish, wild mustard, dry-land cress, sorrel, speckled-dick, red dock, wild lettuce, lamb's quarters, pussley, shepherd's purse, violets, pokeweed; medicinal roots - ginseng, yellowroot, foxglove, konkajohn; paw-paws, haws, elderberries, cherries, persimmons, fox and possum grapes, snow cream, Jerusalem artichokes, and many more. Gathering and preparing these food items provided by the land is a motif. In the 2002 Silas House novel *A Parchment of Leaves*, Vine enjoys picking blackberries she notices had "grewed so thick that they nearly broke down their bushes" (87). She says that they are hard to resist even though she "suffered under the white July sun to gather the blackberries" (87). The couple in *Gap Creek* is forced to rely on the land and search for chestnuts, greens, and the main character sells ginseng in the local store to buy necessities. In *Cold Mountain*, Ruby and Ada find a honey locust tree and "split the pods with thumbnails and eat out the sweet white pulp by scraping it

against their teeth” (205). In *The Dollmaker*, Gertie’s children bring home sacks of walnuts they have found (Arnow 89). In “A Good Pine” a Chris Offut short story from a 2007 *Appalachian Heritage* journal, the grandfather and his granddaughter have a conversation about selecting and eating wild greens appropriately: “Got to be careful with poke ... Eat the leaves and root, but the berries make you sick. They h’aint good for nothing but turning a possum’s butt red” (59). Within these fictional texts are years of skills and knowledge that have been handed down for many generations. The relationship between the mountaineer and nature is semiotic. Using fictional writing, authors like Bo Ball create realistic samples of life on the land in Appalachia. This respected knowledge of the land’s yields per season is an important characteristic of the Appalachian. Knowing that when the sap is in the trees in mid-March, the first sallet greens will appear is necessary in creating a believable and likeable character to an Appalachian writer. Ball explains that some greens are chosen to add color to a meal, and others can be rolled in meal and flour and fried in pork drippings for a special treat (205). The appeal of a text like Ball’s is the ability to relate. Being able to relate historical information either through inherited family skills or personal experience creates a certain charm for the reader. Ball does not explain the history of sallet greens, but those who have eaten them know they are bitter and adding drippings, flour or other such provisions relieves the bitterness. Readers do not need to know “The Romans salted their greens, believing this to counteract natural bitterness, which is the origin of the word *salad*, salted,” states Mark Kurlansky (Kurlansky 64). Wild greens are a staple in the Appalachian home according to Foxfire authors: “In the spring before garden greens could be picked, many women would take to the woods and creek banks to locate wild greens ... Many wild greens have been used by mountain people since pioneer days, when the use of wild plants was a necessary supplement to the daily diet” (Page and Wigginton 171). Greens are frequently mentioned in texts such as *Gap Creek, Cold*

Mountain and the short stories of Chris Offutt and Chris Holbrook. The cooking process of the greens and the knowledge of when and how to pick them is the literary semiotic relationship between the mountaineer and nature.

Home remedies are also part of nature's contributions in the Appalachians. Throughout modern texts, cures are suggested that can heal anything from a rash to typhoid. Julie in *Gap Creek* says that too much store-bought candy will cause colic, but that pennyroyal tea will relieve the colic (Morgan 3). Other cures in that text include: lemon juice in hot water and blackberry or pokeberry wine for rheumatism (Morgan 11 and 45). In Ron Rash's 2002 novel *One Foot in Eden*, bloodroot, mandrake root and sang (ginseng) are all used for healing (Rash 72). Also in the text, a tea made of willow bark (bonset) will break a fever (Rash 110). Ginseng is mentioned in most texts as both a medicinal root and one that is in high demand to sell or trade. These remedies, handed down for generations, originated with the Native Americans in the area. In Charles Frazier's 2006 novel *Thirteen Moons*, the protagonist explains that due to the isolation in the hills herbal remedies found in nature were used. When small pox rampages through the Appalachians during the Civil War, he wishes they had not feared the "substantial risk of death" and he had "insisted" everyone take the inoculation used by those in the "outer world" like the one of Cotton Mather's time (360).

Because of the healing power of these plants, many environmentalists have argued and won suits against mountaintop removal or other forms of land destruction such as strip mining or road construction. In Adriana Trigiani's 2006 novel *Home to Big Stone Gap*, her land is full of medicinal herbs, wild greens, woolly lamb's ear, catnip, and dandelion that is considered to be a "Native American medicine chest" (239). Thankfully, when mountain people finally began to realize the detriment of ruining the landscape, organizations were formed such as Kentuckians for the Commonwealth and Heartwood.

These medicinal plants transcended their original use and became signs against the destruction of the land.

With nature's contributions, knowledge of gathering helped many mountain families survive or supplement their food stores. This knowledge of knowing what can be used from the wild also included when and where to find the food, but also how to preserve it. There are certain times of the year that most food preservation, harvesting, or preparation must be done. Without that knowledge and the skills to do these daunting tasks, a family could starve in the mountains. Bo Ball states, "Our calendar was not a checkerboard of dates decided by the bank and funeral home; it was a series of gatherings, of taking whatever the earth had to offer" (193).

When Rory Kennedy published *American Hollow* in 1999, the tradition of digging roots was still alive. Neial Bowling, ninth child of Iree and Bascum Bowling, says, "You can always make money digging roots. It's a seasonal thing, though, starting in the spring from March to about the first of October. Through the winter months you can gather some moss ..." (Kennedy 106). Neial is able to use a traditional mountain skill to supplement his income as needed. He says that just about anything can be sold from the mountains.

I've never been nowhere in my life where you can live any easier than right here in this part of the country. It's always been easy enough to make it around here, if you weren't too sorry to get out and do something. Now, if you're too sorry to get out of the house, that's another story. Then you ain't gonna have nothing ... Course there's good times for digging roots and not so good times. A pound of ginseng will bring as much as \$240 ... (Kennedy 107)

The Bowling family has continued to live deep in the hills of Eastern Kentucky for many years. Poor healthcare, little education, few jobs, and difficult roads to travel, keep them

on their land. Iree travels weekly to the nearest Walmart for staples, but for the most part everything she puts on her table comes from her relationship with the land – her own garden. Iree claims the process is easy. Interestingly, however, most of her deceased family has succumbed to cancer. Iree, herself, is in horrible health, but she prepares and tends the garden each year.

First, you get your ground ready. Put your seed in the ground, then your plants, then your fertilizer. You plow it, and you put fresh dirt around when the roots come up to get them started out growing. Then you put your dust on, that's to kill the bugs and worms off. When the garden is too big to work around, then you just lay back and let it make itself. All's left is to take the vegetables off and clean them ... Break the beans and put them in your jars, cook 'em for four hours. Take your cabbage down, clean 'em, chop them up and make your kraut. Tomatoes? You take them off the vine when they get ripe, can them, or put them in the freezer ... Sure it's work – but I can fill a hundred cans of beans a day. And we've got four freezers practically full. We got corn here that we shill and take to the mill to make bread, and to ground for cornmeal. (Kennedy 38)

Many Appalachian families living in remote, rural landscapes still maintain this tradition, because they do not have easy access to food that costs too much. Iree's knowledge is transferred to her daughters and sons. The garden itself is a sign of wealth and health for the Bowling family and others like it removed from mainstream American culture.

Ruby, the savior in *Cold Mountain* is the best literary heroic example of this knowledge and skill.

In Ruby's mind, everything – setting fence posts, making sauerkraut, killing hogs – fell under the rule of the heavens. Cut firewood in the old of the moon otherwise it won't do much by fry and hiss at you come

winter. Next April when the poplar leaves are about the size of a squirrel's ear, we'll plant corn when the signs are in the feet; otherwise the corn will just shank and hang down. November, kill a hog in the growing of the moon, for if we don't, the meat will lack grease and pork chops will cup up in the pan. (134)

Ruby is a steward of the land. Like most Appalachian heroes, she is aware that it is important to take care of the land and to develop that relationship. She has consciously and unconsciously learned the signs of the land. Part of the stewardship of the land was burning off the fields and preparing the land for crops. In another Holbrook story called "Fire," the men in the family are fighting fires in the hills to keep them from taking their house. Fires that were set to burn fields are no longer in control. In the story, however, the boys demonstrate the proper way to complete a controlled field burn. Pioneers had long since learned that burning the field is beneficial. When the first settlers were forced to cut down trees and clear land to plant their crops, burning the trees was a necessity. Caudill states, "Wherever the pioneer could manage to get down a few trees and burn them, the soil produced a profusion of corn, squash, beans, onions, potatoes, and tobacco, almost without labor after it was planted, for this was a land yet without weeds" (Caudill 22). However, these early settlers did not know how to sustain the land. They were uncertain how to renew land that had already been worn out. It would be many years before the hero discovered farming techniques that could develop the relationship with the land.

The Appalachian hero takes pride in his/her labor and its results. From planting to preserving, growing food is a noble challenge. Julie in *Gap Creek* says, "We didn't have enough money for shoelaces, but everything I done was free. The sweat was free as water from the spring, as air and sunlight" (310-11). She knows that her labors will be rewarded when the crops are harvested, and the only expense for her is the sweat. Mary

Lee Settle remembers Addie teaching her how to plant in the garden as well as harvesting: "We turned the new potatoes, and picked the corn she had shown me how to plant with pig manure at the bottom of the hole. Three seeds one for the birds, one for the Lord, and one for us ... Father, Son, Holy Ghost I learned to wait, to watch..." (162). Not only did Addie teach Settle a skill that she used later in life, but also the necessity to develop the relationship with the land and to have patience with it. Ron Rash's main character in *One Foot in Eden* mentions that planting needed to be done on Good Friday. Gertie also mentions this in *The Dollmaker*. Every "rule of thumb" was a "rule" for a reason. Methods had been developed for many years that were successful in growing food in the Appalachians, and the mountaineer was adept at reading necessary signs.

For Vine in *A Parchment of Leaves*, her garden is a sign of her success as a mother and as a wife. Her labor pays off when she and her young daughter are able to show her husband Saul, the "fruits" of her labor.

When Birdie finally awoke, we went outside and showed him the crops I had put down. Already the potato plants stood high and blue-green. Onions in straight rows, beans beginning to vine up the horse corn. My gourds hung from the fence like fat women holding their knees to their chests, their heads tucked between their legs. (141)

Saul's reply when he sees the perfect garden is, "You the finest woman I ever seen" (141). His affection and appreciation for her work means everything to Vine. Saul recognizes and benefits from the signs of Vine's hard work.

Perhaps Iree Bowling's sentiment about her land summarizes the changing times and the disappearing stewardship of the land in Appalachia. "... I don't think nobody will never take care of this land like I have – it's passing and it's a shame, for there's something good in it" (Kennedy 38). The Appalachian region seems to define itself on its relationship with the land. When the earliest settlers arrived in Kentucky, they were

required to plant something in the land for the right to own it. The land revering culture began and continues in the present. Although some of the land has been devastated by mining, logging, and flattening, there are still people living in the hollers like the Bowlings who rely on the land's gifts. "Foreigners" or outsiders may see these holler dwellers as backward with the advent of Walmart and other large grocery chains, but those in Iree's generation view their confined valley as a utopia, taking only what is needed and giving back in appreciation.

In his 2008 book, *Uneven Ground*, Ronald Eller states,

Appalachian residents had always used the land for survival, and their knowledge of and intimacy with the land were based upon their use of it. Although some mountain residents may have developed a spiritual relationship to the land and an appreciation for the natural environment, their connection with the place was more often linked to family and community ties rather than recognition of the relationship between their way of life and the landscape around them. (6-7)

Eller's reason for this thinking is that so many Appalachians quickly accepted the "more convenient lifestyles" of a "growth-based economy" after World War II. Eller further states, "... we continued to see the mountains (just as we saw mountain culture) as a barrier to progress, something to be overcome and its resources tapped in the name of growth" (7).

3.2 The Mountain Hero and Hunting/Fishing

Just as the land produces wild plants, it also produces game for the Appalachian hero and family. Most texts, both fiction and non-fiction, comment that wild game was plentiful. Earlier in Appalachia,

Deer was so plentiful that they yearned for a plain joint of mutton, although it was the pig rather than the sheep that settled down most

happily when domesticated livestock were imported from Europe, irrepressibly surviving the attentions of wolves, bears and the American Indians, who discovered an unhallowed passion for pork. (Tannahill 223)

David in *The Kentuckians* says, "There was plenty of game in the hills, squirrel, turkey, and deer, and for a time I could roam as wild as the game, taking pleasure in the roaming" (Giles 78). When David and the other early Kentuckians entered the territory they had to contend with the Native Americans for rights to the wild game. Although game was still plentiful, settlers were forced to venture farther from home to find it eventually. When preparing for their first Christmas in Kentucky, the women comment that they are tired of the big game – deer, buffalo, and elk – and tease their men, "You men just kill off the big game on account of you can't hit the little ... Why, even I can hit a cow elk as good as a man. Git out there and see if by chance you can hit a few turkey and partridge and dove" (Giles 156). Certain that it was good to be tired of the fresh meat, the women did want something different and there was plenty of fowl to be had. David says, "You had to ride fifteen, sometimes twenty, miles to find any kind of game nowadays, and it was troublesome trying to round up enough birds to suit the women, but we were bound to" (Giles 156). In his autobiography set over a hundred years later, G.C. Jones states, "The mountains held plenty of game – deer, bear, wild hogs, panther, bobcats. Just about any kind of game you wanted, it was there for your taking" (Jones ix).

Having a full smokehouse full of meat is a sign of prosperity. When Hank and Julie finally recover from their gut-wrenching poverty and bad luck, Hank went hunting to fill the smokehouse. Just as Vine felt complete because Saul was proud of her garden, Hank is proud that he is able to contribute to the table by hunting.

It was along in late fall ... that Hank took up hunting again. In the summer he had caught trout out of the creek, and we fried them for

Sunday dinner. But we hadn't had any red meat since the winter before. After the first frost Hank killed some squirrels and I made a stew. And then he killed a wild turkey. In November he shot a deer and we had more venison than I knowed what to do with. He salted down some of the deer meat and put in the smokehouse. (Morgan 316-317)

After the bigger game was eradicated, the mountaineer continued to hunt raccoon, possum, rabbit, quail, wild pigeon, wild turkey, bear, turtle, and squirrel. Although many animals are not considered edible in "civilization," when a family needs meat, it often turns to the forest. Rabbits and squirrels were only for the brave because it is said they carry disease (Ball 203). These animals cited in the Bible as unclean provided a certain stigma to those who ate them (Soler 60). Caudill states, "As the wild game declined, the mountaineer turned to milk cows, hogs and sheep, and chickens began to roost in the trees about his cabins," but hunting was still a favorite pastime for the mountaineer (Caudill 23). Learning their skills from the Cherokee, the mountain hero used as much of the hunted animal as possible. Possum is said to be tasty, and its fur could bring almost fifty cents. Appalachian cookbooks continue to provide recipes for cooking wild game (Page and Wigginton 132). Clothing was also made from products from the larger game, but as it grew less abundant, changes had to be made in clothing and diet.

Fishing in literature may allude to the Bible when Jesus provides the fisherman with an abundant catch, but it is also important to the mountaineer's diet in Appalachian texts. Jayber Crow enjoys pieces of fish and corn pone (Berry 112), and Inman "feasted on fish through the evening, eating until all the meal and lard was gone. Then they just cut chunks of fish and skewered them on green sticks and roasted them bare over fire coals" (Frazier 158). When game might be scarce, the mountaineer could always find a stream or river to fish. The act of fishing and eating fish is a method of a communion of

sorts. Men in desperate situations or men enjoying the company of one another relax and fish. The eating itself is a celebration of surviving until the next meal in the case of Inman and his traveling companion Veasey in *Cold Mountain*. On a hard journey through the wilderness to find his way back to Ada, Inman must eat whatever nature provides. Veasey notices a catfish in a creek one day, "In fact it was stout as a tub ... and must have taken a woefully wrong turn somewhere to find itself here in water so narrow it could reverse its direction only if it had a hinge in its middle" (156). Veasey wants to eat the catfish, but Inman quickly points out that they do not have the proper tackle. Veasey, however, cannot get over the size of the catfish and decides that he must have it. He makes a weir and chases the fish to the dead end.

He waded to the fish and bent and dipped his upper half into the water to grapple it out. Fish and man came up thrashing, spilling water off in sheets. Veasey had the fish in a hug about its middle, his hands clenched at its white belly. It fought him with all it had. Its neckless head beat back against his, and the whiskers whipped about his face. Then it bent like a great strong bow, sprung straight, and shot from his arms back into the water ... Veasey stood wheezing for air. His face was marked with long red weals where he had been stung by the whiskers of the fish, and his arms were cut from the spined fins, but he bent and took it up out of the water again and wrestled it to another draw. He tried over and over but failed each time until he and the fish both could hardly move from exhaustion. Veasey climbed wearily from the stream and sat on the bank. (157)

Veasey then asks Inman if he will jump in the water and wrestle the great catfish awhile. Inman simply pulls his gun from his hip and shoots the fish in the head. Veasey and the catfish symbolize the great, historical battles between man and beast, but also the

relationship between the mountain hero and animals they needed to survive. Although Inman has no trouble ending the struggle between man and fish with his gun, later in the novel he finds it harder to kill an animal more important to him. During the war, Inman vows never to shoot another bear even though he has “a strong liking for bear grease” acquired during his youth (352). The vow is a result of a series of dreams that include his transformation into a bear and his ultimate demise. When, as a bear, he is shot by hunters he sees his own “dripping red carcass” that is “manlike” (352). Upon this death, he recognizes the importance of the bear as being symbolic of hope. In his travels home, when he encounters a mother bear and her cub, he tries to speak to her reasonably. However, she charges him, he steps to the side, and she plummets to her death over a cliff leaving her cub squalling. Inman is disappointed and contemplates the possibility of befriending the cub, but decides to shoot it and eat it instead. After the mother’s untimely death he thinks “hope itself is but an obstacle” (353). When he eats the bear meat to sustain him for his journey, he comments that the meat tastes “like sin,” and ponders which of the seven it may be, finally making an eighth called “regret.” Although he temporarily has the feeling of a totemic relationship with bears, when faced with life or death, he chooses life in his quest to return home to Ada. From his dream, what he initially considers totemic of himself is ultimately a foreshadowing of this encounter with the mother and her cub. Finding food during his quest is frequently difficult. The wrestling match with the fish and the tragedy of killing the bear are symbolic of the struggles Inman faces on his journey not only in finding food, but surviving the elements and the men who were hunting him as well. Perhaps this is the reason for the foreshadowed bear encounter – his sense of being hunted himself. His quick thinking helps not only against the catfish and stepping aside from the bear, but other life-threatening situations as well.

3.3 The Mountain Hero and His Tools

To process and store food supplies, the Appalachian hero needs many objects. The tools of the Appalachian hero in literature communicate class and culture of the characters. The objects of the mountaineer are specific to place and time, but also to status in an otherwise classless community.

Mountaineer objects may be categorized by farm implements, cooking and preserving utensils, guns, and household objects. In *Addie*, a biography of her grandmother, Settle gives the reader a list of necessary objects that were moved from homestead to homestead. Many things were left behind when a family moved across the mountains; therefore this list is interesting in that it signifies what must be carried. Addie's family "moved children, slaves, livestock, English furniture, domestic truck, pots, kettles, pans, a whiskey still, farm tackle, blooded horses ... in a long, slow wagon train to Scott County, Kentucky" (Settle 24). Some "objects" are actually humans and animals her family felt necessary to bring – slaves and horses. Most objects are for producing food in their new home.

Farm implements included plows and hoes among other things. Upon arriving in the Appalachian Mountains, the pioneer had very little with which to cultivate the land. The hoe is a multi-purpose instrument and a symbol of work. As a family is preparing to be forced from their land in Holbrook's "Eminent Domain," the father notices the tools in the shed that have sustained the family on the land for decades, "... the hoes, mattocks, and shovels, hanging from the walls, the empty paper sacks and burlap bags piled in the corner, the machine lathe on the work bench, the meal grinder..." (Holbrook 92). These items are symbols of home. They will not be needed when they move, because they will not have the land. His family is being displaced for an asphalt road. As he looks at these objects he realizes the false permanence of the land. The tools remain unchanged, but the land does not. This occurrence was typical in the latter part of the twentieth century.

A push for better roads to bring coal and timber out of the mountains led to mountains being dynamited for passages through instead of over. Many dirt roads still exist, but even most of the narrow one lane roads through the Kentucky hills have been paved over the course of the last thirty years. Therefore, these tools of working the land are no longer symbols of work to be completed, but work long since complete. The hero without the land has no need for his tools. When man abandons his relationship with the land, he also abandons his relationship with his tools. These tools are often found in antique stores and flea markets and have now become symbols of a culture's past.

For Jeeter in Erskine Caldwell's 1932 *Tobacco Road*, the hoe is only useful for chopping cotton and corn. He uses the hoe as an excuse for not raising his beloved turnips this year. It will not serve his purpose, because he believes he needs a mule.

But I couldn't raise no turnips this year. I didn't have no mule, and I didn't have no guano. Oh, I had a few measly little rows out there in the field, but a man can't run no farm unless he's got a mule to plow it with. A hoe ain't no good except to chop cotton with, and corn. Ain't no sense in trying to grow turnips with a hoe. (24)

Jeeter uses the hoe as a scapegoat for his lack of turnips, but it is also symbolic of the skill and tools that are needed to grow crops on a scale large enough to support a family. Jeeter is unsuccessful at this and gives his daughter away for marriage. The family suffers from ignorance and laziness, and it is easier for Jeeter to blame his shortcomings on the lack of proper equipment.

Household items are mentioned on a much greater scale than farming implements. They are the tools of the heroine who feeds her family and provides lifelong memories of food and comfort. When the men finally brought their families into Kentucky in Giles's novel, they carried pots, kettles, quilts, blankets tied in bundles on pack animals, salt, flour, seed, ammunition, and Negroes. Although not typically slave owners

in the Appalachians, some families initially did own them like Mary Lee Settle's family when they moved across the mountains. In this particular case, the Negro woman, given as a wedding gift along with her three sons, belonged to one of the pioneer families. It does not go unnoticed that the slave family is mentioned in the same discussion with material items toted. Slaves do not play a major role, because mountain families were too poor to own them, but as families came and moved farther west (away from the mountains) the state of Kentucky became divided during the Civil War over the issue of slavery.

As the mountains were settled prior to the stove, mountain women used stone fireplaces. "Haunches of deer meat was roasting on a spit in the fireplace. The womenfolks used the fireplace in this room for cooking as much as the one in the cookroom," says the protagonist in Giles's *The Kentuckians* when he stops along the trail to Kentucky. Most families did not have the luxury of two fireplaces, but because this house was a normal stop on a major trail, the host was well-equipped to feed many men. Typically there was only one fireplace for all of the household chores. Fireplace bars, pots, and kettles with a handle (bail) would be hung in S-shaped hooks (Page and Wigginton 2). Hanging from these hooks would be Dutch ovens or other pots. Dutch ovens were developed early in the eighteenth century with "three legs on the bottom, a rimmed lid, and a bail on the side ears of the pots" (Ragsdale 230). They were used mostly for baking breads and desserts because of the shallow depth. Dutch ovens were more frequently buried in the coals of the fire for baking. The most important tool, however, was the wood stove. The invention of wood burning and coal stoves made the labor intensive job of cooking a little easier. However, there were still many chores to complete that revolved around keeping the stove active. According to the authors of *Foxfire*, "Whatever the risks, wood stoves were considered to be an improvement over fireplaces for cooking, but they obviously still required a lot of attention. Dry kindling and

wood had to be cut to fit the firebox and kept on hand” (15). In *Gap Creek*, Julie’s main job even before her father dies is to bring in firewood. Typically seen as a male role, women often were the ones who chopped wood and hauled it inside for the stove. Men may have been at work in the fields and sons old enough to chop wood were probably with them. There is also maintenance to be performed on the wood stove. Ashes and soot needed to be disposed of every two or three days. A soot rake was used to scrape the inside and the top of the stove (Page and Wigginton 27). The stoves were big enough to have many pots and kettles cooking simultaneously, and to watch a woman cook on one must have been like watching a symphony conductor.

The cooking surface of a wood stove usually has six eyes. Sometimes they are all the same size, sometimes of varying sizes. The left side of the stove, directly over the firebox is the hottest place on the top of the stove. The heat under the eyes cannot be regulated individually, so pots have to be moved from one to the other according to how much heat is required. (Page and Wigginton 21)

Instead of turning the knobs to adjust the heat, the hero would move the pots to various locations as needed. Many authors have memories of watching a grandmother or great-grandmother laboring over an old wood stove preparing the meal for a large family.

Cast iron became the most important utensil in an Appalachian household. Used to cook anything in a fireplace, wood stove, gas stove, or modern electric stove, cast iron skillets and pots are the number one staple in a mountain woman’s kitchen still today. The authors of *Foxfire* explain that cast iron is “long the first and perhaps only choice of people in this area.” One mountain woman comments, “They’ve never been a mess of beans or anything cooked that’s as good as they are in that old black pot, and what makes the difference I don’t know” (Page and Wigginton 34). Cast iron pots and skillets must be treated or “seasoned” to prevent foods from sticking and to keep them from

rusting after being washed. This process of seasoning is the key to a great taste. The seasoning simply means that lard or oil be cooked in the pan. Cast iron should never be thoroughly washed – no soap, very little water. If seasoned properly, foods will not stick; therefore wiping them with a paper towel is sufficient.

In his article “Of Sorghum Syrup, Cushaws, Mountain Barbecue, Soup Beans, and Black Iron Skillets,” Fred Sauceman says,

When I want to reconnect with my Southern mountain past, I take a black iron skillet down from the pegboard wall and open the flour bin ... Nothing says Southern cooking any better than a black skillet. Ours are about a century old. They hold, deep within their dark molecules, silent memories of floured, fried fatback on cold Depression mornings. Pineapple upside-down cake from better times. Brown biscuits glossy with lard. The legacy of cracklin' cornbread. (“Sorghum” 224)

Sauceman’s cast iron skillet is a symbol of his family’s past and his specific memories of food.

Along with cast iron pots and skillets, most families had one large kettle – usually cast iron also. This kettle was used for a multitude of tasks – cooking, making soap, scalding hogs and other animals, bathing, and washing clothes. Having a kettle like this was a sign of prosperity. These kettles were handed down for several generations, typically to the eldest daughter. Sidney Saylor Farr explains how to make lye soap in a 2007 essay for *Appalachian Heritage*, and the most important tool is the big black kettle (88).

According to Mark Sohn, “Between 1840-1870, well-equipped kitchens now included large worktables, china closets, pie safes, and dry sinks, and after the 1860s perhaps even ice chests” (19). Other household implements include washtubs, churns, enameled ware, Mason jars, coffee pots, and buckets for hauling water. Settle discusses

washing sheets in her grandmother's great washtub (63). Every family needed a churn to produce the main ingredient in most mountain recipes – butter. Sohn comments that when enamel ware and canning jars were introduced, canning replaced drying as a means of storage (19). Most importantly, these items helped the hero produce the food and complete the chores needed to sustain a household. However, the objects meant a great deal to the families.

She put the coffee on, and stoked the stove afresh. Then, as always in any weather, she picked up the red cedar bucket and went to the spring. As Gertie broke the thin skim of ice on top (bucket) and lifted dipperfuls of water from it to fill the coffee-pot, she smiled on it, remembering the years she had had it, and was filled for a moment with a proud consciousness (Arnow 79)

Like Saucepan with his iron skillet, Gertie stops to reflect on her red cedar bucket. It too is a symbol of her memories. Appalachian heroes developed relationships with these objects that they relied so heavily upon. They were proud to have the object in the family, but also proud that as much as the objects may have been used, they were solid. The reliability of these objects meant that the hero would not have to purchase or trade for another one and that valuable time and money could be saved.

Just as with food from the land and food mountaineers are able to raise and grow, they make do with what they have. For a while G.C. Jones works for a man who lives in town who is a foreman on a timber job. One task the foreman wanted was to move heavy machinery. Jones notices heavy timbers near his wagon and creates a skid to move the equipment easier. He says, "The foreman wanted to know how in the hell why he hadn't thought of doing that. I said, 'I guess it's because you're not a mountain man. We up in these hills try to make do with what we have'" (Jones 28).

When new inventions were introduced in the Appalachians, it was the wealthier families who purchased the items first. Thus, these new goods (like a wood stove or oven), were symbols of class. Those who were able to afford certain implements were considered to have money. Money was not necessarily visible in the mountains otherwise. Families did not own elaborate houses for those on the outside to easily spot affluence.

3.4 The Mountain Hero and His Still

When the whiskey tax was repealed in 1802 after the infamous Whiskey Rebellion of 1794, the relationship between the distiller and the government had been scarred forever. The government again damaged its reputation with the distillers when, during the Civil War, stills were confiscated for the use of the copper and another excise tax was placed on liquor to finance the war. Prohibition in 1919 actually rejuvenated the whiskey business driving the profit margin up to 800%. Instead of the federal government benefitting from the excise tax on whiskey manufacturers, 100% of the profit was for anyone willing to take the risk of producing whiskey illegally. Plus, some states refused to support the law, and the law did not prohibit people from consuming liquor ... just manufacturing it. Where the Scottish had a lot to learn about farming when they migrated to the United States, they already knew about their liquor. To them, whiskey was the water of life. The Appalachians were a perfect place to manufacture whiskey. Bootleggers were extremely hard to find and the clan-like society within the hills is added detriment to government men with historically bad reputations.

Just as valuable to some mountain heroes as the objects used in the house and on the farm was the still - valuable for the hero to use as a means of producing a commodity that he could sell or consume. Harry Caudill explains,

In this half- century [1850-1900] there grew up farther west, in the Bluegrass, the first of the distilleries which were eventually to make the

word “Kentucky” synonymous with bourbon whiskey. Scotsmen had brought to the Blue Ridge the science of distilling firewater from rye and barley, and in their new environment they quickly learned to substitute Indian corn for these Old World grains. Alcohol could break the tedium of a harsh and dangerous life and the mountaineer was prompt to establish a primitive “still” capable of turning out ample whiskey for his household. Money was almost nonexistent, and to get some cash the mountaineer soon learned to manufacture a few barrels of the colorless and raw corn whiskey to be floated downstream on a raft for sale to the distilleries at Louisville or Frankfort. This source brought him practically his only money income for a period of more than fifty years, and ingrained in him a habit so deeply tenacious that generations of revenue officers have been unable to root it out. (20)

Most households contained moonshine. Many even owned stills. It is said, “If a mountaineer could not enjoy its stimulation because of religious convictions he consumed it as a medicine. It was believed to benefit every ailment from snakebite to arthritis” (Caudill 79). These stills owned by the mountain man became part of America’s history. The National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) has deep roots in moonshine. Fast cars became a necessity during Prohibition, so the bootleggers from mainly the Appalachians could distribute their product. After Prohibition, it continued to be a necessity to run shine because the “revenueurs” wanted to tax the product. Moonshine is the catalyst for one of the biggest sports in the United States.

In his autobiography *Growing Up Hard in Harlan County*, G.C. Jones explains how he became a wagon handler before he was a teenager. One of the jobs he attains is delivering goods over the mountain. A large percentage of the goods he delivered was moonshine.

Mr. Anderson said, "You have 400 gallons of liquor on your wagon, and I am going to arrange produce over it to conceal it." Some of the jugs contained molasses, for a fooler if I was searched going back. He placed sacks of shucky beans, dried apples, three or four bundles of furs, a few cowhides, and feed for my mules on the return trip. (Jones 16)

The sheriff was given a portion of the moonshine to keep him quiet, therefore when the revenuers were sniffing around, the sheriff warned the man Jones worked for, so they could "lay low" until the government men left. Moonshine became like tobacco and other home grown goods. Mountaineers traded moonshine for store goods or other needed items.

Moonshine is personal. Mountaineers take pride in producing the best liquor. G.C. Jones states, "We had 600 gallons of the best moonshine that was ever made in the state of Kentucky. That was the message I was to tell Mr. Ford" (Jones 94). In this case, moonshine was used as currency. The fresh food and goods brought by Jones in his wagons was paid for with moonshine.

Men who successfully avoided the government and continued to produce whiskey became legends. A dime novel was written about Lewis Redmond who was shot eighteen times in 1881 and survived. He spent a couple of years in jail but was pardoned by Chester A. Arthur. Men like Redmond were not fighting a cause. They were fighting for their own rights.

Women rarely were moonshiners. It was a dangerous business, so if women were involved it was usually on a small scale. While not distillers themselves most times, women were successful as bootleggers. David Maurer in his 1971 *Kentucky Moonshine* states, "The limited participation of women is perhaps explained partially by the fact that work at the still is rough and even dangerous. But there is also the pervasive belief,

perhaps influenced by taboo, that in the traditional division of labor men are responsible for the production of whiskey” (75). Women did participate by bringing picnics to the stills when a successful run had been made. They would cook chickens and corn in the still furnace and celebrate the success (Maurer 74). Moonshining could truly be a family business. Children in the family acted as lookouts dispersed to posts in the woods that provided the best visual of possible intruders. Young men who were experienced drivers (whether wagon or automobile) handled the delivery.

The product is no longer moonshine, but drugs like the field of marijuana grown by one hero mentioned earlier. Instead of hiding stills, large fields of marijuana are being grown in the hills. William, in Offutt’s “Horseweed,” decides not to kill the coal company man trespassing on his property. A typical response to this infraction is to shoot the man and ask questions later.

3.5 The Mountain Hero and His Animals

Along with the mountaineer’s relationship with the land and his/her objects, the hero also developed a relationship with animals. Although a big difference between work animals and animals raised for consumption, the mountain hero took special care of his/her animals because they were such an important aspect of the family’s existence.

As mentioned earlier, Jeeter in Caldwell’s *Tobacco Road*, says that he cannot raise turnips without the aid of a mule for plowing. When the mountain hero found a good team of mules or horses, they became irreplaceable and many times treated as well as the hero’s own children. In G. C. Jones’s autobiography *Growing Up Hard in Harlan County* he describes his job as a young boy pulling wagons over the hills to deliver goods. He felt that a lot could be learned from the way a man handled his team of mules or horses. A fight breaks out in the middle of a climb, because a man continues to whip his owner’s team of horses.

The driver ... was thrashing his horses with a big nine-plait black snake whip and cursing them like a demon ... I walked ahead to the stalled team. I asked the driver to stop beating his horses. He told me to mind my own damn business or he would give me a few cracks with his black snake whip. (Jones 8)

Ultimately, the man curses young Jones resulting in a rock to his jaw and being sent back to town to explain himself to his boss. Driving his team of mules that were not used to the hard climb, Jones gives them “extra close attention ... I pushed my hand under their collar pad and let in cool air to their sweaty shoulders and checked their head gear and bits. If a shoe came loose I would get my hammer and clinching iron and tighten the nails” (Jones 7). Jones says, “To become a handler of stock you’ve got to know how to care for them. Treat them gentle, watch out for any discomfort that might be caused by bad fitting harness or a strained muscle or ligament. You do this and the animal will learn to obey every command you give” (Jones 10). Each time the teams stopped to eat or rest for the night, the animals were handled first. Jones and the other men driving the wagons knew that the animals were valuable. The work animals were part of the family and treated as such.

Will Cooper, in Charles Frazier’s 2006 novel *Thirteen Moons*, leaves home at age thirteen with only his horse named Waverley, a few notes of “Georgia paper money, a small iron skillet, and a folded piece of paper on which she [his aunt] had written recipes for fried chicken and biscuits” (36-37). He risks his life to save his horse stolen by Indians and taken to an infamously underhanded character named Featherstone. Will risks his life to save Waverley and throughout the novel his horse seems to be the one constant for him. In his description of Waverley, Will gives the horse human qualities like “handsome” and “impulsion.” He says that he is worth so much that “people built houses for less money.” Even though Will could use money early in the beginning of his career

as a trader, he says, "... I would rather have cut off my left hand and sold it by the pound like pig trotters or stew bones than considered selling him," because he had "head-turning quality" and "I loved him and believed he loved me" (111).

Milk cows were also valuable possessions tended typically by the mountain heroine. In Giles's novel, the early Kentuckians are fending off Indians from a fort, but the milk cows are outside the main walls so they can continue to graze. One heroine volunteers to milk the cow while the men guard her. If the cow is not milked, her bags will swell causing her misery. The heroine is successful, but soon after, the Indians steal the prolific cow and hack her up instead of recognizing that she is a good milk cow. This enrages the women for two reasons. The milk is needed in the fort, and the Indians are such savages they do not understand how to best utilize the possession they stole. Lives were at risk for the milk and the well-being of the cow. It seems as though the settlers would not have been as angry had the Indians stolen the cow for its milk. The animal is so important to this band of early Kentuckians that a woman risks her life by leaving the safety of the fort just so the animal will not be uncomfortable with heavy milk – not just for the milk itself to benefit those in the fort.

Mark Sohn states, "To supplement wild game, even the early settlers raised pork and beef that, for most of the year, could forage in the wilds" (Sohn 17). Unable to feed large numbers, it was easier to let the animals roam the wilderness. A rise in population during the 1940s led to Kentucky passing the Herd Law that stated families could no longer free range, so the size of herds was drastically reduced. If an animal was found on another person's property, the person could keep the animal. Therefore, the mountaineer selected the types of livestock to raise that would be easy for the family to maintain. Pigs "thrived in piney woods, hill country, and scrub lands" and provided an "independent lifestyle for hog raisers" (Wilson 88). They are one of the most efficient sources of food according to Robert Beverley (1705), an "upper-class Virginian" quoted

by Wilson, because “their weight can increase 150-fold in the first eight months of life, and most of the animal is edible” (Wilson 102).

According to the Greeks and Romans, who not only wrote about Celts but traded Mediterranean products for their salt and salt products, Celts ate a great deal of meat, both wild and domesticated. Salted meat was a Celtic specialty. When the Romans finally succeeded in imposing their culture on the Celts, Moccus, which means “pig,” was the Celtic name for the god Mercury. The Celts did not mean it unkindly. To the pig loving Celts, the leg of wild boar was considered the choicest piece of meat and was reserved for warriors ... the Celts preferred the legs. It is likely that among the Celtic contributions to Western culture are the first salt-cured hams ... the Celts certainly made, traded, and ate hams. (Kurlansky 57)

Settlers in the Appalachians consisted of strong Celtic backgrounds. Perhaps this is why the pig became the largest source of meat for the mountaineers. They had a strong cultural disposition for the meat. The Celts were mountain people and knew how to mine their mountains for salt much like the Appalachians knew how to coexist in their own mountains, therefore, they were able to raise and cure their own pork with access to salt.

Many had cattle, but cows tended to be harder to keep within the confines of a fence, thus the least literary animal in Appalachian fiction is beef cattle. Mainly families had milk cows for milk, butter, and cheese. However, some families did have beef and slaughtered them as needed. The fat was made into tallow to grease the bottom of kid's feet and chests for the croup according to Foxfire (126). Every family had hogs and chickens, and some had goats. All of the animals were multi-purpose.

In *Cold Mountain*, goats save Inman's life. As he is trying to get home to his beloved Ada, he is saved by a goat lady. He watches her ritualistically slaughter one of her “pet” goats for their supper and is in awe with the way she gently and sweetly

performs the task paying homage to the goat that is sacrificing its life. Inman witnesses a spiritual moment between woman and the animal giving its life for her; and the respect in which she recognizes its sacrifice and then watches her prepare the meat.

She cut into parts, the tenderest pieces coated with a dry rub of herbs, ground peppers, salt, a little sugar. These she skewered on green twigs and set to roast. The other pieces she put into an iron pot with water, onions, an entire bulb of garlic, five dried red peppers, leaves of sage, and summer savory scrubbed between her palms. The pot had little legs, and she took a stick and scraped coals under it for slow cooking.
(268-69)

The goat lady explains to him,

A body can mainly live off goats, their milk and cheese, and their meat in times of year when they start increasing to more than I need. I pull whatever wild green is in season. Trap birds. There's a world of food growing volunteer if you know where to look. And there's a little town about a half day's walk north. I go barter off cheese for taters, meal, lard, and the like. Brew simples from plants and sell them. Medicine, Tinctures, Salve. Conjure warts. (272-73)

Inman is thankful for her generosity, but he is also concerned with how she lives alone in the wilderness. This explanation she provides is a good example of the mountain heroine. She takes what the land provides, raises her own livestock, and trades for any other necessities she may need. Her life is simple. She has a relationship with the animals and nature that helps sustain her life. Her isolation does not hinder her. Frazier's use of the female character is typical in Appalachian fiction. His Appalachian heroines are kindred spirits – all appreciating the help of a man, but not in need of that help. Ada relies on Ruby. Ruby relies on the skills she learned as a child. The goat lady

is completely self-sufficient. Frazier could have used a man in her place, but the significance of being able to completely be self-reliant in the wilderness of the Appalachians would be lost. A female in the role proves that more than a man, because women are supposed to be reliant on men. Her relationship with the goats is one of respect. She loves the animals as pets as shown when she gently slaughters the goat, and she prepares the goat meat for Inman with great care.

Chickens were also common in most barnyards. No one seems to enjoy the task of dressing a chicken, but everyone enjoys the rewards. "Killing and scalding and plucking one's own chickens and cooking them for hours over a fireplace or wood stove is not the stuff of which many dreams are made," state the authors of *Foxfire* (Page and Wigginton xii). Chickens are also quite literary in modern Appalachian fiction. A few times in *Gap Creek* one of the women kills and plucks a chicken for a meal. Usually fried chicken is served for the meal after church on Sunday. It is especially lucky when company arrives on the day with fried chicken. Julie says, "It was a good thing I had killed and plucked the chicken that morning, because we didn't always have chicken on Sunday. I had hoped Hank might show up at church, and come home with us." Frying chicken is labor intensive; therefore it was limited to once a week. Later when Julie and Hank are married and expecting Hank's mother for a visit, Julie prepares fried chicken. Having been a part of a large family of women, Julie was the one who did the outdoor chores, so she is concerned about cooking for her mother-in-law. Frying chicken can be a disaster or it can be a wonderful example of skill. Julie had only taught herself how to cook since she had been married to Hank. The authors of *Foxfire* interviewed many Appalachian women and found that

None of them enjoyed the task of "dressing" them – the entire process from killing the chickens to cutting them up – but most of them agreed

that poultry can add variety to the menu and is a delightful and economical alternative to beef and pork. (Page and Wigginton 100)

The labor intensive process of preparing fried chicken is symbolic of the respect given to those being fed from the woman preparing. Saving fried chicken for Sunday shows that the day is special in a religious sense, but also as a time for a family to gather. Julie knows that if she correctly prepares the fried chicken, it will be a sign of respect to her mother-in-law. This adds even more pressure to the character. Food, and its preparation, is being used as a catalyst to a possible conflict. Certainly it foreshadows possible problems between Julie and her in-law.

Chickens were just as important to the existence of the Cherokee living in the Appalachians. Especially for women living alone, chickens were easy to handle. One very old Cherokee woman in Charles Frazier's novel *Thirteen Moons* is being removed from her home by the military. When she sees them approach, she gathers "two blankets and a little black pot" with some herbs folded into the blanket. Before she leaves, even though she knows she will not return, she feeds her chickens. The protagonist acknowledges her "stewardship, maintaining it until the last moment" (213). This act of kinship with her animals is symbolic of her culture. Frazier depicts this decrepit woman as heroic, while the military men in pomp and circumstance are depicted as lowly and untrustworthy. Juxtaposing the two creates a sense of regret and embarrassment for what the government did to the natives in the region. In this case, the chickens are symbolic of the loss of stewardship in the hills.

By far the most important animal for the mountaineer's diet is the hog; and the hog seems to be the most significant literary animal because of this. In most of the Appalachian texts, the hog killing process is explained in detail. The importance of the hog is that everything is used. According to Foxfire, "Since the hog has never been extremely difficult to raise, it is still found on many farms. Old- and new-timers alike

adamantly stand by their belief that virtually no part of the hog should be thrown away” (Page and Wigginton 116). The authors go on to list recipes for using all parts of the hog including: the head, tongue, brain, snout, ears, liver, heart, lungs, skin, intestines, feet, and tail” (116).

G. C. Jones recalls the sheriff came to help his family every fall when they butchered hogs. He wanted the “hog’s head, liver, lungs, and feet” for his wife to make head cheese or loaf (Jones 22). Fred Sauceman states, “Biting winters and steamy summers provided the perfect conditions for the salt-curing of hams, aged for as long as two years. Mountain people savor side meat, or bacon, called, by some, with an Elizabethan-inflected second syllable, ‘streaked’” (“Appalachian Foodways” 21).

Many communities shared resources and had a slaughtering day or relied on someone to hold a butchering, so they could purchase fresh meat. Some small communities relied on one man to supply the only local store.

On November 15 we drove out to Mr. Ford’s. It was butchering day. Let it come rain or shine, we would not fail to butcher on this day. He would hire four good strong men to help him. He would slaughter twenty to thirty big fat hogs and from six to eight beef cattle. The people in town depended on him for a lot of meat. (Jones 36)

Jones describes the process like most narrators. Because the numbers butchered are greater, his recount has an assembly line aspect with “three huge vats of water boiling” (Jones 37). Each man has a specific task to complete. As Mr. Ford scrapes the head, the others scrape the feet. When that task is finished, they all easily scrape the remains – hams, shoulders, and side. Jones notices, “It was something to watch, how smooth and skilled these people were, going about their work” (Jones 37).

Hog-killing is still in practice today in the Appalachians. According to Joseph Dabney in his 1998 *Smokehouse Ham, Spoon Bread, & Scuppernong Wine*,

“Thanksgiving Day was the usual hog-killing date four decades ago, but with the modern-day onslaught of environmental warming, the arrival of cold ‘hog-killing weather’ today is totally unpredictable” (103-104). “Despite eagerness for fresh meat, no mountaineer would attempt the ritual without first checking the ‘signs’ as well as the thermometer,” says Dabney (176). One Appalachian hero with 2000 hogs to his credit states that it is best when it is 30 to 35 degrees “when the moon was in the last quarter – a ‘waning moon.’ Killing a hog on a ‘growing moon,’ would be an awful risk. ‘Even cracklin’s will twist and curl up in the frying pan’” (Dabney 176).

Pork, because it was easily preserved, was a valued frontier food. Farmers killed mature pigs, laden with lard, in late fall or winter. They boiled the fat for use in cooking and soap making, and they salted and dry-cured the meat, boiled bone and head parts to make souse, and simmered pigs’ feet for soup. The pork lard that settlers used on the frontier dominated mountain cooking until the end of the twentieth century, and today, pork remains a favorite meat. (Sohn 15)

In Holbrook’s story “The Lost Dog,” a father and son are looking for the hunting dog that has been missing. In their search, they arrive at a home where the family is beginning the hog-killing process, because “it’s cold enough, weather’s right” (Holbrook 24). They need some extra help, so the father volunteers to help for a few pounds of sausage and some souse meat. The son sees, “A group of people stood in the field around a fire that burned beneath a big steaming kettle. Beside the kettle was a rough table made of sawhorses and heavy boards, and next to that a tripod of long, thick poles supporting a large pulley,” and he is unsure what is happening (Holbrook 22). The father is disappointed that his son is virtually useless in the hog-killing task, because he has never been taught. His father is away most of the time driving a truck. This is a source

of shame for the father. Because of this, the father vows to teach his son necessary mountain skills. The task brings the two closer.

Athey Keith in *Jayber Crow* also tells a story of hog-killing time. Because so many families are killing hogs at the same time, they decide to get together at Carter Keith's place (Athey's father) to slaughter and "work up the meat" at the Keith place to avoid moving the hogs they were buying from Keith. The plan is to kill two dozen hogs, and Keith will supply the "scalding box, gam'ling pole, firewood, and other necessities at a small surcharge per head" (218). A few days after Thanksgiving is the scheduled time. However, for various reasons Keith is unable to be there when the process starts, so he appoints his son Athey to be in charge of the men performing the task. Athey greets the men when they arrive to tell them where to dig the trenches to lay the fire. Another complication occurs when a man named Put arrives to work in exchange for a few bits of hog meat that did not belong to him.

If he attended the hog-killing and worked or appeared to work, Put thought, then surely they would give him a couple of heads and maybe a backbone, maybe even a sparerib or two. Maybe the more finicky among them (if anybody could be finicky in that hard time) would make him a present of kidneys or hearts or livers or milts or sweetbreads. At the very least, he would have a day of company and talk and a tub or two of guts to throw out for his chickens and dogs. He had two washtubs for that purpose in his wagon. (220)

While on his way to the hog-killing he stops in at a local store and tells Jim Pete about the big slaughter. Upset that he is not part of it, Jim Pete sends three gallons of whiskey with Put to announce to the men to kill one for him as he supplied the whiskey. That afternoon, they had killed twenty-five hogs (one for the booze, so Athey's dad would not be indebted to Jim Pete). The men proceeded to get drunk and began to waste slabs of

fat. Later, a group named the Regulators (Ku Klux Klan), invades, locks the boozed men in Keith's barn, and begins to eat meat cuts that the drunkards had carved for themselves. By the time Carter Keith arrives home, his place is in a shambles, and Athey thinks he is in trouble. He realizes he should have broken the keg of whiskey as soon as it arrived, but a valuable lesson is learned. Not only was this hog-killing time when a community of men could gather and work together, it also shows the darker side of man. The hog-killing is just the task that happens to be taking place when Athey Keith learns this lesson of greed, laziness, drunkenness, racial prejudice and hypocrisy.

In the absence of men, the women who live on God's Creek in Silas House's *A Parchment of Leaves*, decide to perform the hog-killing themselves. Vine's mother-in-law Esme, "called on every woman she knowed to come down and help with the slaughter. There were no men left on the creek except Old Man Taylor, who was so bent that he reminded me of an upside-down L when I saw him walking alongside the road. We numbered six" (House 110). Vine recalls,

They all elected me to shoot the hog. I accepted with nothing more than the nod of my head and went into the house to get my rifle. I had killed animals all of my life. I had wrung the necks or cut the heads off of countless chickens. Once, I had talked Jubal into taking me hunting with him and had ended up shaming him by shooting three squirrels to his one. But when I walked out to the pen behind Esme's house and saw the hog pacing back and forth – heaving like it knowed what was about to happen – I was certain that I would not be able to do it. I dreaded admitting this to all of the women, for fear of them making fun of me. I couldn't blame them if they did. After all, I had never felt bad about blinking out the lives of small things like hens and squirrels, but I pitied the huge, block-shaped hog that looked at me with black eyes through

the slats of the pen ... "I ain't shot in a while. I'd rather one of you all done it," I said, trying to make my voice as solid as I could. "I won't be able to put him down with the first shot." (House 111)

Vine's inability to shoot the hog is symbolic of the importance placed on the sacrifice of the animals in Appalachia. The hog is giving its life for Vine's family. Because she is able to easily kill chickens and squirrels, this moment becomes sentimental. A common occurrence of the season becomes a tribulation for Vine. Maybe it is because she subconsciously recognizes the time-consuming, difficult task ahead of the women once she pulls the trigger. Knowing the task would be made easier if the men were there to complete it with them, she hesitates. It is the eldest of the group who is not sentimental, remorseful, or hesitant to kill the hog. In fact, Esme's description of her earlier years of hog killing is violent. She says, "In my day we just stuck a blade in its neck and let it work itself to death" (111). Finally, Vine refuses to pull the trigger and begs one of the others to perform the deed. Frustrated, Esme "jerked the rifle away and cracked the barrel open. She closed one eye and looked down into the cylinders ... 'Never seen six big women that couldn't kill a hog'" (111). Without a moment's hesitation, she shoots the hog between its eyes. The women watch as "It wobbled for just a moment, as if drunk. It stomped one foot in a feeble way, tried to take a step forward, then fell over with the heft of an ancient tree" (112). When Bess Morgan comments, "Poor old thing," Esme quickly retaliates stating, "You'll think 'poor old thing' when you're eating them chops this winter" (112). The women, most of them in skirts, continue the process of preparing the hog with their knives. Vine notices that it is foolish to wear skirts in the cold weather for this task. House describes the process in great detail. Boiling water must be poured onto the hog to help scrape the bristles from the body. The smell of burning flesh and hair is always remembered by those who have completed the task. Vine says, "We had all scraped hogs before, and we were good at it. This part had always been the women's job

anyway" (113). Then the hog must be lifted. Automobiles or mules were used to help lift or string up the hog. The next step is to slit the hog's throat. As the warm blood runs out, the six women huddle around it together for warmth. Vine notices at this moment that it is quiet without the men. She says, "When men were present at a hog killing, the event took on the feel of a celebration. The men would have all been slapping one another on the back, taking snorts from a bottle of liquor ... and going on about the promise of food swinging in front of them" (114). This descriptive account ends as one of the men return home after a long absence. This process that the six women have completed represents the female hero's determination, skill and ability to perform the work of men. They too have a relationship with their livestock. Vine cannot bring herself to shoot the hog, which represents her appreciation and gratitude for its contribution. The moment passes quickly when there is work to be done, and her apprehension is quickly forgotten. Ironically, later in the novel Vine does not have as much trouble taking her brother-in-law's life as she did the hog's. Her brother-in-law attempts to rape her, but she kills him, drags him up the hill, buries him, and then allows everyone to believe he has "run off" again.

In *Gap Creek*, Julie also takes part in the hog-killing process. She sends Hank to work, and her mother-in-law and her landlord (Mr. Pendergast) are left to complete the chore. Julie is the strongest of the three, but "the killing had to be done when there was a freeze," even though Hank had to work (Morgan 81). This time, Mr. Pendergast shoots the hog in the head while Julie starts a fire under the big wash pot, sharpens the butcher knives and paring knives. Although the strongest of the three, Julie does not participate in the actual killing of the hog. With a man present, she is able to begin the more womanly chores. When ready, they tie ropes to the hind legs after Mr. Pendergast slits the hog's throat. They had to drag the hog themselves to the scalding boards where they performed the same task as Vine and her friends. "I always hated the stink of hog

bristles and scalded skin,” says Julie (83). While Julie scrapes the hog clean on both sides, Mr. Pendergast stands by the fire to watch. When this is complete, they drag the hog to the gambrel to lift him by his hind legs where they hang him upside down. The part of the process left out in House’s novel is included in Morgan’s.

Taking a sharpened butcher knife, I drove it into the fat of the hog’s belly, but not too deep. I didn’t want to cut any of the guts inside. I’d always hated butchering hogs, and here I was married and doing it again. Slicing through the skin and fat I brought the blade right down the hog from one end of the belly to the other. And then with the axe I chopped through the breastbone. Hot guts started falling out, and I had to push them back until we got the tub underneath. Then with my sleeves rolled up I raked the smoking guts into the tub, the slick coils of entrails, intestines like blisters and bubbles of manure with big worms inside, as well as liver, heart, lungs, stomach. I took the axe and finished splitting the chest bone and then raked out the rest of the innards.

It took both me and Mr. Pendergast to lug the tub into the garden to bury the guts. They had a sickening smell of blood and manure. I had blood up to my elbows.

“Never seen a woman work like you,” Mr. Pendergast said.

“Work ain’t nothing but work,” I said. (Morgan 83-84)

This is Mr. Pendergast’s only show of respect for Julie that she unintentionally acquires. Morgan continues with the entire hog-killing process. Julie cuts off the head and saves the brains to fry up for Hank later, because he likes them so much. Julie’s knowledge of cutting up the parts of meat is impressive. She works on the ribs and the tenderloin and is able to completely butcher the hog without any help. She then cuts the fat into sections and puts them in three tubs. Her mother-in-law (Ma Richards) then offers to

help cut the chunks of fat into smaller pieces to render the lard. When the butchering is complete, they salt the meat for the smokehouse. Julie's work is still unfinished, but the three of them needed to eat, so she fries some of the pork tenderloin and makes grits for their supper. Julie says, "The fresh meat, as it crackled and turned brown, smelled sweeter than any pastry. Fresh meat has a perfume of its own. The steam that went up from the pan of tenderloin filled the kitchen with a golden flavor, mixed with fumes of the boiling coffee. The smells made me a little light-headed, and out of myself" (Morgan 86). The meal they share after a hard day of work is satisfying to all three. Irritated by the nagging of Ma Richards and exhausted from sheer physical exertion, Julie finally relaxes and enjoys the company and communion over a hard wrought meal. She says, "I felt like eating was the best thing there was. People eating together felt bound to each other, like it says in the Bible about the breaking of bread" (88). Mr. Pendergast and Ma Richards begin to tell stories of the Civil War and the lack of pork during those hard times.

I don't know what brought us together in such a fine fellowship unless it was just the tenderloin and grits and coffee, and maybe the work of hog killing. But it was like we formed a special kinship in the kitchen, at the table piled with tubs and dishpans full of pork fat. Maybe it was the tiredness that made me a little light-headed, and the prospect of all the work ahead. (Morgan 90)

This sense of satisfaction is short-lived because while rendering lard, some of it spills onto the stove fire and burns a good portion of the kitchen ... including Mr. Pendergast. However, at the dinner table, a communion is enjoyed by all. The hog killing process itself is a sign of communion as well. However, it seems as though Julie may have thought that her skill for killing a hog may not be needed after marrying Hank. Like the relationship itself, she is the supplier of food and Hank is emasculated for this reason.

As the women in House's novel come together in a feeling of camaraderie and necessity to perform a "man's" task, they feel a sense of ownership, completion, and success. They feel a sense of self-reliance although they rely upon one another in the process. They are independent of men, but connected to each other. More importantly, both Vine and Julie with the help of family and friends have performed an Appalachian ritual. It is a ritual performed countless times for hundreds of years in the past. They have a skill that will benefit them and future generations. Readers know that Vine and Julie will teach their children the art of hog-killing. Even though in generations much later, the need for hog-killing will lessen, the skill will still exist in the family.

Hog-killing typically only happened once a year for the majority of Appalachian families, but for those who raised hogs to sell, it was a job. In Chris Offutt's story "Nine Ball," Everett's father is a hog farmer. His mother is no longer alive, so his father is taking on the female roles in the home as well. For every meal, they have pork. Everett, from the modern generation, is sick of pork. He does not realize his good fortune to have meat on the table.

As mentioned earlier, every part of the hog is used. Lard was needed for a variety of reasons and many still use it today, although it is not quite as available as it used to be. Mark Sohn states, "Beyond ethnic and cultural influences, Appalachian food of today reflects national concerns for the environment and good health. On the health side of this, the twenty-five to fifty pound buckets of lard once common in local stores are now almost nonexistent" (22). Many Appalachian heroes insist on using lard in biscuits, for example, because it has such a distinct home style flavor.

Handed down from Elizabethan England, souse meat, taken from the head, is a delicacy of the mountain people. Dabney includes recipes for making souse meat in his text with this story from an Appalachian heroine.

Azzie Waters ... remembered that her mother always cooked her hog head in the fireplace because it had to cook all day long. "She'd pull it out [of the fireplace] late of an evening when it got dark and take it out on the back porch. She'd put that head in a big old pan and work it up, pick out all the little bones and lay 'em in a saucer. I just loved to suck them bones, because they had a good taste. She'd work them all up real good and then she'd put in black pepper. 'Course it was already salted. She'd put it in a big bowl and put a plate on top of it and put irons on top of that plate and let it set overnight. That would drain ever' bit of the grease out. Then it was pressed meat, or souse. That would keep well until people ate it." (Dabney 184-195)

Dabney says that hog-killing day in the Appalachians rivaled family reunions, revival dinners and singing on the grounds, because it was such a special event. Everyone was excited at the promise of having a full smokehouse again. Certainly the Appalachian hero gains dietary value from livestock and takes great pride in raising enough to support a family.

Whether the animals provided a service or sustenance for the mountaineer, the Appalachian hero respects his/her animals and understands the importance of caring for them. Appalachian authors recognize the importance of realistically telling the story of the food processes and accurately conveying the reverence the mountaineer had for the animals.

CHAPTER 4

FOOD AND COMMUNITY

Massimo Montanari states, "...we define food as an exquisitely cultural reality, not only with respect to nutritive sustenance itself but to the ways in which it is consumed, and to everything around it and pertaining to it" (Montanari 93). People typically do not like to eat alone; we like to have company with our meal. Coming together for various functions and socializing is one aspect of community. The relationship between the Appalachian hero and the community often involved events like hog-killing or apple-picking, but also church dinners, funerals, marriages, and reunions. With limited communication in some remote areas, these events were vital to the social life of the mountain family. When relatives, friends, or even strangers visited, it was important, and still is, to "put on the hog" for company. The heroine is at her best when she is cooking for a big crowd. "Systems of government may change, but the basic language of food does not: to offer too cheap or commonplace a meal is insulting; the opposite ostentatious," claims Reay Tannahill in *Food in History* (Tannahill 80). Many times I have witnessed my mother, grandma, and aunts feed an endless number of people on what seemed like very little. It always reminds me of Jesus feeding the 5,000 in the Bible's four canonical gospels. Just as Jesus broke the five loaves apart and fed the masses with leftovers, a similar miracle happens when uninvited guests are welcomed at the Appalachian heroine's table, albeit a much lesser miracle. Somehow she manages to have more than enough food even with twenty unexpected eaters. There is always something to eat for friends or strangers. Although not as elaborate as the Native

American potlatch, the outcome is similar. The host gains prestige by providing a feast. This theme of the hero and society is strong in modern Appalachian literature.

Settlers fed the Cherokee a feast to entice them to sell their land and sign a treaty in the late 1700s in the Appalachians. In Janice Holt Giles's novel, *The Kentuckians*, soldiers keep the Cherokee away from the rum barrels, but "spread a big feast" to "fill their bellies" in hopes of smoothly negotiating a treaty for land rights as instructed by Daniel Boone (Giles 9). The situation is out of control when one "stray" Cherokee lectures his people on the white men's desires. Boone quickly suggests the feast (Giles 22). Men who are hungry do not typically speak. The communion takes place over the food nonetheless. When they are finished with the silent meal, then they will relax (Giles 38).

Often a weary traveler might arrive at a house in the mountains asking for directions or shelter. While trying to return home on a train car, G.C. Jones notices a rough looking man in a field hooking a horse to a plow. He asks the man where he might get something to eat, but instead of directing him to a café or store, he asks Jones for news about Harlan, Kentucky and welcomes him into his own home for a meal. Jones recalls, "This was a true mountain man, living under the fear of God's mighty hand and knowing of the great love He has for men on earth ... strong and fearless looking" (Jones 81). This man, Roy Creech, invites the stranger Jones to his table where his wife feeds him hotcakes, gravy, fried eggs, and milk. Jones remembers this hospitality years later as he writes his memoir and even remembers the exact contents of the meal. When he tries to pay Creech, the man responds, "Absolutely not! I welcomed you to my table, not for pay. You said you were hungry and I had plenty to feed you and I'm proud to have you sit at my table" (Jones 82). Creech does what Jesus tells his apostles to do. In the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand found in Matthew, Mark and John, the apostles suggested for Jesus to send the crowds to villages and farms in the area to find a place

to stay and something to eat since there was nothing but desert. Jesus answers them saying “You give them something to eat.” The isolated stranger only asks for news in return. Although of little consequence to Creech, this is a demonstration that he is successful because he provides the meal to a stranger.

There is a “stream of covered dishes that flows from house to house in times of joy or sadness” (Trigiani BSG 231). In her “An Anthropological Approach to the Problem of Obesity,” Hortense Powdermaker states, “The giving of food to people who are in trouble is still widely prevailing folk custom (financial problems, illness, death)” (Powdermaker 207). Bringing food for the family upon the loss of a loved one or due to illness still exists today in the Appalachian communities, but also in the literature. The idea of bringing the community together through food is a motif. In Trigiani’s *Big Stone Gap*, it is a trait that Ave Maria really appreciates about her town. “I don’t know how Fleeta does it – when it comes to events, she has almost a psychic ability about how much food to make and who to call to fill in the holes,” Ave remarks (Trigiani Home to BSG 99). Because she is responsible for feeding her family, the mountain woman recognizes the importance of helping someone who may have a hard time feeding a large crowd of mourners or family. Foxfire authors state, “In the mountains, cooking for large numbers of people was once an accepted part of the daily regimen. Family members often numbered in the teens, either from the nucleus of parents and children or because other relatives had been taken in” (Page and Wigginton 298). This practice of feeding large numbers helped develop the skills in preparing massive feasts.

In *Cold Mountain* while working in the garden one day, Ruby and Ada look up to see a group of “pilgrims from Tennessee” walking up the road with all of their belongings in a wagon. They were run out of their homes by the Federals. Ruby and Ada prepare a huge feast for the families.

They cut the chickens up and fried them, cooked pole beans, boiled potatoes and stewed squash. Ruby made a triple recipe of biscuits, and when supper was ready they called in the visitors and sat them at the dining room table. The slaves had the same fare, but ate out under the pear tree. (135)

The next morning they cook all of their eggs, a pot of grits, and more biscuits for the strangers. They also send provisions with them when they leave. The stewardship that Ada admires in Ruby is not only taking care of the land and animals, but the people as well. Ada suffers near starvation, because she is unable to produce food herself. Now she and Ruby have a large store of food, but it is not the abundance that leads to generosity. It is the need of the people that leads them to be generous. Even if they did not have much, they would have shared everything they had. This relationship with society appears to be the most important of all relationships for the mountain hero. The desire to help one another in time of need is a significant trait of the area. Knowing that if his own need arises, the community will reciprocate the same hospitality is not the sole reason for the generosity. It seems to be second-nature – a way of life that is taught from the earliest years of childhood.

One Foxfire story tells about a woman who taught herself to cook. If the meal did not turn out as she had planned and it did not taste good, she fed it to the hogs. Foxfire authors speculate,

Perhaps that compelling quality has something to do with the fact that food, for those who made the dishes ... became somehow a metaphor for the generosity and interdependence of life here that transcended the food itself. Or perhaps part of what makes the foodways compelling has to do with the fact that though overall they are rather plain and functional, like good warm quilts, there are, as with quilts, those moments of

planned design and exuberance that decorate our lives – times when a meal, like a friendship quilt, is designed to mark an event in some memorable way. (Page and Wigginton xiv)

The heroines take pride in their cooking. They want people to enjoy the meal, but it is not the food that is important in the triad. Food brings the host and guest together. It is the camaraderie and the brief period of rest and fellowship that food symbolizes. They want to be respected for being a good hostess.

One of the most popular methods of establishing good relationships with fellow society members is the church social or dinner on the grounds. The women of the church bring a variety of pot luck dishes for lunch after the Sunday sermon. The church supper is a time of communion with fellow Christians. In Holbrook's short story "As a Snare," Taulbee stays for the church supper to eat fried chicken and drink lemonade (114). This is significant, because Taulbee was going down the path of sin with drugs and alcohol after his father passed away. Church members visit him at home to try to get him back in the church, but he is belligerent and unwilling. When he makes the decision to go to church and then stay to commune with them, he demonstrates his desire to return to the righteous path.

Dinner on the grounds typically occurs once a month, but the Sunday meal after church is always the biggest of the week. "And when church was over they would go home to Heavenly dinners of fried chicken ... and creamed new potatoes and creamed new peas and hot biscuits and butter and cherry pie and sweet milk and buttermilk," recalls Jayber Crow (Berry 161). Settle remembers,

Everyone went home on Sundays if they were close enough. Big Sunday meals. Each sister had her specialty – fried chickens, relish tray, potatoes, green beans, squash, corn, sliced onion and tomatoes, fried ham, red eye gravy, pies (apple and lemon chiffon). I don't think that

until now I have realized that almost everything but the flour, salt, pepper, and sugar was either grown or made on the place by those two women [Addie and Aunt Myrtle]. They [relatives] took it all for granted and when they went home they filled the car with chickens, butter, buttermilk, and vegetables. (Settle 180-184)

In Settle's family the same would happen on the holidays. The two heroines of the family – Addie and her daughter Myrtle – grow, preserve, and prepare all of the food while everyone else enjoys it. But for Addie and Myrtle, this is a time for them to enjoy the family. They enjoy cooking for the large group. While Settle sees the family as being disrespectful, Addie and Myrtle are flattered. These dinners not only contribute to the plot, but are symbolic of the family entity. When a family gathers around to eat, each of the subplots within the main plot is exposed around the table. G. C. Jones recalls, "It seemed like eating was all we did on Sundays" (Jones 32). During this time of communion, characters bring personal issues and conflict into sight of the other characters. This setting around a table is important symbolically not only as a communion, but as a confession or testimony. Afterward, grievances may be solved and a type of rejuvenation occurs for the family.

Anytime a meal takes place in literature, it represents something else. Whether it is meant to demonstrate a family dynamic, conflict, or resolution, it always demonstrates a communion. Breaking bread with someone is one of the most intimate acts between two people according to Foster in *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*. Jesus took his last meal with his disciples in an act of generosity, love, and devotion. The motifs of hospitality and communion are also found in classical texts such as Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and James Joyce's "The Dead." In Lee's novel, Scout makes peace with Walter Cunningham over lunch at her home while she watches him pour syrup over his entire plate of food. She learns something that endears him to her even though she had

previously pummeled him in the school yard. Although Scout does want to berate Walter for his faux pas with the syrup, Atticus intervenes. He uses the moment at the table to teach Scout about hospitality. Scout would not have learned this intimate habit of Walter's unless they communed with food. It is his idiosyncrasy with the syrup that resolves Scout to befriend him.

In "The Dead," Gabriel, the nephew, praises his aunts for their gracious, annual hospitality not only because it his duty as the most desirable guest, but because the extravagant meal needs praise.

I feel more strongly with every recurring year that our country has no tradition which does it so much honour and which it should guard so jealously as that of its hospitality. It is a tradition that is unique as far as my experience goes (and I have visited not a few places abroad) among the modern nations. Some would say, perhaps, that with us it is rather a failing than anything to be boasted of. But granted even that, it is, to my mind, a princely failing, and one that I trust will long be cultivated among us. Of one thing, at least, I am sure. As long as this one roof shelters the good ladies aforesaid—and I wish from my heart it may do so for many and many a long year to come—the tradition of genuine warm-hearted courteous Irish hospitality, which our forefathers have handed down to us and which we in turn must hand down to our descendants, is still alive among us. (Joyce)

The women may use the party as a means of gaining respect, but certainly it deserves the respect. They desire the compliments paid by their guests, but they also enjoy the hosting and preparation. It is a reciprocated ritual. Gabriel suggests that it may be a dying art, but urges everyone at the table to insure that the ritual of Irish hospitality be passed on to future generations just as generations of Appalachian women pass on their

skills of hospitality. This does not suggest hospitality is cultural. Women, generally speaking, want to be praised for the food or housekeeping abilities. Hospitality and the reciprocated praise of it is distinctly recognized and used as a literary motif over and over.

Harkening back to the ancient Egyptian tombs and Roman society, funerals are also events where food is found in Appalachian society. According to Mark Kurlansky in *Salt*, "Elaborate funeral feasts were held ... and copious quantities of food were left as offering ... The feasts, and sometimes the preparation of foods, were depicted on the walls. Every important period in ancient Egyptian history produced tombs containing detailed information about food" (Kurlansky 37). It seems throughout history and across cultures, whether in the home of the deceased, at the church, or in the cemetery, women have been bringing pot luck dishes to feed the mourners. Women seem to know when there is a need. Jayber Crow explains that it is because women talk. They communicate with one another, and when someone is in need they act.

The men are not uncharitable; they are quick to get together to harvest a crop for a neighbor who gets sick. But it is the women more than the men who see to it that cooked food goes where it is needed, that no house goes without fuel in the winter, that no child goes without toys at Christmas, that the preacher knows where he should go with a word of comfort. This is a charity that includes the church rather than the other way around. (190)

Even when the family does not attend church regularly, ladies will bring to those in need. In her 2007 *Foodways* essay "Funeral Food and Cemetery Cleaning," Kathleen Purvis states, "... bringing food to grieving families is a token of caring" (Purvis 55). Not only is fried chicken a Sunday meal necessity, it is also a common item brought to families

grieving over loved ones. The casserole also seems to be the perfect dish for this occasion of grieving.

The casserole is emblematic. Dishes such as squash casserole, spinach pie, cheese grits, corn pudding, hoppin' John, and limp'in' Susan are one-pot, covered dish meals that draw on traditional ingredients and are comfort foods at a time of loss. Fried chicken is also common for families that sit up with the dead in southern wakes. The South's women were the culinary caregivers with funeral and cemetery cleaning day foods, baking cakes and pies, setting up card tables or other serving places, and generally overseeing the food rituals of a southern way of death. (Purvis 55)

The custom of a wake, or "watching" the dead, dates back to Christ's death and resurrection. Apparently, families were hesitant to bury the body in case the person was not dead. This is the origin of the "wake." In fact, "watching" became a way to earn money even into the twentieth century. Social status of the mourning family could be identified by the length of time they employed a watcher for the beloved. Many customs have arisen from this idea of watching the dead. In Scotland, the "house of mourning" provided food and drink to those who arrived to pay respects. The preferred meal included pancakes. In his book *Funeral Customs: Their Origin and Development* (1926), Bertram S. Puckle states, "In Ireland bread, cheese and whiskey were distributed at midnight, after which the fun began. At no time are the laws of hospitality more rigorously maintained than at the funeral ... when we consider the funeral feast" (Puckle).

Another funeral ritual or superstition found is the "sin eater." The sin eater was essentially a "human scapegoat" taking the place of slaughtering an animal on the grave to take away the sins of the dead (Puckle). Sacrificial animals for removing sin can be found in Leviticus in the Old Testament when God gives Moses the list of things for the

priests to do. Puckle recalls a story from a professor at the Presbyterian College in Carmarthen who saw a sin eater in 1825.

Abhorred by the superstitious villagers as a thing unclean, the sin-eater cut himself off from all social intercourse with his fellow creatures by reason of the life he had chosen; he lived as a rule in a remote place by himself, and those who chanced to meet him avoided him as they would a leper ... only when a death took place did they seek him out, and when his purpose was accomplished they burned the wooden bowl and platter from which he had eaten the food handed across, or placed on the corpse for his consumption. (Puckle)

The food might have been a loaf of bread and a mug of beer. Ancient Egyptians offered wine, sweet beer, various cakes, and fruit. The premise of bringing food to the grave seems to stem from the superstition that food will keep the soul from wandering. This superstition continued into the twentieth century

When Mr. Pendergast dies from his burn wounds, he does not have family to visit, so his funeral is the responsibility of Julie and Hank. While the dead lies on the table in the kitchen, Julie prepares a meal, because Hank must build a coffin. Ma Richards compares the scene to a wake, and Hank says, "We're like sin eaters." He explains to Julie that a sin eater is "Somebody the family pays to eat supper off a corpse, like they are taking on all the sins of the dead person" (113). Any of the funeral food rituals represent a communion in celebration of a life. The food is meant to comfort the bereaved.

When Addie dies, a picnic is held on the grounds in front of the burial vault. Women in the town bring "potato salad, fried chicken, fresh tomatoes, pickles, cakes and pies, all labeled with the name of the woman who had brought them" (Settle 232). Although it seems a bit morbid to eat in the cemetery next to the tomb, the food is a

celebration for Addie. It is also important for Settle and the rest of the family. Having attended all of those family meals created by Addie, it is as if the family, once again, gathers at Addie's table with food they are only required to eat, not prepare. Metaphorically, the food is brought to Addie's "shrine" as an offering of thanks for her devotion to the community. To Settle, the types of food brought by the women are important, because she is able to recall the dishes many years later. The names on the dishes are also important. Returning the dishes to the appropriate home allows for one last "thank you" to the woman for her generosity in the family's time of need, and it allows the preparer to receive appropriate gratification for her efforts. The dishes are not elaborate. They symbolize the modest Appalachian heroine's culture. Everything must be something she would have prepared herself in such a time.

Funerals bring family members together, as well as weddings and reunions. Many Appalachian families hold annual reunions either in the family cemetery or at the family's home place. Kathleen Purvis states, "Burial 50 or 100 years ago meant yearly visits from one's family, armed with clippers, hoes, fresh flowers, and yes, picnic baskets" (Purvis 53). Cemetery cleaning was another reason to share a meal with family. Often, the annual cemetery cleaning coincides with the family reunion. The reunion may actually be held in the cemetery.

Typical reunions consist of music and an abundance of food. Many family reunions in Appalachia are weekend long events. Modern Appalachian writers spend a great deal of time appealing to a reader's senses when describing meal times - particularly meals that bring a family together. Trigiani spends time describing a Thanksgiving meal that has a quality of a reunion in *Home to Big Stone Gap* (67). Holbrook's "Hell and Ohio" is about a family reunion after a tragedy has occurred. The younger brother was killed in a car accident at the hands of the older brother who still carries guilt. Living in Ohio he is somewhat removed from the tragedy, but when he

returns to Kentucky for the reunion, he sees that his father sits quietly in front of a television constantly, and his mother rarely leaves the kitchen. Even while feeling great remorse, the brother feels comforted to be there with his family surrounded by food. He describes,

We fill three picnic tables set end to end and eat like there's no tomorrow – hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken, coleslaw, potato salad, baked beans, deviled eggs, cornbread. Cousin Elgin shows up with a box full of venison steaks, and I get the first one off the grill. (7)

As miserable as he feels while he is there, he also recognizes there is nowhere he would rather be, because it is his home. The food and his mother's preparation are comforting to him and he misses that most of all while he is trying to deal with the death of his brother. These reunions bring families closer together. Funerals and weddings are times of mourning and celebration for a specific reason, but reunions are strictly about the communion over food. This is an undying tradition in Appalachia and is demonstrated through its literature.

Cooking as a way of thanks is also prevalent. Apple-picking, hog-killing, corn-shucking, or barn-building are all times when communities come together to help one another. For helping, some of the product may be offered to those who assisted, and there is always plenty of food prepared by the women for all who came to help. Often, the tasks themselves became a time of celebration when music, food, and drink ended the hard day at work.

Corn-shuckings became the liveliest of work frolics. In pioneer times, it was traditional for the host to stash a jug of whiskey deep in the unshucked corn pile. First shucker to reach the red ear won three swigs from the jug, or as they put it, "three bobs of his Adam's apple." ... In the meantime, women of the community came in and helped the housewife

cook dinner. They'd have everything you could think of that grew on the farm; they'd have it on the table for people to eat. (Dabney 39-40)

To build a house for Vine and Saul (*A Parchment of Leaves*), the men and women in the community haul wood from the local sawmill and assist the couple in building. When it is complete, Vine and her mother-in-law Esme fix a huge meal for everyone who helped. Chicken and dumplings, shucky beans, fried corn, boiled Irish potatoes, three big skilletts of cornbread, baked sweet potatoes, ashcakes, and four big blackberry cobblers were served to the masses. Vine recalls, "I couldn't eat after cooking all day, so I just set there and looked at everybody. I knowed all of them well by this time ... I wanted to remember all of the people that helped build our home" (House 41-42). Prior to the marriage of Vine and Saul, Esme sends a basket of food to Vine, because she had saved the life of her other son Aaron (whose life she later takes). Saul delivers the basket of bread, dried apples, jars of molasses, honey, jelly, beef jerky, and crackling for cornbread himself, and this is when their relationship begins. It is sometimes difficult for strong-willed mountaineers to express feelings of gratitude or love, so food takes the place of words. In this way, food becomes not representative of communication, but communication itself.

On Inman's quest to return to Ada (in *Cold Mountain*), he encounters many people – some who help him and others that he is able to help. He meets a woman whose daughter has been killed, so he digs the grave for the child and makes her a casket. After he buries the girl, the mother comments that she cannot bring herself to cook, so she brings him bundles of provisions. As he is leaving, she states, "I can't ever look back on this day with a still mind if I let you go without cooking for you" (347). The woman cooks steak, grits, and fried eggs. As hungry as Inman is from his travels, "He sat with knife and fork fistled up before him, but he could not eat. The food seemed to require some special thanks to be returned, and he could not find the words" (347). Man

and woman communicated with very few words. She was grateful to him and even in her great time of sadness, she fed him and gave him food for his journey. It is such an important method of reciprocation that the woman would not be able to forget her lack of hospitality if she had not fed Inman.

Food can sometimes be the method for bringing people together to address a problem or provide news. This occurs in Jones's autobiography when his sister prepares a feast mid-week. "We had a good size helping of pickled beans and corn and a big platter of golden brown fried chicken, hot biscuits, and a steaming pan of huckleberry cobbler with a pitcher of sweet dip to pour over it. I thought it strange to have such a big meal like this in the middle of the week" (Jones 24). His sister Artie prepares the meal for the family to tell them that she just married Amos. Unsure of the family's reaction, she bribes them with a good meal to soften the blow. Fried chicken for a meal in the middle of the week was practically unheard of, and Jones recognized that something important was occurring because of its presence on the table.

Food is a form of communication. Whether it is a time of tragedy or thanking someone for their kindness – it is a gesture and a comfort when feelings are difficult to demonstrate. The hero must have a relationship with the land, animals, and its people, but in the Appalachians, the relationships in the community revolve around food – its production and its consumption. Roland Barthes states,

It [food] is not only a collection of products that can be used for statistical or nutritional studies. It is also, and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behavior. Information about food must be gathered wherever it can be found: by direct observation in the economy, in techniques, usages, and advertising; and by indirect observation in the mental life of a given society. (Barthes 21)

He explains that food is a sign, “a functional unit of communication,” and that “all food serves as a sign among the members of a given society” (Barthes 21). The act of producing and consuming the food in the community becomes an institution. Even though food is anthropologically a need, “Substances of preparation, habits, all become part of a system of differences in signification; and as soon as this happens, we have communication by way of food” (Barthes 22). Because of the class structures established from binaries and hierarchies of food in different cultures, Barthes believes that the “social environment is present in and signified by food” (23). Appalachia seems to provide a perfect example of Barthes theory. It is a society in which food and the objects that help grow or attain food are symbols of class. Techniques for gathering, preserving and preparing signify historical knowledge and culture. The various uses of a hog are symbolic of thriftiness and work ethic. Food brought for a funeral communicates sympathy and caring. Food provided to those who help with the hog killing, corn shucking, or barn raising communicates thanks and respect. Food graciously supplied for the uninvited guest communicates love of fellow man and the desire to communicate with each other in a sociable environment.

When the initial Kentucky settlers were establishing land rights, the first year in the new territory was difficult. Living in forts while the Indians perused the neighborhoods brought the settlers together ... much closer than they would have liked. The families shared chores out of necessity for caring for large quantities. For instance, in *The Kentuckians*, Dave brings in his own corn and also his neighbor's. Ben had returned to the colonies to retrieve his family and bring them to Kentucky, and Dave promised to tend to his place. When Ben returns, he visits Dave to let him know. Upon Ben's arrival, Dave feeds him from a pot of stew. The necessity of caring for neighbors in that hostile environment is a theme in the novel. When it is time to celebrate their first Christmas, the women cook for days while the men hunt. It was hard work to have such an elaborate

celebration. Part of the daily chores required women to carry water. Dave says, "The women carried water by putting a yoke across their shoulders so's they could pack two pails at a time. The yoke and the buckets, empty, made a heavy load and full they must have been a cruel burden" (Giles 114). He also comments about women chopping wood. "The menfolks snagged up logs and piled them in the middle of the commons and everybody used from it, the womenfolks as a rule seeing to their own needs," according to Dave. He is concerned for his love interest, Bethia, who is small and not very good at chopping, but she does the best she can. Bethia's husband Judd is typically not around to help her. She is at the mercy of the common, shared goods and relies on herself. Women also were responsible for washing clothes in the nearby spring and dressing the meat brought in by the men. These were daily tasks that brought the men and women together, but the Christmas shindig required days of preparation and camaraderie to prepare food enough for all the settlers. Mentioned earlier, the men were asked to hunt for a variety of animals including fowl for a change of meat. Dave explains,

Not only had they [women] cooked all the birds we'd brought in, but they'd roasted whole haunches of venison, buffalo humps and tongues, and there was even bear meat for those who liked it. With flour so short you wouldn't of thought they could have puddings and duffs and such, but they did, and Bethia said they used wild honey for sweetening and meal for thickening. They were tasty, too. There had been plenty of pumpkins and squash and snap beans raised, and the table was loaded with them, and there was a kind of jam the women made by taking berries they'd dried during the summer and mixing them with honey and stewing them down. (Giles 157)

This preparation and the feast itself are signs of the relationship established by those early settlers out of not only necessity but the desire for kinship and community.

In this mountain environment, specifically in the days of the settlers in the late 1700s, food is a sign of courtship. Ann, a young woman who had lost her husband, traveled into the new country with her parents. Her father, Sam, had been a “man of property back on the Yadkin and he had the means to make life easier for his womenfolks” (Giles 177). While the women in the fort are performing back breaking work, Sam’s wife and daughter have it a bit easier. With only a few single women in the new territory (and most of them children), Ann is a commodity among the single men. Like Dave, many single men joined with Daniel Boone or other outfits to settle Kentucky, but had no prospects of starting a family without a wife. “Ann had the look of never having done much work ... and had the look of always having been waited on and cared for,” according to Dave (Giles 177). The young men took “extra-fat birds and tenderest humps of meat to Ann McDonald” instead of putting them in the common stores for the rest of the families in the fort. Everything was supposed to be shared. Men also tended to arrive just at supper time, so they would be invited to share a meal with Ann. Of course, this does not go unnoticed by other women in the small community, and Dave is accused of helping the poor, defenseless Ann instead of helping Bethia carry water from the spring.

Food was also important in the Kentucky frontier to honor, not only the communion, but the actual consummation of marriage. When Dave and Bethia finally are able to marry, the women “cook up enough vittles to feed such a passel of men” (Giles 237). For an entire week, everyone in the fort works to prepare for the wedding ceremony and feast. The men hunt and the women cook. Metaphorically, the fort becomes a “hive of bees working” (Giles 242). The folks at the fort want to “make a good showing” having invited other forts for the celebration. When the wedding is over and a substantial amount of time passes for the bride and groom to visit with guests, they are escorted to the loft by guests. All night the guests go up and down the ladder to the bed

of Dave and Bethia bringing the couple “the jug and platters of food” (Giles 246). Dave says, “A young couple has a poor chance of getting better acquainted on their wedding night” due to the fuss being made. Bringing food is tradition. It is as important for the people attending the wedding as the couple. The community can provide support for the beginning of the relationship with the use of food.

Communion around the table is a symbol of family. Powdermaker says,

The family meal remains one of the few times when the family is united and drawn together. Parents still are the givers of food, and most of us are aware of the intense interest with which young siblings watch mother cut a pie and their anxiety over whether the slices are even. This is true in homes where food is plentiful, and obviously food is a symbol for the mother’s favoring or not favoring one child more than another. (Powdermaker 208)

In the kitchen, life changing discussions take place while cooking supper. Many times in Trigiani’s novels, news is heard and heated arguments or decisions occur in the kitchen. However, arguing is typically forbidden at the table. Out of respect for those who prepare a meal, it is best to save the disagreements for later. “When you argue while you eat, the food turns to poison in your body,” says Ave in *Home to Big Stone Gap* (30). Since I was a young child, I will not break bread with people I do not like. The term “breaking bread” is found in the New Testament several times and idiomatically means to have a meal. It is difficult to remain enemies with someone if you have broken bread with him. But, food can also help resolve conflict by forcing communication or redirecting hostilities in its preparation or production. Whether the meal is consumed or not the possibility of a meal can bring about reparation. In Holbrook’s “As a Snare,” Taulbee has little to say to the church members who come to visit him about his sinful ways, but he does communicate with one man about his peas, tomatoes, corn, and beans in his garden. He uses

gardening as a distraction so they will not focus on the problem (Holbrook 98). It comforts him to talk about his garden and it distracts others from his lifestyle. Later he spends time hoeing the weeds from the patch of corn he planted, digging potatoes, pulling onions, and picking peas for supper (Holbrook 106). The business of gardening is also a distraction for Taulbee keeping his mind from his "sinful ways." Maintaining a garden earned him some respect from the community, and is a sign of his success as a man and overcoming his addictive lifestyle. Again, people who have little to say to one another can communicate through food.

Eating a meal with someone takes time; therefore a relationship is formed among or between the people eating. According to Mary Douglas in "Deciphering a Meal,

The grand operator of the system is the line between intimacy and distance. Those we know at meals we also know at drinks. The meal expresses close friendship. Those we only know at drinks we know less intimately. So long as this boundary matters to us the boundary between drinks and meals has meaning. (Douglas 41)

The argument Douglas makes is a meal requires more intimacy than drinks. Drinks do not take very long. The communion over drinks is noncommittal. When food is added, a commitment is made; a commitment that keeps both parties available to each other for an extended period of time. *Jayber Crow* provides a good example of a communion among a group of men at a "water drinking party," but this scenario also includes food and represents a bond with the men against an outside force.

"The Grandstand" was just the name of the spot. A number of the men and grown boys of the neighborhood went there for a certain freedom that the town did not publicly countenance. It was a place where water could be unguardedly diluted, or done without, where talk could proceed without fear of interruption by anybody who would mind. No preacher or

teacher or woman or public official or anybody self-consciously respectable would be there ... Maybe two or three times a year, on good nights of spring or fall, a water-drinking party would be announced by grapevine, and on these occasions, beyond the usual pastimes, the featured event would be a supper of fried fish or wild game or hen soup. Emptied of the little society that gathered and dissolved there from time to time, the Grandstand was just another place in the woods. Nothing was there but trees and rocks and a burnt spot on the ground. (Berry 110)

When one wife, an outside force, crashes the party the next morning and runs her husband up a tree (literally), the men continue to bond with one another through sympathy or empathy for the treed man. The gathering of men to eat fish and corn pone is really a gathering to drink moonshine “water,” because “That fish’ll dry you out,” according to one gentleman. When Jayber tastes the local moonshine, he takes three swallows. The sound that the swallows make is “Good-good-good,” Burley points out. Berry uses this onomatopoeia to demonstrate how many swallows the men took of the “mellow and fragrant” moonshine (Berry 113). Someone did bring a jug of water to the “water drinking party,” and it was in great demand the next morning. “All agreed, saying solemnly that every drop they had drunk all night had been drunk in honor of water,” says Jayber. The communion that takes place over the moonshine and fish is needed for these men. These gatherings at the Grandstand allowed men, who typically worked very hard, to escape – just as men today go to the bar or the golf course.

While working with a group of men, G.C. Jones shared many meals that were a communion of brethren. He recalls, “After supper was over everybody gathered around the main campfire, swapping woman tales, stories about hog raising or breeding cattle, swapping pocket knives, and different ways to make moonshine. This would go long into

the night” (Jones 3). This camaraderie among the men was important for a good working relationship. Food is the catalyst that brings them to the significant times of bonding.

Thomas Foster states,

Whenever people eat or drink together, it's communion. Sharing of peace. The act of taking food into our bodies is so personal that we really only want to do it with people we're very comfortable with. Writing a meal scene is so difficult, and so inherently uninteresting, that there really needs to be some compelling reason to include one in the story. And that reason has to do with how characters are getting along. Or not getting along. (Foster 8)

Appalachian fiction writers actually do a good job of using sensory images to create the setting of the meal. Although Foster argues there is nothing entertaining in people eating, while they are eating, an atmosphere is generated that allows for communication and the development of relationships.

Charles Frazier's protagonist Will Cooper in *Thirteen Moons* sits at his rival's table sharing pork, fried chicken, “bowls of beans and squash and okra, the little china cups of chutneys and relishes” while each examines the other (122). Will is in love with Featherstone's wife Claire who is closer in age to Will. Although the meal is not prepared by Claire, it is an act of kinship between the two enemies. Will notices the food naming the specific items as symbols of abundance that perhaps he is unable to offer Claire at the time. More than Featherstone's luxurious homes and his servants, it is the food that makes Will jealous. The food represents wealth.

For Appalachian writers, the meal itself is important, therefore, they create details of the food. What the characters eat is as important as the characters and location. The effort that is put forth to create the meal is the drama. The struggle to grow or raise the food, preserve it, and prepare it is part of the plot. The dining or communion is the

celebration. Appalachian writers include great detail on what the characters are eating when writers in other genres concentrate, not on the food, but on the people at the proverbial table. Part of the communion is the preparation. Just as Jesus prepared his table with love and sacrifice, the Appalachian hero does the same. The food represents the blood and the body of the hero who creates the food for consumption. Writers who live in or were raised in Appalachia recognize the importance of the food itself as part of the communion. When they spend time listing the items for the meal, it is to invoke memories and sensory images for the reader. This may be why the genre has continuously stayed within its regional boundary and rarely does a text break through that boundary.

CHAPTER 5

FOOD AND SURVIVAL INTRODUCTION

The heroes of Appalachia are stewards of the land, creators of food, and brimming with knowledge and skills to provide food to sustain a family. However, many families also relied on outside income. Because there was a strong bartering system, money was not needed for many years, but during the industrialization of the Appalachians, money became increasingly important for many living in small towns. As the timber and mining companies moved into the hills in the early twentieth century, many mountaineers succumbed to a way of life that was perpetuated by these companies. Coal companies in particular convinced mountaineers that they could have a better life if they moved into the coal towns. Ronald Eller says, "When the collapse of the first great industrial boom came in the late 1920s, unemployed miners and mill hands struggled to return to the land and to an earlier way of life," and they moved back with kin or on smaller unit farms (10). Those who were able to return to the farms were lucky, because those who were horribly affected during the Depression trying to "subsist on poor land or to survive on the dole or on government work programs," states Eller (11).

When the father and oldest sons began working outside of the farm, it became increasingly important for the women in the family to take up the farm implements. Another problem was the lack of business sense of the mountaineer. When the timber and mining companies needed land, they bought it at very little cost, but at a great expense to the mountaineer. This also drove the hero off of his land and into the coal mines. The mountaineer slowly began to assimilate to the capitalist American society from which he had been excluded for so long. The loss of land to the coal and timber

companies required many to move into town or to purchase food items from the local stores thrown up by the big companies. Throughout this assimilation process food continued to be important. Modern Appalachian writers have portrayed families throughout this struggle to adapt to “new” ways in their own homeland.

5.1 Bartering

As discussed earlier, the land contributed many things to the mountaineer if he/she could recognize them. Many harvested these contributions to use at home, but also to sell to the local stores. Taxes were paid and necessary supplies were bought through a bartering system.

We ate very little from the store, which stocked mostly the things people couldn't raise: salt and flour, and New Orleans molasses in barrels, pepper, cloves, nutmeg, vanilla, coffee, cheese, cloth in bolts, hardware, coal, harness, and so on. And Uncle Othy bought eggs and cream and old hens and other produce that the housewives brought in when they came to buy. (Berry 20-21)

These items were acquired by exchanging chestnuts, apples, walnuts, whiskey, ginseng, and tobacco. Tobacco crops in the Appalachians began in Virginia as early as the founding of the Jamestown Colony in 1607. According to Civitello in her 2004 *Cuisine and Culture*, Virginians wanted to grow something profitable. They tore up their gardens to plant tobacco anywhere they could – even between graves. But, they did not have anyone to hoe and harvest it. The Native Americans would not do it (those who had not succumbed to Old World diseases). African slaves were too expensive (some arrived in 1619).

England had the perfect labor force: a surplus of poor, desperate young men in their late teens and early twenties. They signed an indenture- a contract – giving them a free trip to America and free room and board in

exchange for four to six years of work. Then they were supposed to get their freedom, tools, corn, and land of their own – something they had zero chance of getting in England. The person who hired the indentured servant and paid for his trip received free labor and fifty acres of land. (Civitello 128)

This was a good deal, except, most of the young men did not live four years in America due to dysentery, typhoid, or malaria. Those who did find there was only one woman for every six men.

Another means of arrival for early Appalachians was to participate in the American Revolution. Celts arrived as mercenaries to fight the British and were given land in the Appalachians as repayment. These families settled the land and interacted with the Native Americans who used tobacco mainly for medicinal and celebratory purposes. Early in its history in America, tobacco was produced in low-lying regions of Maryland and Virginia. At the turn of the twentieth century, production shifted to the Virginia and North Carolina Piedmont region and into Kentucky where two types of tobacco, the burley and the bright, grow exceptionally. The mountaineer developed an addiction to tobacco. Caudill says, “The tobacco patch was planted close to the cabin and was tended with even greater care than was devoted to the foodstuffs” (Caudill 23). Using tobacco for consumption and bartering grew rapidly.

When game in the new country on the eastern coast of America became scarce, men like these mercenaries and indentured servants decided they needed to move west. In Giles’s *The Kentuckians*, Dave says that the game in the country (Virginia) is becoming scarce, because the settlements were flourishing. He decides that his days “east of the mountains were numbered,” so he makes the decision to travel with Daniel Boone and others over into Kentucky to establish settlements there. Dave traps to trade for things he needs to live. He explains,

The Robertson brothers had set up for themselves hard by the Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga, and they traded with the settlers and the Cherokee both. They gave a good price for prime pelts, and they kept a fair store of powder and lead, flour and goods and tools and the other necessities folks wanted. I got in the way of trading with them and whenever they needed a scout or a hunter they mostly called on me. In time I had me all I needed and wanted in the way of possessions ... a good horse, traps, and a fine Deckard gun. (Giles 6)

Men like the Robertson brothers did well by trading with both Cherokee and settlers in the late 1700s and continued into the early 1900s.

As the provider in Morgan's *Gap Creek*, Julie is another literary example of the use of bartering. She only has thirty-six cents to buy Hank a gift for Christmas, so she plans to sell eggs at the crossroads store for twenty cents a dozen, and make extra butter she can sell for fifteen cents a pound, but the cow is not giving much milk. She then decides to gather chestnuts. Later she needs to purchase coffee and sugar, but it would take her several weeks to save enough eggs to sell. She says, "But sometimes the Lord puts a thought in your mind at the right time. I recalled that people had said Mr. Pendergast had been a digger of ginseng roots" (Morgan 170). She digs around in the cellar to see if he has any stored and finds "thirty roots, all covered with cobwebs. Some looked like dried sweet taters and some like shriveled figures of people, and some like the private parts of a man" (Morgan 171). She takes them to the local store, but discovers they are old. The men in the store tell her "sang" is hard to find anymore, because everyone used to dig for it. George, the store owner tells her the man he sells to in Greenville might not take the three quarters of a pound she has, but another man explains, "He just sells it to the Chinese, and the Chinese will buy any kind of ginseng," and another man helps saying, "Being dry don't hurt sang" (Morgan 172). George pays

Julie \$2.06, and she is thrilled. With this money she purchases five pounds of sugar and five pounds of coffee with twenty-seven cents left over.

Other mountain cash crops include May Apple and lobelia. Herbs such as pennyroyal, yellowroot, bloodroot, poke, and catnip could also be sold, but brought very little. May Apple roots brought eight to ten cents a pound and lobelia weeds brought fifteen to twenty-five cents a pound (Ball 200). Julie uses these items to buy necessities, but when a market is found for these wild roots and plants, many mountaineers went into the wilderness as if on a gold rush.

Gap Creek is set in the late nineteenth century, while Chris Offutt's story "Sawdust," is set in the late twentieth century with characters still collecting the natural bounty and using it as a source of income or bartering. A young man quits school to hunt mushrooms, ginseng, and May Apple root. The young man's father had killed himself and the family had no value of education. If characters lack the skills, knowledge, or desire to work hard and produce food for the family, using the mountain environment for bartering provides an easier existence.

Other sources of bartering appear in Frazier's *Cold Mountain*. Ruby learns that a man down the river from them killed a beef, so after harvesting and preserving their apple crop, Ruby takes two jugs of apple cider to barter for beef. She is only able to exchange one jug for a very small piece of brisket, but she is successful (336).

G.C. Jones comments, "It was seldom heard of, someone selling their produce for cash. They would trade for salt, sugar, soda, shoes, a few bags of flour, sometimes a bag of horehound candy for the kids to lick on" (Jones 1). Jones says, "We raised a lot of extra calves, hogs, chickens, ducks, and many many other things to take to the town of Harlan to offer for sale or trade. The town people were eager to get our country fresh foods. Some people called us peddlars" (Jones ix). Cash was unnecessary in the hills. Jones was a delivery man for a trader. He delivered liquor in a wagon across the hills.

This trade was well thought of at the time. He received a warm welcome when he pulled in with forty-two hundred-pound sacks of sugar. The wives would have tables loaded down with food. In fact, each stop he made, the wives insisted on feeding him. When he returned across the hills, his wagon was loaded down with liquor. The men loading the wagon arranged jugs of molasses, sacks of shucky beans, dried apples, furs, cowhides and mule feed in case the wagon was searched. They called these items “foolers.” Other wagons he hauled for trade included hens, cans of homemade lard, honey, dried beef and lots of other items to be taken into town (Jones 16). For payment on one occasion, he received bartered goods in lieu of cash.

Each sack was about half full of food – a big country ham in each sack, shucky beans, dried apples, and several jars – well wrapped – of huckleberries, jellies, and jams. He [Mr. Ford, their employer] knew JoJo’s family could use these things. Them living in town, they seldom got hold of good country food. (Jones 20)

Jones’s memoir of his life in Kentucky in the first half of the twentieth century provides a factual account of the bartering system alive and well in the mountains. When the system seems to dwindle, he is faced with big business in his home town. The mine company moves in and takes away the need for trade. Until the mine essentially closes the town due to the dependence of the people.

Appalachian writers spend a great deal of time developing a setting that provides for its inhabitants, so the characters must be smart enough to recognize the land’s resources and the seemingly fictional text is full of historically accurate encounters between the hero and his land.

5.2 When the Land Is Not Enough

Leaving the mountains is a prevalent theme. The main reasons people left are: work, natural disaster, eminent domain, or poor stewardship of the land. Some

characters only contemplate leaving, while others never look back. Some find jobs in industrialized cities such as Detroit, Cincinnati, Chicago, and Indianapolis. Others find jobs working for coal and timber companies within the Appalachians.

Coal companies arrived in Appalachia prior to the First World War and seduced the mountain land owners to part with their mineral rights and often times the land itself. Harry Caudill explains:

With every convincing appearance of complete sincerity the coal buyer would spend hours admiring the mountaineer's horse and gazing over a worm-rail fence in rapt approbation of his razorback hogs while compliments were dropped on every phase of his host's accomplishments. He marveled at the ample contents of the mountaineer's smokehouse and savored the rich flavor of the good woman's apple butter and other preserved delicacies, while he assured her that no dainty to be found in the big city confectionaries was half so tasty. He ate the rough "grub" she prepared for him, and happily slept in the softest featherbed the cabin afforded. After such a visit he and "the man of the house" would get down to business and before long the deed or option was signed with the uncertain signatures of the mountaineer and his wife, or, more probably, with their duly witnessed marks. (Caudill 73)

Using the pride of the mountaineer as a means to attain his trust, complimenting his animals, his home, and his wife, the coal buyers quickly established a presence in the coal-abundant hills. Some gave up their land and moved out of the mountains completely, while others went to work for the coal companies. "For \$1.50/day the highlander dropped plow and hoe and turned to the tasks of the coal barons, and though

he might revert upon occasion to his ancestral agriculture he would never again free himself from dependence upon his new overlords," says Caudill (Caudill 99).

The coal companies constructed towns around the mines. They built hundreds of frame houses that seemed, by comparison to the cabins, "palatial." Some coal company houses were shoddy, but many had plastered walls and were actually painted in a variety of colors. These houses, along with the salary, enticed many families. The work itself was no harder than logging or farming. The salary, however, was paid in scrip. The coal companies established commissaries that provided everything the modern coal mining family might need: pretty, new clothes for the women, canned meats, fresh and canned vegetables and fruits, spices, and a variety of sausages (Caudill 103). For a family that relied on hard work for its own food, this instant gratification was a novelty. The problem was that the need for groceries and household goods outweighed the miner's salary. The wages, being paid in scrip only, had to be used in the company store. As subsistence farmers before, mountaineers had land to grow their own food. When they moved to the coal towns, they were forced to rely on the scrip.

The need for miners was great, so the companies recruited Europeans with the promise of security and a better way of life. Between 1912-1927 the coalfield houses were full, and the Appalachians became a "melting pot."

Wages were not high but they did not linger appreciably behind earnings in industry generally across the nation. But if the miner's wages were not high, neither were his wants many or expensive. Food, clothing and shelter were the things for which he gave most of his earnings, and his spending for these things was relatively lavish. A miner's wife acquired a new coal-burning cooking range and a wooden kitchen cabinet. Her house was filled with iron and brass bedsteads and dressers, and plush, mohair-covered living-room furniture from the commissary. Lace curtains

fluttered in her windows, and brightly colored linoleums and flashy carpets covered her pine floors. With company scrip she was able to buy closetsful of clothing for her self and her children. The miner proclaimed his prosperity by clothing himself in silk underwear and shirts and expensive Stetson hats. Sometimes he went in debt to the extent of a month's wages to buy a fancy diamond- studded tie pin or a gold pocket watch and chain. His earnings were dissipated for household furnishings, clothing, food and a few personal effects, and rarely did the shovel wielder entertain the notion of saving some of his hard-earned dollars. (Caudill 110)

In these coal towns, class became apparent. When people moved into the towns, they became a working class and no longer supplied their own food. The families who stayed behind were often considered of a lower class; the company owners, upper class. Those still farming land did not have the means to purchase anything from the company stores. My grandmother remembers being jealous of kids who brought store bought bread sandwiches for lunch when she had to eat biscuit sandwiches. However, when the mining company closed, it also closed the doors to the store that the working class families relied upon so heavily. Although a noble and heroic trade, the coal mining family suffered great loss and tragedy. The mines claimed hundreds of lives and continue to do so from black lung and other ailments from the intense work conditions. When a miner was unable to work due to injury or death, the family was forced to leave the coal towns. Without land and without money to obtain land, they were destitute. Generational poverty sometimes began with the loss of a mining job. These trials and tribulations appear frequently in modern Appalachian literature.

For instance, in his memoirs G.C. Jones recalls having to help his estranged family through the hard times in Harlan County, Kentucky when the coal feuds of the

1930s occurred. Jones was an activist in getting the union started in the town, which he says is the “greatest thing that ever happened, bringing all of Harlan County’s mine owners under union ruling” (Jones 50). He knew first hand what the coal companies were capable of doing, including murder and rape. The miners did not necessarily work every day according to the need or whim of the coal companies. If they did not work, they did not get paid.

It lacked ten days till Christmas. Dad had sold all his stock to the sawmill company and he had not raised a crop the past summer. I knew that he had paid all his debts with the money he received from selling his stock. He still had two riding horses and two good milk cows, and chickens were plentiful – they were just about wild ... I knew none of them would go hungry, but they had no money or anything to bring to town to sell.
(Jones 38)

Without goods to barter, the family could not acquire other necessities such as salt and clothes. His dad is out of work from the mines at this point. Jones feels that even though his parents have “disowned” him, he wants to do something for them for Christmas. He visits his sister Artie and her husband Amos. Amos is also an out of work coal miner. “Amos, being raised in the mountains, knew how to make do with what he had. When the work stopped at the coal mines he started laying up foodstuff for the hard days ahead,” Jones says (Jones 38). Because he knows they will not go hungry, Jones buys them warm clothing – underwear, overalls, coats, boots, gloves, etc... These items required money or something to trade, which the family did not have. Artie and Amos bought foodstuffs they knew their parents would like that could not be grown or raised. Things that could be purchased in a grocery store were often treats for a mountain family. The families that raised a lot of food, preserved it, and kept milk cows were lucky during this time in the mountains. Any store that was not a “company” store was forced to close.

Without jobs to earn company scrip and nothing to trade nor a place to trade it, times could not be much harder. Harlan County and others in the same situation all over eastern Kentucky and West Virginia were declared in a state of poverty (Jones 44). Each time the union would strike, the miners and their families suffered greatly. A similar violent strike occurred again in 1970 in Harlan County.

World War II seemed to put the coal companies back on track provided an “escape from poverty and idleness” for the mountaineer (Eller 12). Eller explains,

The promise of steady employment, higher wages, and better living conditions drew thousands into the armed services and into the defense plants of Chicago, Cincinnati, Dayton, Baltimore, and Norfolk ... A year into the war, a mountain teacher reported, “The young manhood of our town has moved out almost en masse Never again can this section be the same.” (13)

Not only were young men leaving the hills for war, “4,200 truck mines opened in the 1940s,” but the growth of the economy in Appalachia “masked fundamental flaws in the region’s development. Most of Appalachia’s mineral and timber resources continued to be owned by outside corporations,” and was therefore not taxed for local interest (Eller 15). The money was rapidly leaving Appalachia with nonunion miners being paid a very low wage.

So many families contained miners and Appalachian literature is full of examples of both successful and unsuccessful attempts at sustaining a family in a mining culture. A successful mining family is found in Chris Holbrook’s short story “Fire” from his *Hell and Ohio* collection from 1995. This family has three sons who are capable of maintaining the farm while the father works in the mine. However, the miner’s brother, Curtis, injured in a mining accident, is an abusive alcoholic. The family members tolerate Curtis because of his injury. There is a sense that it is acceptable to be an alcoholic both from his brother

and Curtis's wife. Curtis feels that something is owed to him due to his sacrifice in the mines.

Men also left home to work for timber companies. In *A Parchment of Leaves*, Vine's husband Saul leaves for a year to work on contract for the War Department. Turpentine¹ was needed in World War I, and the pine trees in Laurel County, Kentucky were abundant. Saul reasons with Vine stating, "It's awful good money, Vine. If I done it for a year, we could have anything we wanted" (House 83). Vine replies that they have everything they need as she makes cornbread, but Saul argues that he wants her to have "fine things," and it is for "the war effort" (House 84). Vine agrees, only because she realizes that if Saul is working for a company producing a needed war item, it will keep him from being drafted in World War I. Saul is successful at his job, and he does earn a substantial amount of money. He is successful, however, because of Vine. She is able to raise a garden and care for herself and their child. Again, it is the man who is successful at working outside of the land, but the wife and children are needed to maintain the land for the family's success. It is the attachment to the land that maintains the success. Without that connection, many failed.

Men like G.C. Jones, with a team of mules or horses and wagons, carried goods across the mountain paths making them wider for more travel by dragging wagons up and down the hillsides. When the coal companies arrived, however, roads that were easier to traverse became a necessity. Ironically, better roads means success and prosperity, but the mountaineer lost land and homes benefitting little from them. Many families were displaced because of these roads. In fact, it is still happening today in Eastern Kentucky, only now the state highways and county roads are giving way to turnpikes and interstates. The Heartwood and Kentuckians for the Commonwealth

¹ A naval store extracted from the gum of pine trees. The workers would create a big mound by digging trenches, then burn pine trees on top of the mound allowing the sap to run down into the

organizations recently fought against Route 66 running through environmentally protected land in the Daniel Boone National Forest located in London, Kentucky. Because of a natural spring and a certain kind of mollusk and a variety of other endangered species living in a nearby creek, Route 66 (a federal project) was re-routed. In the early to middle twentieth century when roads were first being constructed, it was impossible to fight them. The roads did not benefit those living in the area. In fact, the new highways being built have few exits and are designed as an expressway to pass through quickly. Therefore, those giving up land would have to travel a good distance just to access it. The roads divided land that belonged to the mountaineer. Valuable land used for growing food was destroyed, and with the land divided, it was difficult to cross a freeway to access land on the other side. The ones traveling the roads were the capitalists seeking gain from the hills, and at the same time, remaining separate from the people. There were no environmental organizations to protect the land when roads became a need for the growing industries. Eminent domain was enacted many times and families were forced to move without recourse. Holbrook's short story entitled "Eminent Domain" is an example of family land being lost to roads. The story is ironic. The youngest son still living on the property with his parents is forced to work odd jobs to make ends meet. He hires on with the construction crew that will demolish his family's home and land, because he must work. As with the coal companies, land was "stolen" and the men were forced to work for the "thieves." Jayber Crow says,

Until the 1930s the roads in these parts went to the river; there was not much need for a road along a river, which was in its way a road. Down there [Hargrave] they did distinguish the masses from the classes. There was real money in Hargrave, and real poverty, and public virtue, and semiprivate depravity. (Berry 166-67)

trenches. Several mounds were found in the Daniel Boone National Forest, which was another

Fictional Hargrave for Jayber, is an example of capitalism at work. Roads meant wealth. Someone became wealthy where roads appeared – coal or timber companies. With the roads, came a society with classes, when before classes were relatively unimportant or non-existent in the hollers. The roads are also symbolic of escape, and as more and more were built, more of each generation left the mountains.

Eminent domain was also invoked to flood the valleys for power. Ron Rash's novel *One Foot in Eden* is about this type of displacement. The valley is flooded by Carolina Power. People are removed from their homes, and cemeteries are moved. Again, the mountaineer has little recourse to fight the government and big businesses. Power is needed in a twentieth century society. Generations are separated by this need. The son is a sheriff who must enforce the evacuation of those who have been his neighbors for years. His father remains on the farmland eating only what he can provide from the land. When the son occasionally visits and has a meal with his father, he no longer likes the greasy food because "society" has convinced him it is not good or good for him.

Prior to the class system established with the arrival of coal company towns, a division between the bottom land owner and the mountain top land owner existed. Land owners who procured land in the lower valleys for the best farming became more successful than those with land at the top. In the 1941 film about Tennessee native and World War I hero Sergeant Alvin C. York titled *Sergeant York*, York tries desperately to earn money to purchase a piece of rich bottom land, because he is tired of fighting the miserable rocks on his patch of land while trying to plow and plant. He is bested by another man who already has bottom land. Those who had very little land in the hills to begin with were unable to produce enough to earn money. These successful land owners continued to purchase all of the land they could. The land at higher elevations

reason the original route of the new I66 had to change.

consisted of “poorer spurs and knobby ridges.” According to Caudill, “These were so infertile that they could produce passably well only one or two crops of corn before the thin topsoil was washed away or depleted” (Caudill 81). The farmer with poor land may have had a coal company with rights to the minerals underneath, a timber company with rights to the timber, and land traders surrounding him to gain his little patch of sub-par dirt. Sometimes families were forced to become sharecroppers. It was possible to rent homes from large landowners and produce food for family consumption while sharing with the landlord. Caudill explains,

He [mountaineer] must have pork, milk, butter, corn, beans, squash, cushaws, onions, Irish and sweet potatoes and tobacco, and these could be derived only from the soil. His ancestors had obtained them successfully from his lands for more than four generations and, when title to the land departed, reliance upon it remained. The mountaineer must cultivate the earth to survive ... Because the prevailing mode of agriculture could produce only a simple living at best it pauperized the tenant because, labor though he might, he could extract from his neighbor's land only enough corn, meat and potatoes to feed his family and livestock from one year to the next. He found himself in a vicious cycle from which there was no escape by any agricultural means known to him. (Caudill 81-82)

Like the coal companies, the wealthy landowner kept the mountaineer in a state of poverty and submission. This process contributed to poverty throughout Appalachia, but also in many parts of the United States.

Currently, coal companies are still after land in the Appalachians. In West Virginia, Larry Gibson hangs on to his fifty acres of family land wanted by coal seekers. According to Michael Shnayerson in his 2006 *Vanity Fair* article “The Rape of

Appalachia,” Gibson’s fifty acres sits on \$450 million in coal. Not only that, his land overlooks the ravages in the valley that the coal companies have already completed. Journalists visit Gibson to take pictures and see the destruction first hand. His family land initially was five hundred acres in 1886. “Twenty years later, a land company agent from out of state gulled an illiterate forbear into signing his X on a contract that transferred most of the land for ‘one dollar and considerations,’” states Shnayerson. Most families in the area have similar stories, but the Gibsons have continued to hold out. Coal companies still try to manipulate Gibson telling workers he wants to “take their jobs away.” Gibson claims his trailer has bullet holes from angry coal miners in response, and many acts of vandalism and violence have been committed – 119 as of the 2006 article. Gibson claims his wife even left him due to the threats.

Strip mining in Appalachia is happening right now. Mining companies argue they are performing reparation on the land and making it better than it was before. The reparation, however, happens only after mountain streams have been filled in, water is contaminated with pollutants, and people have died from cancer caused by the coal plant emissions. Like the Middle East is destined to be in turmoil throughout the ages, it seems as though Appalachia is also destined to be pillaged for its resources from generation to generation. Although coal mining may seem a digression from the subject of food, for mountain people like the Bowlings who rely on the land to produce food, it is a topic of great importance. As rich farmland disappears across the Appalachians, so does the ability to grow one’s own food.

Appalachian authors continue to research and write about the land and societal issues in the area, because many of the same problems still exist. The generational troubles both unite and divide the people of Appalachia, but the one connection that all seem to have in common is the mountain food culture.

5.3 Abandoning the Hills

Many abandoned the hills during the trying times with coal companies that began in the time of the First World War. G.C. Jones's brother Jim decided to leave the mountain, but opted for another coal company. Others left the mountains completely. The Great Depression affected the entire country, but those who left the hills did not realize how bad things really could be. Those who stayed behind continued to have enough food when others who moved to cities did not during the Depression.

A group of night miners were reading a paper with big red headlines. The paper said that big steel mills and factories were closing down all over the country. Banks were going broke, big businessmen were committing suicide. All the farmers in the northwest were burning big silos filled with wheat. Ranchers were slaughtering thousands of cattle. This news came during Christmas, but people living back in the mountains didn't get any news until they came to town or heard someone tell about it that had been to town ... The company I worked for posted on their bulletin board that there would be no more work until further notice ... There were a lot of sad faces around that store. Most of the night workers had drifted to this mine from up north. They didn't have families or kin to fall back on. They just got their pay and grabbed the first way out of these hills. (Jones 68)

When the coal companies shut down, entire towns contained people without work and no way to earn money. They did not know how they were going to feed their families. They had left the hills for a better life. While the mines operated, they "lived good," because "every day the big company stores stocked their shelves with all kinds of expensive groceries and meats" (Jones 69). Many who left home went back. Houses became crowded in the hills with all of the adult children and their families moving back, but if a

garden was planted, it was the only place to survive. Jones's sisters left home at this time, because the house was too crowded. They went to Ohio to work in restaurants.

Another reason for leaving the mountains is to chase the American dream. When some left the hills and led good lives in the industrial cities, they sent word back to the hills. Many were persuaded to give up the difficult life of farming to work a steady job to earn steady wages. Unfortunately, capitalism proved detrimental to many mountaineers. Those working for automobile companies in Detroit, for example, were always afraid of attrition. Without a job in the city, it is impossible to support a family without credit which many had never encountered. The aspirations of a modest life outside of the hills became the downfall of many families. The option was to return to the hills to stay with family or to live a life of poverty until work became available.

The ultimate embarrassment for the mountain hero is the inability to feed his/her family. The mountain people were stereotyped in Detroit as "hillbillies" for their lifestyle and eating habits, and they were completely out of place. The best literary example of having to rely on outside sources for food is Gertie in Arnow's *The Dollmaker*. Gertie encounters this embarrassment when Clovis coaxes her to move to Detroit with the children during the Second World War. Clovis is laid off from the factory and finds odd jobs to do, while Gertie whittles figurines and dolls to sell. Gertie, initially whittling to pass the time and remind her of home, is discovered when someone sees her work and gives her the idea to sell. A hobby, something that she treasures, becomes a menial task to earn money for food and loses its allure. Gertie's existence is redefined because she is unable to provide for her family in the city the way she does in the hills – her home.

Holbrook's story "The Idea of It," is about a man who needs work so he hires on as a scab at a trucking company. He desperately wants to remain in the hills living the "holler life," but it becomes increasingly harder. He remembers, "The best part of my childhood was spent on this farm here in eastern Kentucky. My dad worked in the mines

then. Mom, Dad, and me all lived here with Grandma and Grandpa” (Holbrook 127). His father, however, left the farm. “When I was ten Dad moved Mom and me to Dayton, Ohio. He got a job in a Frigidaire factory. He didn’t stick with it though, or it didn’t stick with him. After about a year we moved again, to Indianapolis, then the next year to Detroit, then to Pittsburgh, then to Cincinnati,” he recalls (Holbrook 127). Remembering the moving and the difficulty his father had holding a job, he does not want that for his family. Thus he becomes a scab before he will leave the holler. Much like John Prine’s song “Paradise,” the son asks the father to return to the life he knew as a child. In Prine’s lyrics, the town of Paradise no longer exists from the leveling of the coal companies, “I’m sorry my son, but you’re too late in asking. Mr. Peabody’s coal train has hauled it all away” (Prine). Holbrook’s character cannot return to the holler he once knew, because he only knew it as a child. As an adult, the appearance is much different. It is the same holler with no jobs and hard living, but the view is changed. He knows the outcome of moving, so makes the adult choice of staying. The reader can speculate that perhaps the scab’s son will make a different choice – the same as the grandfather if he grows up in the hostile holler lifestyle with a scab for a father. The scab understands the struggles of his father, and can empathize with his decision to leave, however, he stays.

In her essay for the Fall 2008 *Appalachian Heritage*, “Psychological Bridges and a Christmas Jam Cake,” Sidney Saylor Farr states, “It has been said that emigrants to this country take three generations to become Americanized. When Appalachian people migrate to other states and bigger cities to live and work, they have to bridge the gap in one generation” (87). Farr suggests that combining the “simplicity” of her heritage with the “stimulating” life outside Appalachia creates an interesting history and “fertile sources of experience to draw from and that richness can make amends for many of the disadvantages of poor education, and personal spiritual, and intellectual, isolation” (87). As a nineteen year old, Farr was introduced to a world outside of her isolated

environment by the missionaries from the Red Bird Mission. She claims to have “adopted their mannerisms, accents, and style of clothing, which disgusted my family and friends” (86). Her family ultimately must have thought her assimilation was an abandonment of her own heritage. Later she seems to have realized that by taking on this other persona, perhaps she did. She recognized that she did not need to change to become a writer, because she had long since been writing. Farr did the leave the hills, but it was temporary. Hers was both physical and psychological leaving, but she left and learned more about her heritage than she would have if she stayed.

5.4 The Hills Revolt

Although not exclusive to the Appalachians, relationships with nature can be volatile and force an upheaval in a family’s location. Because mountaineers relied so heavily on a relationship with nature for their food, that relationship sometimes had problems. Flood and drought seem to be the two main forces of nature that drive mountaineers from the hills. Because growing food rely so heavily on a balance of water and sun, these two forces appear most frequently in the literature.

Gap Creek is a good example of a lesson in humility provided by nature. Newlyweds Hank and Julie are unable to afford their own home, so they rent from Mr. Pendergast in his home in exchange for Julie cleaning and cooking for him. After Pendergast’s tragic death, Hank and Julie remain in his home trying not to return to their families and make it on their own. Julie works hard to build the store of food, but the river floods at Christmas time and destroys everything except the buildings. The milk cow drowns and the meat cannot be eaten. The freshwater supply is undrinkable. The chicken coop is swept away, and everything in the root cellar – potatoes, dried apples, peppers, pork, and corn - rots. It is “like the plagues of Egypt” sweep through. Julie thinks, “By the time I’d finished cleaning the house, I felt the floodwater had been poison and killed almost everything it touched, except the tools ... If we had been broke at

Christmas, we was worse off by New Year” (Morgan 236-239). After the flood, Hank and Julie encounter more bad luck at the hands of nature. They find all six of their hens lying dead in the yard. A mink had “slipped into the henhouse to kill the chickens.” Julie blames their bad luck. She thinks, “If we had plenty to eat and Hank had a job, and there wasn’t a baby coming ... it would have slipped into somebody else’s henhouse” (Morgan 269). She feels that bad luck continues to revisit, because they are in such a desperate situation and contemplates whether it is something they have done causing each disaster. Geographically, homes and gardens in hollers are built typically near creeks so flooding was a common problem.

Prior to the flood, Hank loses his job. Julie feels completely responsible for providing for the family, and she is pregnant with their first child. She takes inventory of everything on the property to see what stores of food they have to keep them from starving until Hank is able to earn wages again. In fact, Julie’s inventory consumes five pages of the text. It is such a significant moment in the lives of the characters. Hank is angry and embarrassed over losing his job. Julie is petrified and desperate, but she is the one who quickly gains control. Hank relinquishes his control to her at that moment. He is ill-equipped to deal with the appropriation of food, because his mother spoiled him as a child, whereas Julie was treated as a son and forced to perform in a more masculine role. Hank and Julie continue to have bad luck and ultimately leave Gap Creek to return to their hometown with regret and embarrassment. They had left home in the first place for Hank to find work. When he is laid off, their marriage suffers. They experience starvation and lose a child to hunger.

Drought is also a means of nature that drove mountaineers from the hills. Ironically, in Ron Rash’s *One Foot in Eden*, the valley is being flooded, but the community is experiencing a drought. The novel, a murder mystery based in Southern Appalachia, is told from the perspectives of the high sheriff, the wife, the husband, the

son, and the deputy and is likewise divided into five sections bearing the names of these main characters. "Corn stalks stood dead in the fields, the beans half-buried in gray dust. The only crop that looked to make it was tobacco I'd planted beside the river, that and some cabbage, if the groundhogs didn't get it," said the husband (Rash 116). Roy, the local merchant also suffers in a farming community. He tells the sheriff, "I got a shoebox full of credit tickets. If it don't come a good rain soon I'd just as well use them to start my fires this winter. But you don't have to worry about such things in town, do you?" (Rash 10). The credit tickets are from farmers struggling against the drought. The sheriff is regarded somewhat as a traitor having left the farm to pursue a different career and live in town. Roy's sarcasm is not unnoticed by the sheriff. Although the sheriff was raised in the farm community, those now suffering through the drought think he does not understand. People in town buy their food from a grocery store and do not rely on the weather for their sustenance.

Poor stewardship of the land is another reason families were forced to leave home. Athey Keith's son-in-law in *Jayber Crow* is a perfect example. Troy Chatham is the next generation farmer. The land is given to him, and he feels that he could bring a bigger profit with more modern methods of farming. He purchases large equipment to make the process faster and more efficient, but he falls so far in debt that he no longer can make a profit. Working the land past its limits destroys it, so it produces even less. This poor stewardship has nothing to do with flood or drought, but it does still prove that nature is in control. When the soil is no longer viable, it seems as though the land gives up.

In Holbrook's story "Unstable Ground," an older man named Estill Kidd tries to help his young neighbor, Kermit Strong, take care of his newly acquired property next door to Kidd's. Strong does not listen to Kidd, and in fact, does just the opposite. The

land under them both begins to erode causing damage to Kidd's home. Strong becomes wealthy quickly mining his own land and clearing his land of timber. Kidd says,

He didn't begrudge a man showing ambition. He'd turned a few dollars on coal and timber, and he'd worked in the mines, underground and on the surface, but there was a difference. Every tree he'd cut, he'd grieved over. Every ton of coal he'd mined he'd known the trade-off for. There was a difference in this latest generation. (Holbrook 40)

Strong is forced to move and the damage to Kidd's home is irreparable. He continues to stay in his home, but at night waits for the foundation to completely crumble. Again, there is the theme of stewardship with the land that also seems to deteriorate with later generations. Athey's son-in-law and Kermit Strong represent the modern generation of would-be capitalists in the mountains interested in money and instant gratification, the land be damned. Later, the land must be sold because it can no longer sustain a family due to improper care.

5.5 Homesickness, Comfort, and Freedom

Possibly the most remarkable reason for leaving Appalachia occurs in Chris Offutt's 1997 novel *The Good Brother*. Virgil Caudill's brother Boyd is killed. Everyone in the secluded Kentucky community expects Virgil to seek revenge on the murderer. Harkening back to the days of the Hatfields and McCoys in eastern Kentucky, Virgil does not want to continue the never ending process of vengeance, however, he does it. He murders his brother's killer in a calculated manner. He is forced to leave his family and the life he knows in the hills and wanders out West. Because it is the way of the hills, his vengeance leads to another man wanting vengeance for his brother. Orben, the vengeful man, travels all the way to Montana to kill Virgil. They meet in the woods, talk, and reminisce about the mountains. Virgil longs for the mountains of Kentucky. He misses the food, and he misses the land. They talk of changes in their community. "You won't

believe it,' Orben said. 'They're trying to get bars in town now, and all the bootleggers are glommed up with the preachers to fight it ... Every church in the county's got a new air conditioner and fresh gravel'" (*Good Brother* 299-300). Orben goes on to tell Virgil that a bypass is going through, who has married whom, who found religion, and other community gossip. Orben must kill Virgil, however, and neither can return home. They understand that if they return, there will always be someone waiting to kill them – the vicious cycle. Virgil explains,

Not a day goes by that I don't wish I never done it. When I first got here I thought it was the same as Kentucky only the hills were taller. But it ain't. You're the first person in a year I talked to who knows how I was raised – start right in talking and tell everybody everything all the time. These people out here don't say much ... It's like my world got a hole in it and all the life run out. I can't walk on land and know I've walked it a thousand times. I miss coming up the creek and seeing my home hill setting there waiting on me. I miss being in the woods bad. Hunting ginseng and mushrooms ... I could eat a mile of soupbeans and cornbread. I miss pork something awful. I don't reckon they ever heard of a hog out here. (*Good Brother* 301)

Even though Virgil left the mountains to save his life, he regrets it, because he feels as though he has lost his life anyway. As Orben holds a gun on Virgil the conversation that Virgil has missed continues. Virgil invites Orben to the house to eat or to share the bologna sandwich and coffee he has with him. The meeting ends with Orben saying his pleasant goodbyes to Virgil. They have shared a communion of sorts. They both traveled a long way seeking vengeance. They both miss the hills and their homes. They symbolically bind their agreement to end the revenge by sharing Virgil's bologna sandwich

Offutt's stories thematically include people who leave Kentucky. There is a great desire to leave, but an even greater desire to return. His Kentuckians seek each other out in different places. They share the same manners, interests, knowledge, and skills. Food is an important aspect of the relationship for fellow escapees as well as the relationships Kentuckians find outside of the Appalachians. It is the relationships, however, that drive them back to the hills.

In the last half of the twentieth century, many young people realized there were few jobs and not enough land to produce food to sustain everyone; many did not return. Taulbee recognizes his dilemma in Chris Holbrook's "As a Snare." He feels that he is trapped. Taulbee realizes, "If he left to find work, it would be in a place that would never be home no matter how long he lived there. If he kept on as he had with Roe, picking up work as he could, he would smoke dope and drink until he was too old for any other kind of life" (Holbrook 113). Men did leave the hills; some returned; some did not. Some felt it was necessary to escape that way of life. Those who left sometimes became educated and returned to provide assistance in their communities.

When mountaineers did leave their homes in Appalachia, they looked for comfort; something that reminded them of home. Often the comfort the homesick find is food. The homesick miss preparing leather britches beans in the summer or picking wild berries, but without something from home, life is difficult. In *Jayber Crow* when Athey Keith turns over his land to Troy Chatham, his son-in-law, he and his wife move to town. Athey falls and hurts himself and is unable to tend the land. When he is on his feet again, "he and Della bought a little homestead of twenty acres such as you used to see fairly commonly on the edges and ends of the country towns" (Berry 211). Twenty acres now is quite a bit of land, but for a farmer whose source of income relies on the land, it is not much. In his retirement, he tends his old mules, a milk cow, and raises chickens and hogs. "It was not a place on which they could live as they had lived, for that was past and

they knew it, but it was big enough to permit them still to be as they were, to do for themselves and to recognize themselves,” Jayber narrates. It is important to the Keiths to continue to maintain their independence. The small acreage allows Athey to simply downsize his operation. They continue to rely on what they raise by planting a garden and raising chickens and hogs, and he is able to continue his relationship with his animals and the land. “He called it ‘piddling,’ but his work was perfect,” according to Jayber (Berry 211). Even though Athey is “lame” he is able to provide for his family, and it provides comfort for them in their retirement. Athey’s ability to maintain this level of comfort is symbolic of his manhood and probably extends his life. Therefore, his farming is materially necessary for the families’ comfortable survival, but also symbolic of Athey’s survival. This mutual relationship with the man and his land is important in creating a balance.

In *Gap Creek* Julie is homesick for her mother and sisters when she and Hank have such a difficult time. When her sisters Carolyn and Lou visit, their mother sends lots of food for Julie including a ham and several jars of jams and jellies. Her sister Rosie sends her a coconut cake. Julie had not seen her family since she was married, so their visit in the kitchen with bread baking and green beans boiling on the stove, gives her a warm feeling and a sense of security that she has not felt in quite some time. Had the girls arrived without food, Julie would not have had anything to feed them. She comments, “I was so glad I had bought the sugar and coffee, for my cupboard was bare, and there was only what was left of the canned stuff in the basement” (Morgan 179). Later, when Julie is pregnant, the jars of jams and jellies bring her comfort. She craves something sweet, and that is the only thing she has to eat.

The thing I begun to crave in the cold weather was jelly, hot biscuits and cold jelly. I had eat all the jelly Mama had sent with Lou and Garland. There was still a few jars of blackberry jelly and grape jelly and apple

jelly in the basement, but only a few. I brought them up one at a time and wiped off the dust and eat jelly three times a day. I had to stop myself from eating jelly between meals. I put jelly on cornbread, and I put it on oatmeal. I wanted jelly so bad I could have eat it with a spoon. I thought constantly about the cool quivering softness of jelly melting on my tongue. There is something about the firmness of jelly that makes it taste better. Jelly has a body and has to be cut; it won't pour like honey or molasses. Jelly is soft rubies or amber. Jelly is almost alive. I craved jelly so bad I put it on grits and mush when I run out of biscuit flour. I wanted jelly so much I smeared it on whatever else I was eating.

(Morgan 254)

This discourse on jelly continues with Julie dreaming about jelly in her sleep. The care in the process of preserving jelly may have something to do with Julie's cravings along with the fact that she is pregnant. Someone took great care and put a lot of effort into making one jar. Picking the fruit, dicing, cooking, and canning are all part of an involved process in which Julie has participated with her mother at home. She enjoys the sweetness, but she is lacking comfort in her home and her marriage that jelly is able to provide. It ties her to her youth when she had plenty to eat.

In *The Dollmaker*, Gertie's source of comfort in the Detroit ghetto is dirt. She misses her garden and her land, so she decides to create a garden. Even though the dirt is much different in appearance from what she is accustomed, she appreciates it.

She stood a long time staring at the black earth, rich-looking and alive. At last she squatted and bent her face close to it, and sniffed, her eyes warm as they had used to be when she set the first cabbage plants in early spring; this earth was black as soot, and strange, but the smell of it was much like that of other earth in other springs ... She sat again and

tried to whittle, but thought instead of hens clucking over eggs, sage grass burning at twilight, the good taste of the first mess of wild greens, and early potatoes going into the ground. Potatoes? Good Friday was late enough for the first beans, and in this week was Good Friday.
(Arnow 376)

The smell of the dirt causes a reaction in Gertie. She reminisces about her home in Kentucky, and remembers that, at home, she would be picking the first beans and planting potatoes. This makes her sad, but the smell of the dirt provides some comfort. Most of Gertie's children adapt easier to their new environment. However, the oldest son Reuben, who is most like Gertie, misses the food they had back home. His new school does not allow students to bring lunches. Everyone must go home for lunch. Reuben asks his mother to make him a lunch just once. The action of his mother preparing him a sack lunch and the act of eating it provides his source of comfort just that once.

Mary Lee Settle learned how to garden from her grandma Addie. She says,

I have planted gardens ever since – a garden in Essex in England, an allotment in Oxford, a garden in Turkey which, when the water dried up in the town, I tried to keep alive with Coca-Cola. It didn't work. To watch a garden die from lack of water is to know dying, how slow it is, how life struggles for a last gasp of here and now. (Settle 163)

Keeping a garden was more a source of comfort than sustenance. She enjoyed the fresh vegetables, but it was the process and the memories of Addie that the garden provided. It was the relationship with the small patch of earth that reminds Settle of the comfort she felt with Addie.

When Ada and Inman are finally reunited in *Cold Mountain*, she prepares a meal for him. This is the first meal they have eaten together, so it is not only a communion for

them, but the meal represents her love and the last supper as it is also the last meal she prepares for him.

She put dried apple rings in water, and while they soaked she fried wedges of leftover grits in grease from a strip of fatback. When the grits were crisp and brown at the edges, she took them out and put the apples in the pan and stirred them around ... The meal Ada arrived at was rich and brown, flavored with woodsmoke and pork fat, and it was just the kind of food called for by the upcoming solstice of winter, food that offered consolation against short days and long nights. (414)

This meal provides comfort for Inman that he has not had since he left for the war. Ada is part of the comfort because he loves her, but also because she cooked the meal for him. It is a meal that he is accustomed to from his past as well, with the tastes and rich smells that remind him of home. While Inman is away, Ada has adapted to the Appalachian lifestyle. Initially reliant on Ruby, this is the point in the novel when she has clearly graduated from Ruby's tutelage to become the motherly caregiver. This meal she creates for Inman is symbolic of her independence and womanhood. She prepares the first meal for Inman, and they share their first intimate physical relationship. It is the end and source of Inman's quest. Like Odysseus, he struggles to return home, but along the way he is distracted by the need for food. Without his ability to obtain food easily, Inman is a desperate man willing to do things he normally would not.

Because most of their time is spent in growing and preparing food, it is understandable that the memories of many characters are of food and the people associated with that growing and preparing. Gertie in *The Dollmaker* associates a sack of corn with her brother Henley who died in World War I. She dreams of Henley helping her put a bushel sack of corn on the back of her mule, but for some reason she feels guilty and responsible for Henley's death. Instead of him placing the sack on the mule,

he slings it across her neck causing great pain. This literal weight on her shoulders is also a figurative weight. Henley's death is a continuous burden to Gertie that she cannot lose. Henley is the last male in the family to carry on the name. He also leaves his savings to Gertie and her family to purchase their own land. She continues to feel this burden, because instead of following her dreams as Henley wanted, Clovis moves the family to Detroit. Clovis was supposed to have joined the army. Instead, after he passes his army exam, he goes to Detroit to find work. This decision may also be part of the "weight" Gertie bears. Like this memory of Henley and the sack of corn, Gertie has numerous memories of home triggered by food when she is living in Detroit.

Stooping over the too low gas stove, frying strange fish she had bought because it was cheap and unrationed, turning it in the scant grease she had been able to spare, she saw herself back home. The red ball of the winter's sun was going down behind the hills across the river. The cedar trees above the creek whispered among themselves in a rising night wind. The new milk was cooling on the porch shelf. Reuben was in the barn, the younger ones bringing in the wood and water, while Clytie fried fresh pork shoulder in the kitchen. On the stove hearth was a big pan of baked sweet potatoes, and pulled back on the stove where they wouldn't burn was a skillet of fresh made hominy and another late turnip greens. She was cutting up the soap she'd made that day from the guts of her big fattened hog. Every once in a while she'd step off the porch and look a little south, but mostly west; that would be above her father's house, where the new moon showed first. She couldn't see the moon, not yet, it was too early. (Arnow 265)

Her children interrupt this dream of her home. She misses the land, her parents, and the abundance and goodness of the food she had in the hills. The memory is triggered by

the food she is preparing and the uncomfortably abnormal position of the gas stove she is using. Gertie's reflection is to a time when her family was not classified as poor as they are in Detroit, and where the fish she cooks would be fresh catches from a nearby creek.

In several of Chris Holbrook's short stories, food is a comfort and reminder of home. In "Hell and Ohio," the main character lives in Ohio, but has come home for a family reunion. He comments that what he misses about Kentucky is the food. The family is sitting at a large table of food, and his brother-in-law hands him a piece of cornbread. As he does this, his grandmother says, "I know it's hard being so far from home" (Holbrook 7). This leads the reader to believe that it is the lack of cornbread, or good cornbread, which is difficult about being away from home. When he returns to Ohio he reflects, "There are other times when I get so homesick I could almost cry, a time or two I have, and I know then that everything I ever cared about or ever will care about is in those hills" (Holbrook 16). The cornbread triggers his homesickness.

Going home also triggers memories for characters. In another late twentieth century based Holbrook story, "Eulogy," Tara comes home from school for her grandmother's funeral. She has a meal with her parents, and tells them that she saw the old home place had been strip-mined. Her father says, "It liked to killed Mommy to lease that coal," while her mother reassures that the coal company is going to reclaim the land by sowing grass and making pastureland (*Hell and Ohio* 120). When she leaves, her father sends garden vegetables with her – new potatoes, green onions and early peas. She knows the process by which the food was grown. She knows the routine. Tara remembers that her mother taught her to garden and cook beans, corn, and cabbage for the winter. This is a fond memory she shares with her mother. These vegetables are a source of comfort for Tara while she is away from her family.

The smell of food cooking is also a source of comfort in Appalachian texts. Smells can evoke memories of mother's kitchen. In Holbrook's "Fire," Lee is a young boy

who is not quite old enough to participate in the labor on the farm, but he tries. The story is told from a third person perspective from Lee's point of view. Lee is comfortable with his family and feels safe. He has plenty to eat and enjoys the sounds of his parents in the kitchen while his mother makes breakfast of sausage and biscuits. "His mother stood over the stove, forking sausage patties onto a plate from a still sizzling cast iron skillet, then mixing flour and cream into the leftover grease for gravy," as Lee and his father watch (Holbrook 54). The author uses specific cooking techniques in his description perhaps to remind readers of youthful days watching their own mother in the kitchen. For Appalachians, decisions were made in the kitchen as well as invaluable moments of bonding between a mother and her children. Even though Lee is not actively participating in the preparation of breakfast, he is participating in the family dynamic as his father readies himself for the mine.

The sheriff in *One Foot in Eden* visits his father at his home place. As he sits in the familiar warmth of the kitchen, he remembers when his mother was alive and milling around in the kitchen.

I knew if I went to Salem I'd be going by myself, so I went inside and sat at the kitchen table while he warmed the food. The kitchen looked like it always had in some ways – the Black Draught calendar above the stove, the metal tins of sugar and salt on the counter. But Momma's recipe box wasn't on that counter. There was no sifter or rolling pin out. The kitchen didn't have the warm smell it'd had when I was growing up and Momma always seemed to have bread or a pie in the stove. (Rash 37)

This memory reminds him of other memories from his childhood with his brother squirrel hunting. He remembers the window of the kitchen being a "beacon leading us to a warm, safe place where people who loved us would always be waiting" (Rash 38). The sheriff visits with his father and they share a meal. When he was young he enjoyed the meal,

but in older age, he finds the meal to be greasy. His father has continued to eat the same way he has for years and thinks the food is “better than any café food,” but the sheriff says, “There had been a time I would have agreed with him. The thick, salty tang of fatback added to the collards and field peas would have made it taste all the better. Laura’s crackling cornbread would have tasted sweet and moist as cake. Now the food tasted greasy, sliding down my throat like motor oil” (Rash 38).

The sheriff married Janice, a woman who is not from the hills. She does not appreciate the heartiness of the food. When she visits, she turns down collards and venison, because she says it is “country food.” This difference causes a strain between the family and Janice. Even though the sheriff does not enjoy the food as he did as a child, he enjoys the memories that prevail because of the food and its representation of a warm, loving home. The sheriff’s rejection of his father’s food is a rejection of the lifestyle, but he is torn between the comforts of that lifestyle as a child and his escape into his current life.

In Holbrook’s “Eminent Domain,” the men in the family return to the old home place site. The son, who is no longer living there, is interested in his family’s heritage while the other, who is still living in the hills, is interested in making money. As the grandfather points to various places on the property, he explains where the buildings and orchards used to be. The one who left has fond memories of his childhood, while the other is unable to make a comparison to any other way of life.

“I can remember when this was a show place.” He pointed to the south, down the hillside toward a silt pool. “The creek run by there,” he said. “We had apple trees – Winesaps and Granny Smith’s” ... “Over yonder Daddy had his bee gum. That’s where the hog lot was. That was the chicken house. There was the well. That was the smokehouse.” (Holbrook 87)

Everything he points out is related to food. His recollection is of food production. The animals and the orchards hold fond memories for the grandfather. It is also important to the dad that his sons know where things were on the home place, even though one of them would rather be working. Because they are forced to give up the land for the road, it is the last time they will be able to visit the site. It will only exist in the memory of the grandfather who actually lived there, and will naturally die out.

Earl Hamner, in his 2007 story in *Appalachian Heritage* "A Dogwood Memory," recounts a family reunion when he was young and explains the importance of storytelling, "No event is without significance to us, and all that happens becomes a part of our history ... Our reunions become a verbal history of birth and death ... and just celebrating the joy of being together again" (Hamner 23). Because the reunions are so important in his family, the food is equally important. After visiting family graves and telling stories, dinner is served.

The turkey, golden brown, had a minimum of birdshot left in it. The applesauce was made from fruit we had gathered from an abandoned orchard down on Mt. Alto. The butter beans, the corn, and the peas came from our summer garden, canned by my mother. The potatoes, flavored with Chance's rich butter, were not mashed but creamed. Finally desserts. The sweet potato pie, still warm from the oven, was encased in a crust so crumbly and sweet that it alone could have been a dessert. And then came the pumpkin pie, steaming aromas of brown sugar and nutmeg, and all laced with generous portions of whipped cream. All of it was accompanied by milk for the children, coffee for the adults and, if requested, iced tea as sweet as sugar cane. (Hamner 24)

This reunion occurred during the Depression. He says, "They were challenging times, those Depression Years. They seem so distant now. We thought we were poor, but in

them we were richer than we knew.” He realizes, like many, that even though monetarily they had very little, they had an abundance of good food and family. Listing the reunion food is significant to this author because he is able to recall the standard fare.

Food provided a sense of freedom during this time. Even though the rest of the country suffered tremendously trying to find work, the mountain people continued to barter for goods that they could not grow themselves. They may have lived in poverty initially, but they maintained the same level throughout. While others became slaves to government help, many in Appalachia were able to fend for themselves and not rely on the companies for work. This feeling of independence did not begin with the Depression, however. The Depression seemed to even the playing field so to speak. The poverty pocket of Appalachia did not exist yet. The authors of *Foxfire* state, “They just cooked what food they had on hand at the time” (Page and Wigginton 37). Cooking and eating what is available is freedom.

In his *Smokehouse Ham, Spoon Bread, & Scuppernong Wine*, Joseph Dabney quotes a woman who remembers that society considered her family to be poor when she was growing up, but she did not understand, “We never did set down to a meal but what we didn’t have somethin’ on the table. We always had bread and meat. We raised our own meat; we raised our own vegetables; we worked like crazy, but we worked and made what we eat and eat what we made” (Dabney 26). To her during the Depression, status was measured by the families’ capability of producing food. She recognized that her family had as much food as anyone else; therefore, they were not poor. She recalls this horrific time in America with fondness, because her family, already making a modest living, continued to be successful in producing food.

Just as challenging as the Depression, those in Appalachia during the Civil War dealt with different elements of difficulty. Economically, civilians ate what was available to them and relied little on outside influences. The goat lady that Inman encounters in

Cold Mountain is free. She does not rely on anyone else for anything. Completely self-sustained in the mountains, she uses the goats for most of her needs. She even relies on them for companionship. The meal that Ada prepares for Inman also represents freedom. It is Ada's freedom that she will not be forced to rely on anyone else for her food, and also Inman's freedom from the war. Ruby gives Ada the knowledge and the skills for her freedom.

Food is also a source of freedom in Ron Rash's *One Foot in Eden*. Billy says,

I hoed the last of the cabbage... I kneeled down and rubbed a green leaf between my finger and thumb, the same way you'd rub a dollar bill, because that's what it was, money. Which was the why for giving over my best piece of land to it and the why for though the beans and corn might not make it we'd get through the winter, provided I was around to harvest and cure it. But we'd be eating a lot of cabbage come January and February and we'd be eating it by lamplight. (Rash 144)

Because it was easier for him to grow cabbage, in hard times, Billy uses his best land to grow it. Even though the family may tire of the cabbage in the winter months, they will have it. He comments that it is "money" to him, which means freedom.

Living in a holler may seem like a prison, because it is difficult to get out and difficult to get in. Many men felt trapped and claustrophobic in the confines of a small valley, so to argue that holler living meant freedom may seem absurd to some. Holbrook provides examples of both sides in his story "The Idea of It." The father/husband lived in Kentucky for awhile as a child until his father moved them around to several industrial cities. He recounts Kentucky as the best time in his childhood, so he wants the same for his son Gabriel. Gabriel, nor his mother Cathy, likes holler life because each feels confined. Cathy also lacks the skills in the mountains limiting her sense of being and heightening her frustration. The father/husband says, "I'm not all the way used to this

stuck-up-a-holler kind of life myself. Most times I love it, having a big garden to tend and miles of hills to hike and hunt in and a little creek for fishing and nobody around to bother me. Sometimes I'll step out on my porch in the middle of the night and let loose a big yell and feel I've been set free from the world" (Holbrook 130). Other times he misses the amenities of town living – TV, grocery stores, garbage pickup, and easy access to other pastimes. As much as he misses these modern conveniences, he knows that he is better equipped to provide for his family living in the holler, because he does not have a job. He says, "We sit at the kitchen table and eat fried corn and boiled potatoes and green beans and yellow cornbread and sliced tomatoes and cucumbers. With all this good garden food, I don't even miss the meat we've not been having" (Holbrook 134). Because of his geographic home, he is able to provide food if little else. If he lived in town, he would not have this capability.

In *The Kentuckians*, when Dave finally marries Bethia and is able to take her to his home for the first night, he remembers the sounds she makes in the kitchen. He finally has a woman in his home providing the comfort he lacked. He listens to her

... feet shuffling over the floor ... the crane clank when she swung it wide of the fire ... the spoon scrape against the side of the kettle ... the bowls clatter when she set them on the table ... water gurgling when she poured it into the noggins ... all the little sounds a woman makes about her house, that come to be part and parcel of a man, like the woman herself. (Giles 248)

This last moment in *The Kentuckians* describes the woman preparing a meal for the man in their shared home for the first time. He is anxious to hear these sounds for the rest of his life. Perhaps it is simply out of love for Bethia, but it might also be a sense of comfort and freedom knowing that food will always be abundant for them, and his woman will always prepare his food. He has not had this luxury until now. The last dialogue in the

book is about food. When Bethia finishes preparing Dave's meal she says, "You can come eat now," as if the entire plot has been leading to this moment.

The common factor for those who find comfort and freedom in the hills or homesickness for them is food. Authors recall exact smells and tastes from the mountains. They list exact menus of meals that were a little more significant than others. G.C. Jones often recounts memories of food appealing to his senses like, "the aroma of frying side pork and hoe-johnny bread and strong black coffee" and how "creamy" buttermilk tastes. The smells invoke a physical reaction when he comments, "My mouth drools when I think of them cold winter days, the aroma coming from the kitchen and going all through the house" (Jones 1). "Breakfast was on the table and the aroma from a big plate of country ham was sure getting to me. Mrs. Walters had made a big mound of steaming hot biscuits, a bowl of gravy, eggs, butter, and country wild honey," Jones again recalls. Eventually, Jones and his wife move to Florida to retire. When he first arrives, he stays with sons. He wants to be sure he is not a bother to his kin, so he prepares a "good mountain breakfast" for his son that includes "fried salt bacon, potatoes, eggs, milk gravy, and a pan of light fluffy biscuits" (Jones 169-170). Even though his son is running late for work, he refuses to pass on this breakfast that reminds him of his childhood prepared lovingly by his father. Away from the hills for quite some time, his son is happy to have the mountain food he missed. He has left the hills and become successful, but at that point with his parents now with him, he benefits by having that sense of home, in the form of his father's cooking, close to him.

Perhaps Iree Bowling in Rory Kennedy's *American Hollow* summarizes her attachment to the hollow life best when she says, "We pay a price for all this beauty we have here ... the hollow is in our hearts. But my young ones don't have the schooling they'd need if they lived yonder, in a city – and there are no jobs for them. We've got our land, true, but if that gets hurt, we'll have to leave" (Kennedy 7). Even in Iree's

“uneducated” mind, she wants life to be better for the next generation. Kennedy spends her time with the Bowlings in the 1990s, resembling her father Robert who was concerned about poverty in the 1960s. Even though the mountains provide homesickness, comfort, and freedom, both those who left and those who stayed know there are still concerns of meeting the basic needs of those in the Appalachians. Health care, education, and jobs are still issues in eastern Kentucky, and authors are still writing about these concerns.

5.6 Assimilation

According to Janet Fitchen in her 1997 article “Hunger, Malnutrition, and Poverty in the Contemporary United States,” the eating habits of the poor are shaped by poverty. She claims that food shortages in early childhood “leave a lifelong sensitivity to the problem of having sufficient and desirable food” (Fitchen 393). If this is the case, children in the mountains may also have a lifelong sensitivity to food, but for a different reason. The abundance, not the lack of food, provided Appalachian children with memories of the food itself. Fitchen believes, “Food and eating are enmeshed in feelings about self, interpersonal relationships, and dreams for the future, and these in turn are shaped by the surrounding culture” (Fitchen 394). The relationships developed within families typically revolve around the growing and preparation of the food. Therefore, I argue that memories and sense of self developed in of childhood often involve food. Fitchen’s argument applies to the nation’s poor, and certainly Appalachia is a poverty pocket. However, the problem in this poverty pocket is not the lack of “sufficient and desirable food,” but the lack of education. Education meant not only school, but came to mean education of society and culture outside the Appalachians. Therefore, a popular trend occurred for people to enter the mountains to “save” the hillbilly.

Settle says, “It was a new ‘volunteer’ fashion for ladies from Charleston to go upriver to teach the Italian women to speak English, to cook (when they had been

cooking Italian food all their lives), and to be 'American'" (Settle 13). "Upriver" from Charleston meant North Carolina, West Virginia, and Kentucky – into the Appalachian Mountains and the coal camps. Mary Lee Settle's grandmother Addie recognized that the frontier valley had changed by the time she arrived. "What she saw in the distance was more a mirage than just green hills, rolling fields, and calm. She saw feudal divisions of money, property, and power in what had been, such a short time ago, a frontier valley," says Settle (18). The timber and coal company invasions created this class structure of upper, working, and lower class. The upper class included big business owners, the working class moved from the hills into the towns, and those left on the farms became the lower class. Those with money obtained property and power. When capitalism arrived in this manner to Appalachia, human nature began to take hold on many men and women. Greed and jealousy for what other families had – a new house, store bought clothes, and food – began a wave of exodus from the mountains into the coal camps or farther.

For those who left the hills and were thrust into the capitalist environment, the change was detrimental to the familial relationships. In Arnow's *The Dollmaker*, Clovis tries to convince Gertie that her sister's life is easier than her own. Clovis argues, "No heaven and sweaten fer her tu make corn grow in land that ud be better left in scrub pine an saw briers, an then not keepen all you raise ... She's had it easier an her youngens has got good schools ... You wasn't raised to eat sowbelly in a tar-paper shack" (84). Rachel Lee Rubin, in her essay "My Country Is Kentucky: Leaving Appalachia in Harriette Arnow's *The Dollmaker*," states the female is "linked psychically to the land (181). Clovis has been outside of the hills whereas Gertie has not. His idea of an easier life is different than Gertie's. She has secretly saved money to buy the Tipton place for them, while Clovis would rather she not have to farm and the kids have a good education. This relationship between Gertie and the land is the "center of a belief system that situates her

in time according to her relation to the natural world” (181). This conversation takes place while Gertie prepares breakfast on her wood burning stove and Clovis shaves in the kitchen. He states, “Wouldn’t it be something now to have it like th people in Town – th electric lights an bathrooms” (84). Gertie argues, “Electric lights an runnen water won’t make a empty belly full ... I’ll bet they’s many a time Meg would ha traded her electric fer a week’s grub ahead, an her man made big money in th mines – when he got tu work” (84). This conversation between the couple foreshadows their life in Detroit. Rubin says, “Arnow early on genders the impulse to leave (represented by the truck) as male and the need to stay (represented by the multigenerational home) as female” (180). They both want very different things in life, but Clovis is ready to adapt to a new “American” lifestyle and Gertie is not. Ironically, Clovis sets out to make Gertie’s life easier, but makes it harder instead. Gertie’s mother believes the wife’s place is next to the husband. When they arrive in Detroit Gertie is faced with credit, taxes, and food that is not fresh. Her first trip to “the big store” she learns about sales tax. Clovis paid the additional sixty cents for the groceries, but Gertie is upset. She complains, “I wouldn’t mind so much, if’n all that money ud buy a egg that was real fresh er some good fresh meal” (212). Clovis scolds,

They’s millions an millions a people never tastes nothen but what they git outa stores. They’ve never tasted real good cornbread with butter an fresh eggs, so’s they don’t mind eggs that ain’t never fresh, an store-bought bread with oleo. If’n spenden a nickel’s goen to be like losen a drop a blood fer you, why you’ll be bled dry in no time atall. (212)

To make matters worse for Gertie, the people were not friendly in Detroit, and she had a hard time understanding their strange accents. “She enters a community of women whose aspirations and talents have been similarly destroyed or stupefied by the dominance of their men,” according to Rubin (180). The kids are also used to the plentiful supply of fruit for snacking, but Gertie cannot afford it in Detroit, and when she

tries to buy fruit from the vendor, it is rotten. Later Enoch cries, "Mom's tryen to feed us rotten bananas" (349). Gertie is devastated and embarrassed. Clovis tries not to scold her, but says, "Gert, you've got to watch what you buy. That sandwich meat you put in my lunch hardly had th taste a meat. More like corn meal an taters mashed an colored to look like meat" (349). Clovis tries to support Gertie in front of the children, but he is the one who forced the move upon the family. He is the reason they do not have good food. "As Gertie's homegrown meals demonstrate, women and the land are untied by their ability to nourish. Capitalism ... which interferes with Gertie's womanly ability to nourish, is associated with the male," claims Rubin (182). Gertie is not used to the capitalist environment of grocery buying either. Enoch points out other mistakes in grocery shopping she has made and then admiringly says that the grocers must make good money from people like Gertie. Gertie continues to disappoint her family when she must buy store bought clothes. She mistakenly purchases a dress the store clerk swore was cotton, but when she ironed it, it melted away because it was rayon. Her children are frustrated with her, because they find it easier to adapt their lives with the new environment, and seem to not understand why she cannot. Her family does not know about the other items she has mistakenly bought – "the box of pepper half full, the rotten eggs, the rotten oranges, the sweet potatoes bought as a treat one night but all black in their hearts" (350). Gertie's identity has been taken away from her in this new society. She is no longer the heroine providing delicious food in abundance, but an incompetent female who must rely on her husband.

Later Gertie tries to earn money laundering shirts, so she can buy popsicles for the kids. Popsicles are a typical "American" treat that Gertie wants for her children. In some ways she is trying to buy their respect and admiration. She notices that many children in the neighborhood have factory-working mothers. These children rarely eat decent meals, because they are outside playing most of the day. She notices that the

children “ate as they played, always chewing peanuts or popcorn or candy or popsicles or some sturdier thing like a stalk of celery or a raw carrot” (373). This is representative of a fast food generation being created in the newly created ghettos established in Detroit to house the automobile factory workers. Gertie uses a food analogy when she responds to Reuben’s teacher who proclaims the children must “fit in.” She asserts, “that children cannot be stamped out identically like biscuit dough” (Rubin 183). Gertie is afraid that her children will be claimed by the “homogenization” like the other children in Detroit (Rubin 183).

With the industrialization of the Appalachians in the twentieth century due to coal and timber companies, came the advent of unions. Factory workers who came from the hills to work often found themselves without jobs. Clovis is no different. The factory workers strike, and he is forced to strike as well. Struggling to pay rent and buy food, Gertie is forced to obtain credit and purchase cheaper cuts of meat at “the big store.” With money from selling her dolls, she is able to purchase a “beef heart, too big, with the little fat on it yellow like from an old cow; she knew it would be tough and that it wasn’t fresh, but it was the only one left. The pork liver was all gone, but she did buy two loaves of bread from the day-old pile – half price. Sixty-eight cents, the machine said, and then the tax ...” (578-579). The kids also learn that because Clovis is on strike, they can only have one glass of milk. In Kentucky, they owned their own milk cow. For breakfast they could no longer have eggs because of the expense. At home in Kentucky, they had chickens of their own. Gertie also began to not eat as much and sometimes not at all, so there would be enough for the family. Even though the meals continued to be less than desirable, the family still ate. Clovis tries to pacify her by telling her that he will obtain credit from a department store, and they can continue to get credit from the grocery man. He even buys her a new “Icy Heart” refrigerator. Rubin comments that the name is “evocative of the soullessness of the war economy” (182). As he falls deeper in deeper

into the capitalist way of life, Gertie becomes more and more disenchanted. Clovis is assimilating in the modern society, but Gertie is stuck in the past at her home in Kentucky. To her, things are not better, as Clovis promised; they are much worse. Now he has no job, and they owe money to strangers for food that is not good enough for her family.

Ron Rash's characters in *One Foot in Eden* likewise suffer from assimilation. The sheriff wants to take his father to eat at the cafeteria, because he no longer approves of the "greasy" food on which he was raised. His father does not want to eat in a restaurant. The sheriff wants his father to become more acclimated to modern society, but his father is comfortable with the garden greens and peas that "fits" him. The sheriff's wife Janice considers the collards, peas, and fatback to be "country food," and considers it the food of the uneducated. This association between lack of education and fatty foods took place when the mountain people arrived in the cities for jobs. Because they brought with them their methods of cooking, their co-workers or acquaintances were introduced to this "old style" way. Not only did the mountain people sound uneducated with their ancient Celtic dialects, they also did not know much about the way of life in cities. This lack of knowledge plus the food items they consumed and the way they prepared the food became closely associated.

For most in society, people who are educated are well-assimilated into capitalism. Those living in the Appalachians in the twentieth century were mostly considered uneducated and therefore unassimilated. In her essay "Beating the Biscuits in Appalachia: Race, Class, and Gender Politics of Women Baking Bread" in the 2005 *Cornbread Nation 3: Foods of the Mountain South*, Elizabeth Englehardt explains that "help" was sent in to educate the mountain families and offer welfare services to those in need. Service workers and teachers came to establish schools and to teach women how to "keep" house. The idea of civilization included a faster way of cooking for instance.

Even cornbread became low class thanks to these women, and biscuits became the recommended bread. The 1890s to 1920s were the “heyday of the Progressive Era” during a time of “settlement houses, ‘New Women,’ public libraries, anti-tuberculosis campaigns, ‘Lifting as We Climb,’ temperance, and, of course, suffrage” (Engelhardt 33). In her 2007 essay “Gender and Food,” Marcie Cohen Ferris states,

From the 1890s through the 1920s southerners created a New South that was evident in the new lines of commercial food products that appeared in the general store and grocery. Although men’s and women’s roles in food preparation changed little from the end of the Civil War to World War II, access to canned goods, cooking stoves, and electric refrigerators and appliances significantly changed women’s roles in the kitchen. (Ferris 60)

These refrigerators and appliances were not necessarily available to the mountain women living in Appalachia. The mountain heroine continued to use a fireplace or wood burning stove and a spring house to keep foodstuffs cool. The mountain woman was being left behind in society’s standards. Like Gertie in *The Dollmaker*, is not acclimated to using the new “Icy Heart” refrigerator and is warned that it will freeze and destroy food if not careful. Elizabeth Engelhardt states,

... the biscuit and the cornbread – have shifted in meaning over the course of the twentieth century. Today they are, at least for Americans of European and African descent, both primarily Southern foods, hallmarks of down-home or country cooking, and sources of nostalgia for “simpler” times. But when the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth, they had very different and distinct meanings. To some observers, one was a mark of high culture, modern hygiene, and progressive womanhood. Biscuit baking demonstrated class

consciousness, leisure time for women, consumer-marketed equipment, and nationally standardized consumption. Cornbread, on the other hand, symbolized ignorance, disease, and poverty. It could be made with locally produced ingredients, equipment made at home, and brief moments of time seized between other work; even at the turn of the century, it was regionally identified and nationally disparaged. A social history of class, race, and gender hides in the different recipes and uses of cornbread and biscuits. (Engelhardt 32-33)

At the Hindman Settlement School, Katherine Pettit and May Stone experimented in domestic science with Appalachian women. Cooking lessons were at the core of what Pettit and Stone began. They were summoned by Reverend J. T. Mitchell who wanted Appalachian women to become enlightened. According to Engelhardt,

Not only were women defined by Mitchell, Pettit, and Stone in the restrictive categories of wife, mother, and housekeeper before all others, but also cooking and home-making were presented as the path for Appalachian women to follow to reach the intellectual and moral positions occupied by Pettit, Stone, and their teachers. (Engelhardt 34)

Ironically, at the turn of the twentieth century when Appalachian women had been successfully providing for their families for over a century, Pettit and Stone arrived to teach them how. The teachers began with cornbread. They wanted to replace it with something healthier and “civilized” – the biscuit. The teachers felt that the Appalachians were “completely ignorant of the finer points of baking,” a symbol of modern society. Corn had always been a symbol of pride. According to Loyal Jones in his essay simply titled “Corn” in *Foodways*, “By 1849 the South had 18 million acres planted in corn, as compared to 5 million in cotton. Corn’s reproductive return is greater than that of any other cereal crop, with one grain producing anywhere from 500 to 4,000 kernels” (Jones

152). As previously mentioned, settlers to Kentucky had to grow a crop of corn to validate their land holdings. To gain funding for their education endeavor, Pettit and Stone had to convince donors that corn was a “nostalgic symbol of America ... portraying cornbread-eating Appalachians nostalgically as ‘our contemporary ancestors’ ... making them worthy (and needy) American subjects for funding ...” (Engelhardt 35). The so-called Progressive women set out to help the women of Appalachia reach the “height of domestic achievement” --- the beaten biscuit. The beaten biscuit was “beaten” with a mallet on a hard surface.

Bill Neal, in his *Southern Cooking*, writes that the beaten biscuit involves flour, salt, sugar, lard, and cold water. He lists the necessary equipment as a mixing bowl; blending fork; wooden spoon; mallet, cleaver, or rolling pin; biscuit cutter; and baking sheet ... Neal calls for at least 300 strokes for family and 500 for company. (Engelhardt 36-37)

Not as labor intensive, cornbread is a staple in the mountaineer’s kitchen often portrayed in modern texts, and the most important device used in cornbread making is the iron skillet. Pouring the mixture into the hot oil greased skillet and cooking the bottom to crispness before putting in the oven is a necessity. In *Big Stone Gap* Mrs. Mac invites Ave Maria into her house because she has made cornbread she wants to share. While discussing other topics, Ave watches Mrs. Mac cut the cornbread into triangles in the skillet. Many of the characters add a special ingredient. In *Gap Creek* Julie says, “To make cornbread, to make good cornbread, I had to have some buttermilk, and I knowed the buttermilk would be in the spring house ... The floor was water, except for a row of stepping stones from the door. And in the water set jars of milk and pitchers of cream, butter inside tin pails” (Morgan 64). Unlike white bread, cornbread did not keep well for more than one day, so it was prepared daily. Therefore, cornbread was always hot and fresh when remembered by characters like Julie and Ave.

Essentially, the biscuit became a symbol of modern society with more ingredients and more modern conveniences needed to prepare them. Cornbread, on the other hand, can be cooked in various conditions including over an open fire or oven; and in a skillet, Dutch oven, or “hoe.” Not only that, it can be prepared in a very short time with very few ingredients. This upheaval in the kitchen became more than a decision on what type of bread to prepare with the family meal. Engelhardt suggests, “ For turn-of-the-century mountain women ... the decision made a statement about class in the Appalachians. The biscuit ... marked middle-and upper-class status in 1900. Pettit and Stone judged the households into which they were invited by the breads they were served for dinner” (Engelhardt 37).

Pettit and Stone further chartered to teach the Appalachian women to cook vegetables and meats with less grease stating that these domestic achievements were marks of a superior social class. They felt that once the bread making was standardized, lessons of morality and intellect could follow. Engelhardt recognizes literature in which the middle-class workers are eating biscuits prepared by servants eating cornbread. This difference in bread preparation goes deeper.

Yeast bread and beaten biscuits occupy one end of this food-and-class continuum; the many varieties of cornbread occupy the other. Soda biscuits and quick breads stand in the middle ground. The logic of these divisions reveals much about gender and race in Appalachian culture around 1900 and can be seen when we examine the ingredients, equipment, leisure time, and national standards encoded in the recipes themselves. (Engelhardt 39)

Her point is that wheat was not grown by the mountaineer. The land was not sufficient for it to grow, because large fields were needed with lots of sun. Corn could easily be grown in a garden. Women could grow their own corn in a patch next to the house.

Planting corn in the region was the most logical decision. Only people who could afford to purchase wheat flour or maintain land for wheat could be considered part of the biscuit class. Again, mountaineers infamously made do with what was available to them. The same large tin pan may be used to feed the livestock, mix bread, wash clothes, carry water, and dress a chicken. Discarded bottles may be used as rolling pins and potato mashers. Equipment, like a stove, was needed to make biscuits that most Appalachian families did not have. Time was also a commodity needed to make biscuits. Leisure time was not afforded to mountain women; only those who could afford to have servants typically had leisure time. The definitions of leisure time from Pettit and Stone seemed to be more time to spend in the kitchen – something the Appalachian heroine already did. The introduction of biscuits did accomplish moving the Appalachian region toward assimilation into “civilized” American society. Many, at least, began “participating in the nation’s consumerist culture” (Engelhardt 44). However, the Appalachian virtue of using what was provided by the land still held steady. “To try to cook without cornmeal in the South is a lost cause,” says Charles Reagan Wilson in his *Foodways* essay “Cornbread” (Wilson 154). Engelhardt quotes an anonymous mountain woman who told Pettit and Stone, “Ye all must be a lot of trouble to yerselves” (Engelhardt 44).

With the changes in the hills, towns began to suffer. Jayber Crowe’s fictitious Port William suffers through “progress” in the 1960s. The local general store closed and the last one like it sustained the local economy as long as it could by purchasing chickens, egg, and cream from the farmwives. Eventually, farmwives discontinued bringing goods to town for trade and started buying their groceries.

The Economy no longer wanted the people of Port William to produce, for instance, eggs. It wanted them to eat eggs without producing them. Or, more properly speaking, it wanted them to buy eggs. It didn’t care whether the eggs were eaten or not, so long as they were bought. It

didn't care how fresh they were or how good they were, so long as they were bought ... And the farmers ... were worrying. They knew that farming was in decline, losing diversity, losing self-sufficiency, losing production capacity. A sort of communal self-confidence, which must always have existed, had begun to die away. (Berry 275-276)

When the food source and supply of a community dies, the rest of the town follows – restaurants, hotels, and other amenities once available are unable to continue in business. When families began to rely on grocery stores, it was imperative to have a source of income. At this point in the Appalachian society, poverty and class issues changed. Families began to rely on outside sources for food; therefore, earning a paycheck was a necessity. With this change, farmers were in jeopardy, because the demand for their produce declined. Grocery stores were stocked with items shipped in, not the items grown locally. Crops decreased to support just the family. Cash took the place of the barter system, so excess crops could not be exchanged for items not grown on the property.

Those forced off of their land were thereby forced into adapting to rely on grocery stores for food. Vivian and Betty, in Holbrook's "Eminent Domain," can green beans from the last garden they will ever have. They will be renting in town and are not allowed to grow a garden. Dynamite blasts from the road going through rattle the jars they use for canning. The road is causing the last use of the jars for that family.

As early as the 1940s, the younger mountaineer generations began to crave store bought goods they saw their peers at school eating. Mark Sohn states,

As rural areas became more developed, school lunches reflected family differences in taste and opportunity. Some students ate the school's hot lunch; others walked to small stores to buy a pack of Nabs cheese crackers, a chocolate-covered Eskimo Pie, a cherry Moon Pie, or even a

box of Barnum's Animal Crackers. These stores sold Pepsi and RC Cola, which students combined with peanuts. For those who used a meal ticket at school, the "store-bought" snack lunches were a point of desire, and they caused feelings of conflict between those who could afford to buy from a store and those who had to eat the school lunch or, even worse, a lunch made at home. (Sohn 74)

The children assimilated quicker than the parents, so when they saw the possibilities of easy to obtain food from fellow students, they begged their parents to buy from the store. Store bought items continued to be coveted after the Second World War and well into the 1960s. Recent trends within the last ten years have families returning to organically grown food sources. Ironically, organic food is more expensive and demand seems to be on the incline. Maybe a potential role reversal is pending where the Appalachian families can return to producing and marketing organically grown crops to major food companies. Appreciation for cooking has also been on the rise in the last ten years. With an entire cable network dedicated to a variety of culinary topics, it is no wonder that attention has been turned to freshly produced foodstuffs.

Mary Lee Settle tells of the mining camps when her grandparents were younger. She says,

Life, for a while, was good. Local men had work that paid cash or the scrip that meant they could buy, but only at the Company Store. There were things at the Company Store that they would have had to go all the way to Charleston for in the past, if they had the cash, which they usually didn't ... There were barrels of dill pickles, huge wheels of store-bought cheese, white bread, drugs and whiskey, and mangles for the washtub. At Christmastime there were oranges from Florida and Skookam apples all the way from the West Coast ... When my grandfather asked a miner

who had ten children how he was managing to feed them, he answered,
“Well, Mr. Tompkins, we don’t eat no canned peaches.” (Settle 13)

If he did not purchase canned peaches, his family either did not eat them or they grew them at home. Being a mining family, they probably did not eat them, because canned peaches were a delicacy and more expensive.

At the end of the twentieth century and even now in the twenty-first century, people like the Bowlings in *American Hollow* still struggle to assimilate in a capitalist society. Generations are left behind from loss of land or jobs. In Chris Holbrook’s short story “First of the Month,” a Kentucky couple aspiring for wealth try desperately to become capitalist innovators in their county, but there is a “glass ceiling” in place based on heritage that will not allow them to advance. They are stuck in the middle class. Not wanting to go to the grocery store on welfare check day, they are snobs, but the tables are turned when they socialize with the Appalachian self-named aristocrats. The couple is looking for the next “get rich quick” scheme, and initially pays little attention to the consequences it may have on the environment or their heritage. While driving through an old mining town, the husband contemplates, “There’s talk of opening up a section of the old deep mine, restoring the company commissary and a few of the old houses and running tours through. I’d like to get in on that” (Holbrook 67). He works for a wealthy man named Wingate performing a variety of jobs. Wingate is an investor and sees him as an employee, not as a friend. He is sent on an errand to purchase food for a dinner at the Wingate’s of which he and his wife are invited guests. Alicia Wingate provides a list of interesting, out of the ordinary items including shrimp, smoked herring, and marinated artichoke hearts. He is able to find all of these things at the local grocery and thinks “It’s a testament to progress that a grocery in this part of the state would stock such items ... Strides have been made” (Holbrook 68). While he is locating the needed items, he sees a welfare hitchhiker, Dougie Johnston, whom he had picked up on the way to town

“pilfering through the rolls of unsliced boloney, squeezing the loaves of day old light bread, sniffing the packs of discount chicken wings,” and he comments,

He’s among his own today. The store’s full of cases just like him – skinny, scraggly haired men and obese women trailing screaming kids; grandmaws and grandpaws doddering along behind, toothless, bent over, broken down, uneasy so far from the head of the holler. You can always tell when the welfare checks have come out. (Holbrook 68-69)

He feels that he is above these people who have been destroyed by the capitalist society of which he longs to be successful.

Later at the Wingate’s dinner party he is treated in the same manner as he treats Dougie Johnston, and Alicia Wingate treats the man’s wife Roberta the same as he treated Dougie. When another guest, Ann Marie, discusses her social service work in the hills, she describes the homes she visits and the resentment she receives from those she tries to help. Alicia comments, “There’s just so much built-in failure to overcome. Am I right, Roberta? You’re from here. You’ve had to overcome your background” (Holbrook 73). Having felt and done the same thing to Dougie Johnston earlier, the couple feels humiliated. Those not from the mountains consolidate all of the Kentucky locals into the same group - hillbillies. Because Roberta is from the area, she must also have led the same hillbilly lifestyle.

Ignorance did not originate in the hills. There is a lack of education both in and outside of the Appalachians. Those trying to help by assimilating the mountaineer family into American society typically hindered it just as they did with the Native Americans. It was in the late 1960s when the War on Poverty was waged in Appalachia. School houses were built throughout the mountains and became the “jewel of the town,” according to Ava Maria McChesney in Adriana Trigiani’s *Big Stone Gap* (22). For the most part, those who tried to help were genuinely concerned about the welfare of the

mountain residents and their children. Others were condescending and unbelieving of the circumstances in which some families lived. Although the hillbilly stereotype had been well-established as early as the eighteenth century, it was perpetuated in the 1960s by journalists and other writers. The ignorant hillbilly had existed prior to this period, but the mainstream writers brought the visual to the rest of the United States and included pictures. This stereotyping is apparent with the Wingates and their friends. Because the aspiring couple is from Kentucky, they can only peer through the glass ceiling into the upper class. They are confined to the bottom to serve the upper class. Trying to assimilate into the modern American society was difficult for the Appalachian. Those who tried to help did not know how even though they meant well. Others who condescended to help perpetuated the stereotypes and kept the Appalachian hero from achieving assimilation.

CHAPTER 6
HILLBILLY FOOD
6.1 Class and Food

The types of food raised and consumed in the mountains also became subject for ridicule. Foods eaten by the hillbillies were considered unclean or high in fat. The following is a discussion of the types of food and historical and modern values placed upon the food of the Appalachian people.

In her 1997 essay “Hunger, Malnutrition, and Poverty in the Contemporary United States,” Jane Fitchen says,

The cultural dimensions of hunger among poor Americans can be elucidated by the use of ethnographic research methods, which are particularly well suited for examining such food-related patterns as food preferences, frequency, quantity, and regularity of eating, distribution of food within the household, attitudes about foods, and social interactions associated with food. (Fitchen 389)

For mountaineers, food preference is a derivation of what people were able to grow on their land. Fitchen says that a person’s economic situation determines the types of food they eat most frequently (390).

Roland Barthes essay “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumptions” was re-printed in the 1997 collection *Food and Culture: A Reader*. In this essay Barthes uses a group of three themes found in advertising, the result of a study of French people applicable when studying food of any culture. The first is that food is assigned a commemorative function with an historical quality and long roots. This theme

is linked to techniques of preparing and cooking food. The second is the anthropological situation of the consumer. Feelings of inferiority are attached to certain foods, therefore people abstain from them. It could be foods that are considered masculine or feminine, sexually sublimated, or present a certain stigma for those who eat them. The third is a set of ambiguous values concerning health. Maybe from old wives' tales or actual scientific studies, examples include that coffee dissolves fatigue, or margarine builds muscle. Certainly the way food for mass consumption is handled has seen advances in modern history. I include this idea because of the "advertising" that writers produced about the Appalachian people and their food that created certain stereotypes. Because of these stereotypes, it is possible that later generations such as the sheriff in *One Foot in Eden* embarrassed by the eating habits of his father, felt that the mountain food was inferior. Specific foods such as pickled eggs or hogs' feet found in jars on the grocery counter in Appalachia are not typically found outside of the region. Along with grits, biscuits, and cornbread, fried bologna is mentioned many times. Bo Ball talks about a neighbor family who no longer eats groundhog because it is too gamey and they prefer fried bologna (200). The grandfather in Offutt's "Good Pine" makes grilled cheese sandwiches with fried bologna for his granddaughter (62). Virgil in Offutt's *The Good Brother* shares a bologna sandwich with the man who comes to kill him for revenge, and Taulbee in Holbrook's "As a Snare" eats a bologna on white sandwich with an entire sack of tomatoes. Bologna is one of those food products with a stigma like potted meat or Spam. Bologna is like the hot dog including the same ingredients, but without the support of America's "favorite pastime" (baseball), Nathan's Famous hot dog eating contest, and a plethora of other accommodations. Bologna seems to be the Appalachian version of the hot dog and thus falls into the lower class category.

Corn is another important staple in the Appalachian diet. Linda Civitello explains in *Cuisine and Culture: A History of Food and People*, "The word corn was first used to

describe any grain, even of salt, as in corned beef" (97). There are many uses for corn or maize (two separate things). In *Food in History*, Reay Tannahill states,

The once-familiar pattern of east-coast American eating – the food whose mention still brings a sentimental tear to the all-American eye – was laid down in the early days. Hominy (ripe maize, whole or reduced to grits), succotash (fresh or dried kernels cooked with beans), and cornpone (a thick, unleavened maize pancake) were the colonists' basic grain dishes. (223)

Growing and preparing corn is a theme in modern Appalachian texts. Cornmeal and grits seem to be the most important staple in the Appalachian diet. On the first page of Morgan's *Gap Creek*, cornbread and grits are mentioned. Soon after on page four, Julie says that when her father developed chest consumption in a particularly bad winter, the family could not leave the mountain. She says that they almost ran out of cornmeal. Julie's mother told the girls,

Now you can do without a lot of things, but a family can't do without cornmeal. If you run out of meal you don't have any bread and you don't have any mush. And you don't have anything to fry fish in, or squirrels. When the meat runs out, and the taters runs out, the only thing that will keep you going is the cornbread. You can live a long time on bread and collard greens, if you have collard greens. And you can live a long time on bread alone if you have to, in spite of what the Bible says. (Morgan 4)

Later in the text when Julie's sisters visit her in Gap Creek, they bring popcorn from home. Popping the corn over the open fire gives Julie a sense of comfort and family.

Gertie uses hominy making as a distraction early in *The Dollmaker* to keep her mind from worrying about her husband Clovis who left to enlist in the army. The entire day is spent in the process, but is only a temporary distraction. The children skin the

corn that is to be made into hominy, and after they have retreated to bed, Gertie stays up boiling it in the can of lard on the stove until it widens. The women living in the forts in Giles's *The Kentuckians* also spend an entire day pounding out hominy in the commons area. While pounding hominy, Bethia and Dave discuss Judd's abandonment. She is safe in the fort with the other families and the work to be done. As she stirs and pounds the hominy, the couple creates a bond. The task itself provides a cover, so others in the fort will not notice the pair in an intimate conversation. Dave realizes she is happy that Judd has left, and she realizes that she will be happier even if her amount of work increases. She is closer to Dave at least (144-145).

Foxfire explains the entire process of making hominy. Much like hogs, corn was used completely and in many ways. The Foxfire authors explain,

Corn was one of the most important crops, used as a staple for both people and their animals. They ate it fresh on or off the cob. They used it dried to make cornmeal, parched corn, hominy, and grits and sprouted it to make moonshine. They also raised and dried popcorn. The dried fodder (leaves) was used to feed animals, and the shucks could be used to bottom chairs, or could be made into mats, scrub mops, hats, horse collars, and various other things. (Page and Wigginton 177)

Harvesting corn became a social event in the community. The mountain family had very few diversions from their work, so they "took advantage of every opportunity to turn work into a social event" (Page and Wigginton 155).

Corn often provided that social event - either harvesting, preserving, preparing, or even "drinking" it. Corn could be a treat like the popcorn mentioned earlier. In his memoirs G.C. Jones remembers baking dried corn and potatoes with his siblings by putting "the ear near the red hot ashes" and turning it until it is brown. He says, "Then

you put a smearing of butter on to melt through the grains, salt lightly, and hope you don't break a tooth when you eat it" (Jones 65).

These tasks of preparing corn, killing hogs, and making hominy are all symbolic of the working class. Throughout history, the working class was without a written voice. Only through the oral transmission of stories do we have a representation of the peasant class in previous centuries. The same is true for recipes. In *Food Is Culture*, Massimo Montanari claims that there are few recipes from the peasant food culture of the Middle Ages for instance. He says, "It is no simple matter to recognize the specific role of peasant society in the structures of food production, in the channels of distribution, and in the symbolic values attributed to behavior and consumption..." (Montanari 36). This is somewhat true into the nineteenth century. Very few written recipes, and certainly cookbooks, were written that included the food of lower class society. Because of this the upper class distinguished classes of food. In the fifteenth century, garlic was labeled as a "rustic food," unless it was used in an upper class recipe like a roasted fowl like duck or goose. Its class depends on what it accompanies. This is what Montanari calls the first sign. "The first sign is that of various combinations and modalities of usage, which immediately clarify the societal destination of the food," he claims (Montanari 38). The second sign is "the enrichment of poor produce by the addition of expensive ingredients, especially spices" (Montanari 38). He uses the example of a peasant vegetable – the turnip – being boiled and sautéed in oil, onion, and salt. The logic is that any food that undergoes the preparation of flavoring and cooking then becomes upper class. As mentioned previously, cooking is the difference between "civilization" and animals. Only humans have the ability to cook their food.

Substitutes for certain food items became necessary in hard times. In mountainous regions when wheat was unavailable for bread, peasants used chestnuts, acorns, roots, or wild grasses. Eating these items without cooking them, however, is a

“decisive step” toward “animality” according to Montanari, because “the consumption of certain substances, can be viewed as a sign of the abdication of one’s human identity” if the substance is not cooked (106).

6.2 Cultural Influences Found in Appalachia

In “Hunger, Malnutrition, and Poverty in the Contemporary United States,” Jane Fitchen comments, “As in any society, so in America, the definitions of acceptable and preferred foods are largely cultural” (394). The Appalachian culture has contributed many commonly acceptable American foods, but seems to get credit for only those created by stereotyping the hillbilly.

Foxfire authors say for Appalachians, the mountain food tradition is

... unpretentious, solid, and fulfilling ... normal food rooted in, and infused by, an age when what was consumed was what one raised; when the only techniques of preservation were drying, pickling, and salting; when nothing was wasted; and when, in the absence of grocery stores and a cash economy, one’s own winter store of food was so important that usually the only buildings locked on a typical farm were those that held the ‘rations.’ (Page and Wigginton xi-xii)

Although Appalachia is considered a poverty pocket in the United States, it is unlikely that the mountaineer existed on a “poverty diet” from Fitchen’s definition. Fitchen further states, “Poverty diets are excessive in starch, fat, and sugar and deficient in meats, proteins, vegetables, fruit and milk products,” so it is difficult to imagine the mountaineer on a poverty diet with an abundance of all food groups available (Fitchen 390). The mountaineer’s diet consisted of garden vegetables, fruits, and greens found in the hills. Wild game supplied the mountaineer with meat to supplement the annual hog killing. Creeks and lakes provided an ample supply of fish.

The Appalachian people adopted food from many cultures. The American Indian dishes typically were based on corn, beans, pumpkins, and squash according to Joseph Dabney in *Smokehouse Ham, Spoon Bread, & Scuppernong Wine* (4). Native American “benevolence provided the basis for many of the Appalachian foods” and their “lessons in hunting and fishing and farming and mountain living were crucial to the survival of the new Americans” dating back to the first colonists in Jamestown (10). According to Mark Sohn in *Appalachian Home Cooking: History, Culture, and Recipes*, “In 1549, Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto recorded that Cherokee tribes were cultivating seven food plants: beans, corn, grapes, mulberries, potatoes, serviceberries, and roman squash” (13-14). As food increased so did population in the Appalachians. Sohn further states, “The stability produced by access to a dependable food supply influenced the development of hierarchies, chiefdoms, and an elite class” in the Cherokee tribes (14). Native Americans also adopted foods from other cultures. In his 2007 essay “Appalachian Foodways” Fred Sauceman states,

The region’s reliance upon corn, beans, and squash, for example, is a legacy of white settlers’ first encounters with tribes such as the Cherokee and Iroquois. One of Appalachia’s most common meals, beans and cornbread, represents the coming together of white and Native American traditions. Seasoning the iconic pot of beans is lard, the rendered fat of the pig. Beans were cultivated by Native Americans long before white settlement, as was corn, used to make the cornbread that has become a standard accompaniment to a bowl of soup beans and a symbol of the South. (18)

Appalachians were not only influenced by the natives, but also the Europeans. From the British Isles they had puddings, stack cakes, pies, milk, cabbage, turnips, and buttermilk.

From Germany they had dumplings, kraut, apple butters, deep-dish pies, Moravian cakes and cookies (Dabney 4).

The African slave had knowledge of rice cultivation, cooking and storage, and they brought yams, okra, watermelon, and a love of fried food (Civitello 129). In the South, slaves prepared food using traditional methods including barbecue, which is a long process. In the North, there was a “middle-class necessity of doing a great deal of work as quickly as possible,” therefore, pocket soup and johnnycakes were invented (Civitello 133). G.C. Jones explains the meaning of chitlins when he remembers his uncle paying a black man named Jesse with chitlins for helping him butcher a hog. He says, “Now, if you don’t know what chitlins are, they are the guts of a hog. I’ve watched colored folks prepare them from the belly of a hog to a nice clean pile of meat. They say it’s a delicious dish. I only have their word, for I’ve never tried them” (Jones 102-103).

In his essay “Taking Stock of Being Appalachian,” James B. Goode says,

The broad ethnic diversity also created an interesting plethora of additions to our meals. Almost everyone liked hot pickled Hungarian peppers stuffed with cabbage; chow-chow was always a garnish for soup beans and cornbread; Louisiana hot sauce found its way on everything from fried eggs to hot dogs; Polish sausage was served with potatoes and bell peppers; Deep South black-eyed peas and lean pork bits were frequently accompanied by the German-inspired pickled corn on the cob. My first realization that our eating habits were unique came when I moved to Lexington, Kentucky, to attend college. I couldn’t find good salt bacon, souse meat, chitlins, collard greens, wild grape jelly, or any corn squeezins. When I lived in South Wales, I couldn’t find a single sack of cornmeal in the whole damn country! (56)

In a region not typically known as diverse, it is interesting to find this variety of influences in one person's account of food from his youth.

The derivations of these main dishes from various cultures made up the Appalachian diet. Throughout Appalachian texts, entire meals are described in mouth watering detail and recipes are often included. Food is listed. Often, it is an aside from the plot, but in many cases food is a sub-plot as in *Cold Mountain* or the plot itself as in *Gap Creek*. Authors spend many pages describing the preparation of food, the contents of a meal, and the conversations that take place over a meal. Some of Appalachian foods are recognized by the average reader, but many might only be recognized by those descended from the mountaineers in the region. This is the intrigue of regional texts. Like Faulkner's South, certain things exist in both the real and fictional worlds created in an area. The appeal of Appalachian literature to a mainstream audience may not exist because of the specificity of the content. Appalachians, like other cultures in the United States, live a binary existence. They are both American and Appalachian and struggle with the same double-consciousness as Hispanic and Native Americans. This may be why many Appalachian texts are not mainstream canonical American literature as many Hispanic and Native American texts tend to struggle to find a mainstream voice. However, some texts perpetuate the stereotype applied by an "outside" America whether intentional or not.

In Adriana Trigiani's *Big Stone Gap* trilogy, she includes her Italian influences and the influence Appalachian cooking has on her Italian family. In her first novel *Big Stone Gap*, by chapter three she has a recipe for possum. Ave's friend Fleeta is a typical Appalachian cook. Her recipe for possum is:

MAMAW SKEEN'S POSSUM

Skin your possum. Place in large pot and boil 'til tender. Add salt and pepper to taste. Make gravy with broth and add 4 tablespoons flour and ½ cup of milk. Cook until thick. Save a foot to sop gravy!

Ave wonders what happens to the other three feet. As she looks through Fleeta's recipe cards, the reader is privy to a list which includes: divinity candy, lemon squares, cheese straws, peanut butter balls, and rhubarb pie. She takes the time to explain the definition of divinity candy for her readers who may not know. Trigiani struggles with her double consciousness like Ave: Growing up feeling like a bastard child, not knowing her true father, Italian in Appalachia. She writes as an outsider and perpetuates the stereotype with this recipe.

Ave visits her friend Iva Lou who serves macaroni and cheese, salad, slaw, biscuits, and cake. Ave's Italian mother never made macaroni and cheese, but Ave loves it. Ave describes the dish, "The soft elbow noodles nestled in butter and cheddar cheese melt in my mouth. The crushed potato chips on top give it a delicious salty crunch" (*Big Stone Gap* 171). Ave's long, lost Italian relatives visit her for the first time in *Big Stone Gap*. Having never eaten Appalachian cuisine, her father enjoys fried chicken and her aunt loves collard greens (*Big Stone Gap* 220). As a gift, Ave gives her family "dry soup beans and seasonings she bought at the Piggly Wiggly to take back to Italy" (*Big Stone Gap* 225). In her third novel in the trilogy, *Home to Big Stone Gap*, Trigiani includes recipes for soup beans and cornbread, both belonging to her friend Fleeta. During the second novel, Fleeta and Ave start a homestyle café in the back of Ave's pharmacy. The menu consists of Fleeta's Appalachian specialties. Trigiani tries to incorporate and demonstrate her cultural influences.

Chris Offutt's stories do not typically have much to do with food. However, even as he focuses on plot, it is interesting that he mentions specific foods eaten by the

characters. Instead of saying, “Casey finished his meal,” Offutt says, “Casey finished his salad of wild ramps and cress” in his story “Aunt Granny Lith” in his collection *Kentucky Straight* (142). The food gives the story cultural specificity for the reader. In another Offutt story, “Nine Ball,” a hog farming father without a wife prepares the same meal every night – soup, beans, cornbread, and pork. His son is tired of the same meal over and over. It is not the type of meal that he has, but the repetition of it. It is probably unnecessary for Offutt to include the specific meal, but again, he adds sensory details making the story culturally interesting for the reader.

In *Addie*, Mary Lee Settle tells a story of her first published poem. The publishers of the poem edited the poem to make it more appealing to make it cross-cultural. Settle’s Aunt Myrtle made a chiffon pie that she really enjoyed. It was the subject of her poem. She complains, “Only somebody edited it and used the word ‘punkin’ because it scanned, and sounded cute. I hated pumpkin pies. And ‘cute.’ Hogs ate pumpkins. I didn’t like the taste, and I didn’t like the word, to say it, the sound of it” (Settle 176).

Betty, in Holbrook’s “Eminent Domain,” prepares a large meal for her family before the men go on their excursion to the family home place. Instead of yelling “Supper is ready,” she yells from the house, “I made a baked ham and fried sweet potatoes and a pot of shucky beans, and fried apples and two skilletts of cornbread and blackberry dumplings” (Holbrook 80).

Meals of this size were also typically consumed during the noon meal. Foxfire author Eliot Wigginton says,

Plenty of food was raised and plenty was served. The noonday “dinner” for a houseful of working folks was a woman’s glory, albeit a chore – several different meats, five or six vegetables, gravy, biscuits, pickles, preserves, pies or custards, coffee, and milk – and there was variety

enough ... except in the toughest of times, to satisfy almost everyone.

(Page and Wigginton xii)

These large noon day meals date back to the Middle Ages when it was too dark to prepare food in the evening and took many hours to prepare the large feasts for noblemen. The middle class working society had to eat later because of work and had a less illustrious meal prepared by maybe one servant. Peasants also exercised the noon day ritual, but typically had much less variety and quantity than the middle class, according to Sherrie McMillan in her 2001 article "What Time Is Dinner?" Farming cultures continued this tradition of a larger noon meal when in the 1700s the large meal seemed to shift to the evening and became even later with the advent of better lighting. Farmers, however, continued to work the fields throughout the day. Evening was a time in preparation for bed. Farming families tended to retire early and work from sun up to sun down. A large meal in the evening only complicated this time and added unnecessary work for the mother who had been performing household chores throughout the day. In warmer months when the heat was disagreeable, heating the household before bedtime was not conducive to comfortable sleeping.

6.3 Food Preservation and Preparation

The preparation of food is an important system of communication in Appalachian households. This motif is frequently seen in modern Appalachian literature. Foxfire explains,

... the preparation of food – or the canning of it, was traditionally a means of engaging everyone's energies around a common task, passing time productively, and cementing friendships permanently ... cooking became an event, as opposed to a utilitarian task. ... the tasks of drawing water from the well outside, peeling potatoes, slicing cabbage, frying sausage, making bread – and talking and laughing quietly as the

food hissed over the fire and wonderful smells filled the room. The food was fine, but the activities and the conversation that preceded and followed its consumption were the main events. (Page and Wigginton xv)

Although labor intensive, preparing meals for the family was a source of joy for many female mountaineers. It was not about the meal itself, but how the time was spent preparing it. Now, we have convection ovens and microwaves to expedite the process. Rarely do families spend time in the kitchen together preparing a meal; and many families are lucky if they share a meal together at the table. Theorists, including the Foxfire authors, conclude that although the type or abundance of food is important, it is the preparation that adds value. Roland Barthes claims, "...it is not a level of its cost that the sense of a food item is elaborated, but at the level of its preparation and use" (Barthes 22).

G.C. Jones introduces his autobiographical text remembering his sister Artie helping his mother prepare canned food for the winter. He says, "They canned beans and corn ... They pickled beans and corn, too. You string and snap the beans and cut the corn off the cob whole kernel, then cram pack them well mixed into fifty-gallon wood barrels, cover with hog curing salt, put this in a non-freezing place, and let it pickle. It sure is good eating with corn pone, side pork, buttermilk, and a big onion" (1). He diligently explains the task and the delicious outcome of the time consuming task.

In *Food Is Culture*, Massimo Montanari explains that in the medieval period the two food models - raising animals (domestic) and hunting them (wild) – began to change. These two models were symbols of two civilizations – nomadic and sedentary. He claims that when the barbarians invaded Rome, their culture, including food, "became the touchstones of a new economy" (11). The two models became one system of values regarding food preparation. This led to the development of

... efficient methods of conserving vegetable and animal products for use beyond their *natural* cycle of growth. The food of country people ... has always focused on produce and foodstuffs that are preservable in the long term. This initially meant concentrating above all on such foods as cereals and vegetables, which could be preserved for many months, even years, simply by storing them in dry places, above or below ground. (15)

The most frequently used method was drying in the sun or smoking until salt was introduced as the hero of preservation.

Meats, fish, and greens have always been preserved with salt, and this itself constituted the principal guarantee of sustenance in a rural economy that could not entrust itself to the daily market or the capriciousness of the seasons. So we can quite properly and correctly think of the taste of salt as characteristic, throughout history, of the cuisine of the poor. (16)

Prior to the need to raise animals for food, salt was used for many things. In *Salt: A World History*, Mark Kurlansky provides an extensive account of salt's uses throughout the world. He claims there are more than 101 well-known uses for salt, but it was sometimes difficult to obtain. The most important need for salt was for preserving. Mary Lee Settle discusses the historical importance of salt in her biography *Addie*. She says,

The salt business had begun as early as 1805. By 1812, instead of log houses, dark satanic mills were built of the trees in the valley, and acre after acre was stripped and burned to dry the salt from the wells that were dug near the Burning Springs ... Black smoke from the salt furnaces darkened the land and made a pall of the sky. She accused the

men who had gathered around the salt industry of “total disregard of shame, honor, and justice.” (25-26)

Robert Morgan’s *Gap Creek* helps to explain Addie’s feelings about the men who built the salt mines and factories. Julie explains,

Mama had told me that during the Confederate War when you couldn’t buy nothing at the store, and there wasn’t any money, salt was the scarcest thing of all. Salt was ten dollars a pound, then fifty dollars a pound. It got to where you couldn’t buy it for any price. Where there was a salt spring back in the mountains, people went there to boil the water down to catch the salt. They fought over water there and at least one got shot. People got so hungry for salt they dug up the dirt of their smokehouse floors and boiled it to get the salt drippings out. (Morgan 149)

Salt is such an important element in the daily lives of the Appalachian hero that Julie applies certain colors to the taste of salt. At the moment of climax during the first sexual intercourse between Julie and Hank on their honeymoon, Julie sees “salty colors like orange and yellow” and applies these colors to food: “Yellow is salty as butter and popcorn. Yellow was swelled up and buttery. And there was a golden brown that was saltiest of all” (Morgan 53). Experiencing something for the first time, she applies what she is feeling and seeing with salty food. Possibly this foreshadows the couple’s future struggles with affording sugar and salt as well as other foods, but more probable is that she relates something she knows very well to something unknown. The need for salt did not end with the war, but a business opportunity was found due to the pricing of the commodity at that time. When the price of consumer goods has increased substantially since the Civil War, it is staggering to think that a pound of salt cost more than the current price of approximately three dollars.

Kurlansky states that Jungian psychologist Ernest Jones commented that salt “is often associated with fertility.” This idea is connected to fish having more offspring than land animals, because they live in the salty sea. Also, notoriously rampant on board of salt ships, mice are prolific breeders. Janice Holt Giles’s novel *The Kentuckians* describes a possible link between salt and sex as well. Bethia’s husband leaves her alone for extended periods of time in an isolated region of Kentucky. This angers Dave who is in love with her. She is short on salt until Dave arrives bringing meat and salt. It was scarce in the region, and she was glad to get it. She says, “I just don’t relish meat without salt, but I reckon I’ll have to when this is gone” (152). Dave suggests they go to a salt lick to “boil out a batch” for her (152). This moment provides a source of sexual tension between the forbidden couple. Dave has something to offer her that her husband does not. In this case, salt may be symbolic of a loving relationship she is missing.

According to Kurlansky, “In 1769, when Daniel Boone followed that trail, crossing the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky, he took with him Kanawha salt, as did the thousands of other settlers that followed” (250). Each time settlers returned for family members, or new settlers arrived, they brought salt with them. But still the settlers ran short of salt. Dave, in *The Kentuckians*, recalls they could not store a good supply of meat due to the lack of salt. The weather was getting warmer and what meat they did have was beginning to thaw (Giles 200).

The Great Buffalo Lick on the Kanawha River was a major source of salt. Like the California gold rush, small operators built operations with single furnaces powered by local coal. To run the saltworks, plantation owners rented slaves. In 1810 the census for Kanawha County had 352 slaves and by 1850 it had 3,140 slaves. Coal mining was the worst job, so slave owners sometimes stipulated that their slaves could not be used as coal miners, because they were too valuable. In 1858, the principal salt states in the South were Virginia, Kentucky, Florida, and Texas producing 2,365,000 bushels. New

York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania produced 12,000,000. By 1860, Americans were the biggest consumer of salt in the world (Kurlansky 253-257).

Salt was always on the ration list for the Confederate soldier. In 1864, a soldier received as a monthly allowance ten pounds of bacon, twenty-six pounds of coarse meal, seven pounds of flour or hard biscuit, three pounds of rice, one and a half pounds of salt – with vegetables in season. But the Confederate ration list was in reality a wish list that was only occasionally realized. (Kurlansky 258)

Kurlansky explains that General Sherman wanted to cut off the salt supply to the South. Because it was a necessity for curing meat, he wanted to cut off that food supply. In 1861, the Union took control of the Kanawha saltworks. In 1862, Confederate loyalists took the saltworks back and then 5,000 Confederate soldiers drove the Union out of the valley. The Union had not had time to destroy the saltworks. After that, all saltworks were destroyed when taken by the Union army. Saltworks tended to be major targets; therefore, northern salt was a common item for smugglers. Because of the salt shortage, people tried to invent substitutes including vinegar, oil, sugar, and acid. Salt conservation was also a hot topic of the time. Those with access to seawater used it to cook foods like rice, hominy, and grits. People would even brush off the salt crystals from meat to reuse them. Brine from pickling was boiled down and reused, and dirt around smokehouses was dug up and leached (Kurlansky 264-269).

The canning process was invented in France in the 1700s upon the challenge of Napoleon Bonaparte to find a means to preserve food for his armies. Nicolas Appert found that putting food in a sealed glass jar and heating it to a high temperature would keep the food from going bad (“History of Food Cans”). Ann Cashion, in her essay “Preserves and Jellies” in *Foodways* explains that the colonists had other daily challenges of just existing in the new land, so the time consumption of canning was not

feasible. “There is ample evidence, however, that by the beginning of the nineteenth century the art of making preserves and jellies was alive and well in the southern states,” says Cashion (232). By 1859 the Mason jar was invented just in time for the Civil War. This invention helped the economy and furnished “troops in the field with nonperishable rations” (Cashion 232). During the Great Depression, Americans were encouraged to “provide for their own needs.” The Ball Brothers Company manufactured an “efficient canning unit that the Works Progress Administration used to establish community canning centers, helping to defray the labor and expense of canning in individual households with a collective approach” (Cashion 232). By 1946, Cashion states, there were 3,600 of these canning communities in the United States with most of them located in the South. Most of the canning centers closed after World War II during a prosperous economy. Although canned preserves and jellies flood the supermarkets, many Appalachian mountaineers still can their own keeping the tradition alive. Many Appalachian authors fondly include meals ending with jellies and preserves and often these are dessert. G.C. Jones states that on a cold night after the stock are fed on his wagon team, “Some good mother or wife would roll up a jar of home canned peaches or apples to top off a good mountain supper” (3).

As important as knowing how to find food in the wilderness by either hunting or gathering, or being able to raise food, is the skill of preserving the food. Mark Sohn says, “Food preservation is the primary means of extending the life of food after harvest” (47). There are various forms of preserving food in Appalachian history including salting, drying, pickling, canning, relishing, and finally freezing.

Once established, families were able to take advantage of Appalachia’s rich soil and its abundance of wild game. As they prospered, they added rooms onto their cabins and worked hard to preserve food. For emergencies and hunting trips, they made jerky and hardtack, a hard

biscuit made with flour and water. At home they used popular food storage methods such as drying, salting, and pickling. In addition, frontiersmen stored dry foods such as corn, flour, and beans aboveground, and in cool underground storage areas they saved potatoes, beets, turnips, carrots, and parsnips. (Sohn 16-17)

Although the mountaineer did not invent these methods of preserving, the hero certainly mastered the skills. Many popular fictional Appalachian texts in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries contain characters that have this knowledge. It seems important to many modern writers of Appalachian fiction, they do justice to the efforts of the previous generations of mountaineers. Whether the setting of the text is the 1800s or 1900s, the characters maintain the skills taught to them by previous generations. The Foxfire books and many Appalachian cookbooks include the recipe or process for preserving jams, jellies, preserves, and pickled products. These food items are a delicacy for the mountaineer and a source of comfort for later generations. Many people in the mountains still practice these methods. During the Harlan County coal wars, G.C. Jones says that he and his wife continued to raise a garden, pigs, and maintain a milk cow. Because his family was growing and his income was small he planned for “future foods.” He says, “Mae’s father gave her a young milk cow. I traded a lot of vegetables I had grown to a friend for a brood sow. I had grown enough corn to raise and fatten eight or ten pigs and still have enough to feed the milk cow all winter” (Jones 119). Even after the union problems in the coal towns, Jones and his wife stored food. They canned vegetables and fruit, raised chickens and hogs. He worked at night and helped his wife prepare food during the day in case the coal mines cut down on work as they had done in the past. This provided Jones with a sense of comfort knowing that his family would be provided for in hard financial times. Into the 1980s when Jones finished his autobiography, he and his wife still raised hogs and butchered in the fall preserving the

meat with “sugar curing salt.” He claims, “The cool days and cold nights bring out the desired flavor” (Jones 174). He also says they still can fruits and wild berries a tradition they taught their children.

Julie in *Gap Creek* craves foods that are sweet while she is pregnant. The only thing she has that provides her comfort is jelly brought to her by local women (254-257). Likewise, in *Cold Mountain* when Ada returns from spending the night in the woods, she “pulled the wax seal off the crock of blackberry preserves and dipped two fingers into it and scooped berries into her mouth. The preserves had been made with little sweetening and tasted fresh and sharp. Ada sat for hours ... and ate until the little crock was empty” (63). She does this absently while thinking of her father and her lover Inman, but these preserves provided comfort in absence of these men. Ruby teaches Ada how to preserve and store the food that, together, they have successfully raised. Apples and other fruits could be preserved in many different ways.

They ate apples at every meal, fried and stewed and pied and sauced. They dried rings of them into little scraps of apple leather, which they stored in cloth bags and hung from the ceiling in the kitchen. One day they built a fire in the yard and made a black kettle of apple mash with spurtles. The apple butter had come out thick, the color of old harness from spice and brown sugar, and they sealed enough of it in crocks to eat on for a year. They pressed cider from rusty culls and fallen apples, and they fed the pomace to the hogs to make the meat sweet. When it was hardened enough it could be traded – Ruby traded for beef. (323-24)

Ruby’s knowledge is invaluable. Not only does she know the methods of preserving the apples, she knows a variety of ways. This skill is also important to the Appalachian heroine so her family would not become bored with a singular method of food

preparation. Appalachian stack cakes with dried apples, cooked in iron skillet or Dutch ovens, were special treats at Christmas time or other special occasions. G.C. Jones remembers a colleague's lunch box stuffed with lots of good food, but was particularly envious of two pieces of apple stack cake made with molasses and "plenty of sweetened spice" packed in his work lunch box (Jones 8).

A large variety of beans and peas are a staple in the mountaineer's diet. Easy to grow and plentiful, they are also easy to preserve by using the drying method.

In the autumn the backwoodsman's wife dried beans, still in their hulls, against winter need. Strings of beans, rings of dried pumpkin and strips of meat hung drying in the smoke of every chimney. These crude delicacies were so succulent that, even in this age of supermarkets and deep-frozen foods, hundreds of mountain women diligently hang up strings of "shucky beans" and "pokes" of dried apples for frontier-style banquets at Thanksgiving and Christmas. (Caudill 22)

Fred Sauceman explains in "Appalachian Foodways," "The bean harvest is preserved well into the winter by canning and freezing, in addition to the time-tested method of drying. 'Leather-britches' are string beans dried in wind and sun and threaded, to be reconstituted months later in a pot of boiling water" (21).

In *Gap Creek*, Julie's time is spent providing food for Hank and herself. After she is able to gather or harvest the food, she spends time preserving and storing with Hank's help. It is after the task of handling the vegetables and fruits that Hank goes hunting to fill the smokehouse. Julie seems to check her list stating, "... the corn was gathered and put in the crib ... the taters was dug and the apples was picked ... the beets was canned and the foxgrape jelly made, the winter squash put in the hay, and the cabbage buried in a hill behind the barn ..." (Morgan 316-317). Days and days are spent in preserving the food.

When this is complete, the hero has a sense of pride and contentment. Bo Ball explains this feeling:

Strawberries came just before school let out for the summer. As soon as the corn was planted, the tobacco set out, we had time for strawberries in larger patches. To enter your own yard with two pecks of wild strawberries was to be a hero briefly, for capping them came next. A tedious job, one of such subtraction that only a gallon of little knots would be left, reduced partly to juice by the heat, partly by the force of fingernails that pried the green from them. In most families, any male over 11 did not have to cap strawberries. At Hattie's house everyone gathered under the apple tree in the front yard. A communal container was placed in the middle of the circle. Smaller lids and plates held individual mounds of pods and berries and we started the intricate work. Our mouths watered, but we did not dare eat this late in the process. The juice, forced where splinters or hangnails had been, burned as would iodine ... The berries went straight from the yard to the cookstove ... (193-196)

Because the task of preserving large quantities of food is so daunting, every member not working at something else is needed. This type of process occurs with anything being grown. The window of opportunity for consuming items freshly slaughtered, killed, or picked is narrow. To let food go to waste is unthinkable. Many modern Appalachian texts provide great examples of this process. Whether or not authors remember these experiences from childhood or have listened to stories from previous generations, they include this process to show, not only the hard work of a character, but to show the pride and sense of completion at the end of the laborious task. The gratification of sealing the last lid on the hundredth Mason jar full of peach jelly, shucking the last ear of corn, or

snapping the last bean, is a great feeling. It is a feeling that most societies around the world are not able to feel. Just as an author is relieved to finish a book, the hero in the Appalachians felt relieved to finish preserving hard won food supplies. They felt this over and over just as a prolific author feels it over and over. This feeling of satisfaction is apparent in Appalachian fictional prose. Characters undergo changes throughout a quest for food. Planting, growing, and harvesting are simply the beginning of a process that is incomplete without preservation and preparation. There are fruit butters to be made, corn to be made into cornmeal or other foodstuffs (including moonshine), apples to dry, honey and sorghum syrup to be gathered and preparing sauerkraut has strict guidelines based on the Zodiac signs and phases of the moon.

As they have done for ages, those who live in the Appalachians, even in the modern age of convenience food and rootless mobility, continue to grow green beans, bake cornbread, can apple butter, harvest black walnuts, and cure hams ... Appalachian fare has always been centered in the home and in the garden and guided by the seasonal variety of the land and the larder. (Sauceman "Appalachian Foodways" 22)

Regardless of geographical location, storing food has always been more important than the method of preparation. As discussed earlier, meat was salted and stored in the smokehouse, root vegetables in the cellar, dairy in the springhouse, and vegetables and fruits were canned and placed in the cellar as well. If food was not kept properly, the time and expense to raise or slaughter the food was wasted. Therefore, canning and preserving took place immediately. In Robert Morgan's *Gap Creek*, when Julie is faced with feeding her husband and landlord on a limited budget, she trudges to the root cellar to take inventory. She finds shelves loaded with jars of canned stuff, quart and pint jars of jellies and green beans (Morgan 63).

Many Appalachian writers include these processes in their texts for a variety of reasons. Some readers have experienced these tasks, some do not know or understand the process, but preparing food for storage gives the one at the task, as well as the reader, a sense of comfort. Obtaining the food is a success at this point, and it is ready to be kept until needed. In *Cold Mountain* Ada and Ruby thread beans on strings making "leatherbritches" that hang from rafters to dry (43-44). In Holbrook's story "Fire," women sit "on the porch peeling and quartering Winesap apples" (59). A woman is making leatherbritches beans by stringing them up to dry in Holbrook's "Eminent Domain" (94).

Dairy products, kept in the springhouse, included milk and butter. Butter was churned by hand from the clabber of milk. Appalachian literature often includes descriptions of the butter making process. Mr. Pendergast (*Gap Creek*) brings in a Mason jar of warm milk for Julie. She says, "I strained it into one of the earthenware pitchers. I figured the milk would keep colder in a pitcher than in a Mason jar. I tied a cloth over the top of the pitcher to put it back in the springhouse, but Mr. Pendergast said you've got to save some to clabber, if you want any butter" (131). Settle also remembers her grandmother making butter.

Addie inspected the milk, poured some of it into a separate can and when enough cream had formed and soured she got out the churn, poured the creamy milk into it and sat like a woman playing a cello on the back porch while the sound of the churn went on and on until the butter floated in globs on the top. She formed the butter into big pats with her hands and stamped the top of the pat with an old iron shape with the indent of a cow on it. So, to the rhythm of the churn, a-thunk-a-think-a-thunk as if Miss Addie were willing it to form butter, I wandered around the back yard and the back porch with the sound following me. (173)

This description includes sights, smells, and sounds Settle fondly remembers that are symbolic of Addie.

When meals were complete, often food was left over. Many times the food was saved for someone to eat later, but early on there was no refrigeration, so they might keep a plate in a “bread safe” (Morgan 131). Anything that was not kept was typically given to the hogs.

In Charles Frazier’s *Cold Mountain*, Ruby teaches Ada the importance of storing food properly for safe keeping. For instance, when they pick the cabbages, they bury them for winter to use in a variety of dishes including: kraut, fried cabbage, boiled cabbage, stuffed cabbage, and slaw. They dig a “gravelike trench behind the smokehouse” and line it with straw. They put all of the cabbage heads in the trench, put straw over them, and cover it with dirt (241). Ruby explains that sauerkraut is kept in a crock.

In *Addie*, Settle explains all of the different “out” buildings on her grandmother’s property including a chicken house, pigsty, corncrib, and tobacco barn. She says that with all of the whitewashed buildings, they “looked like a little village street” (173). Often, these buildings for storing food hold fond memories for characters. Small country stores that supplied food and other goods also provided fond memories, because they were often visited and maintained a certain smell. These buildings that housed food appealed to the senses, thus making them memorable. Settle explains, “The long room was scented with great cylinders of cheese, slabs of corned beef, a barrel of dill pickles, apples in sawdust, greens and corn and runner beans and penny candy” (174).

The preparation of food is also an important feature of Appalachian literature. While preservation is a means of storing what the four seasons offer and provides memories of families working together, preparation of the food provides the memories appealing to the senses especially taste and smell. The methods of cooking vary, but

historically there were three preparation types according to Claude Levi-Strauss. In his essay “The Culinary Triangle” reprinted in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, Levi-Strauss compares food in cultures to languages. He says that “... if there is no society without a language, nor is there any which does not cook in some manner at least some of its food” (28). All human beings need food to survive, of course, but Levi-Strauss’s observation shows the significance in the preparation of food and places it as relevant as the language of a culture. He created a three point culinary triangle, which consists of raw, rotted, and cooked food. “The cooked is a cultural transformation of the raw, whereas the rotted is a natural transformation,” he states (29).

In any cuisine, nothing is simply cooked, but must be cooked in one fashion or another. Nor is there any condition of pure rawness: only certain foods can really be eaten raw, and then only if they have been selected, washed, pared or cut, or even seasoned. Rotting, too, is only allowed to take place in certain specific ways, either spontaneous or controlled. (29)

All food is then prepared in some way. Levi-Strauss argues that even the raw food is prepared in some way before it is eaten, and rotting is “controlled” so the food is eaten when the time is right. This language created from the preparation of food is significant to the Appalachian culture. The skills inherited from previous generations are this language of food in which he refers. As Ruby communicates with Ada in *Cold Mountain*, the common language they speak out of necessity is food – planting, harvesting, preserving, preparing, and finally sharing.

Levi-Strauss also claims that there are two modes of cooking – roasted and boiled. Roasted is directly exposed to fire, and “boiled food is doubly mediated, by the water in which it is immersed, and by the receptacle that holds both water and food” (29). He says that because boiled food requires a cooking receptacle (a cultural object) it is

symbolic of the relationship between man and the world in early society. Levi-Strauss says that roasting represents nature or the wild, and boiling is a mediator between food and fire, thus making the process, and the food prepared by boiling, civilized. "Cooking in a pot, rather than directly on the fire, also meant not wasting the nutritive juices of meats, but holding them in and concentrating them in the water," says Massimo Montanari in his "Roasted and Boiled" chapter of *Food Is Culture* (49). He further states that "economy and conservation" are associated with the pot. The broth created when boiling meat may be used for something else. Using Levi-Strauss's concept of the civilized pot, Montanari claims the idea of boiling meat became linked with the peasant class which needed to gain as much from the salted, preserved meat that was typically boiled. The upper class, on the other hand, had access to fresh meat thus eliminating the need for boiling and salvaging nutrients. This is an interesting concept as society typically does not associate the peasant class with "civilized."

The dialectic of roasting and boiling is also implicitly one of gender. The pot boiling on the domestic hearth enters into the arena of female competence. Stoking the fires to roast meat is more often than not a "man's" specialty, actually better expressed as virile or masculine, which calls up images of brutal simplicity, as well as mastery over natural forces. (Montanari 49)

Therefore, according to Montanari, the process of boiling meat is symbolic of the peasant woman, and roasting is a sign of social privilege and males. One might expect the opposite - the upper class to be associated with a boiling and not a "virile" method of roasting.

Boiling conserves entirely the meat and its juices, whereas roasting is accompanied by destruction and loss. One connotes economy, the other prodigality; the former is plebeian, the latter aristocratic. This aspect

takes on primary importance in societies which prescribe differences of status among individuals or groups. (Levi-Strauss 31)

Roasted food does not require a civilized receptacle as it only needs to be exposed to direct fire. A good example of the manliness of roasting appears in *The Kentuckians*. Men in the mountain wilderness were capable of roasting meat over an open fire as Dave does. He has a “haunch of deer” on a “pronged stick ... watching it sizzle and brown, the fat around the edges melting and dripping into the fire, keeping up a continual popping and crackling ... Waiting and watching, turning the meat every once in a while to keep it from burning” (Giles 120). The division of class between boiled and roasted meat seems to have disappeared when the New World was founded, but certainly the idea of gender remained. Men settled the frontiers first preparing meals over an open fire, and later sent for their women who brought ... the pot.

Preparing bread is important in the Appalachian household which is frequently reflected in the regional literature. Whether from flour or corn meal, bread is served at every meal. Today biscuits and cornbread are easily prepared, but initially the process of making biscuits was an art form. Julie’s mother-in-law in *Gap Creek* scolds her about her biscuits being too soft, “A biscuit that ain’t cooked long enough will never be crisp” (Morgan 77). Frazier’s Ada spends two hours just trying to prepare the oven and “raise a loaf of wheat bread” using “saleratus, the only leavening she could find” (36). Ada does not have the skill at this point, because she did not have a mother to teach her. In fact, “When the loaf came from the oven ... it resembled a great poorly made biscuit; its crust was of a cracker like texture, and the remainder was sodden and tasted of uncooked flour” (36). Recipes varied from family to family, but the ingredients were basically the same – lard, flour, salt, milk, and a leavening ingredient such as yeast. Sohn states, “The history of biscuits is also tied to shortening, which evolved from lard, to butter, to Crisco, to oil” (Sohn 28). Originally the biscuits were more like the cracker that Ada made by

accident. It was a labor intensive process of hand beating. Biscuits eventually became light and fluffy depending on the lard. Gertie always added an “extra pinch, for Clovis liked his biscuit bread flaky with lard” (Arnow 82). Baking powder or soda also enabled a faster preparation of bread. When pre-sliced loaf bread became available in stores, children were often so tired of biscuits, they thought it was a luxury to take a sandwich in their school lunch made from sliced bread. Later, the advent of self-rising flour, along with electric stoves, shortened the process.

In “Appalachian Foodways,” Fred Sauceman states, “Perhaps Appalachia’s greatest contributions to the world’s cuisine are the ingenious ways mountain cooks have devised to preserve the bounty of the farm” (19).

CHAPTER 7

STEREOTYPES

The Ballad of Jed Clampett

Come and listen to a story about a man named Jed
A poor mountaineer, barely kept his family fed,
Then one day he was shootin at some food,
And up through the ground came a bubblin' crude.

Oil that is, black gold, Texas tea.

Well the first thing you know ol' Jed's a millionaire,
Kinfolk said Jed move away from there
Said Californy is the place you ought to be
So they loaded up the truck and moved to Beverly.

Hills, that is.
Swimmin pools, movie stars.

The Beverly Hillbillies!

Well now it's time to say good-bye to Jed and all his kin.
And they would like to thank you folks fer kindly droppin in.
You're all invited back again to this locality
To have a heapin helpin of their hospitality

Hillbilly that is. Set a spell. Take your shoes off. Y'all come back now,
y'hear? (Henning)

The Beverly Hillbillies, Hee Haw, Snuffy Smith, and Mountain Dew all conjure mythical images in the American mind. We recognize these icons, but how did they enter mainstream America? In his 2004 text, *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon*, Anthony Harkins states, "The twentieth-century hillbilly image had its origins in three related but separate literary and illustrative traditions that reach back at least as far as the colonial era: portrayals of the rural rube; conceptions of poor whites of the southern backcountry; and images of the inhabitants of the southern mountain regions" (13). He

also mentions William Byrd II's text written about his adventures while plotting the North Carolina boundary line. Byrd claims, "Sure there is no place in the World where the Inhabitants live with less Labour than in N Carolina ... they loiter away their Lives ..." (15). Harkins remarks that Byrd is "clearly appalled by the conditions of the rural inhabitants, whom he views as unhealthy, slovenly, and utterly averse to work" (15). He says,

... journalists and travel writers repeatedly compared "poor whites" unfavorably to other supposedly inferior people of color ... through a variety of arguments, including genetic inferiority, excessive interbreeding with "nonwhites," and environmental factors, such as the destructive influences of the southern climate, rampant disease, and a woefully inadequate diet ... these writers asserted that "poor whites" were neither truly "white" nor clearly "nonwhite" but instead, a separate "Cracker race." (17)

Harkins quotes an article in the Boston *Daily Advertiser* from 1866 claiming that this poor white social class will never rise above "filthy poverty" and "foul ignorance," and also claims that "Time and effort will lead the negro up to intelligent manhood, but I almost doubt if it will be possible to ever lift this 'white trash' into respectability" (17).

In the 1880s the most infamous feud in the history of America took place between the Hatfields and McCoys. Although it was not the first or the last or even the longest or "bloodiest" feud in the region, it was the most published (Cummings). Unfortunately, the writing contributed to the aspect of a violent culture and rarely mentioned the actual rivalry as economic.

The term hillbilly seems to have been created around the turn of the twentieth century. Harkin explains the terms "hillfolk" and "billie" from Scottish expressions were combined and appeared in print for the first time in 1900 in the *New York Journal*. The

author, Julian Hawthorne, “defined a ‘hill-billie as a ‘free and untrammled white citizen of Alabama, who lives in the hills, has no means to speak of, dresses as he can, talks as he pleases, drinks whiskey when he gets it, and fires off his revolver as the fancy takes him” (Cummings). This beginning continued throughout the twentieth century. Sometimes portrayed as violent, but always portrayed as simple. “Through the early – to mid-twentieth century, the hillbilly came to Hollywood on film as these rural characters were depicted in numerous ‘cookie-cutter-feud-and-moonshine melodrama,” according to Cummings. In the movies, cartoons, and finally on television, the hillbilly stereotype became part of America’s popular culture. To those actually living in the hills, the label is problematic and hurtful. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the uneducated, hollow dwelling stereotype still remains, but also includes government dependency.

The people in Appalachia have long been considered the poorest in the nation, and “Americans love to hate the poor,” according to Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz in their introduction to the 1997 text *White Trash: Race and Class in America*. In particular, the rural poor have been subjected to accusations of being “incestuous and sexually promiscuous, violent, alcoholic, lazy, and stupid” (2). Terms like “white trash” and “hillbilly” are often mentioned when referring to the mountaineers, and they are often blamed for “the nation’s ills” (3).

White trash is an ideal test object because it refers to actually existing white people living in (often rural) poverty, while at the same time it designates a set of stereotypes and myths related to the social behaviors, intelligence, prejudices, and gender roles of poor whites. That is white trash is an identity generated in the dialectic of base and superstructure. White trash is, moreover, becoming an increasingly

popular and relevant term in mainstream U.S. culture. (Wray and Newitz
7)

In America, class is linked to wealth and race. Hispanics and Blacks are stereotypically poor, Whites and Asians are stereotypically middle class. This, of course, is not true. Poverty is not linked to race, nor can it any longer be linked to region. Even so, today in eastern Kentucky families in remote hollows struggle without basic health care and education. When Rory Kennedy lived in Mudlick Hollow with the Bowling family for a year in 1996, she learned that family traditions of quilting, growing food, and collecting wild plants from the hills were still alive and well ... and so was poverty in the mountains. Most of the Bowlings living in that hollow receive government assistance. Many have left these types of hollows due to lack of work. As the population decreases, the hollows become forgotten pockets of poverty. With no one to sell homemade goods or ginseng and other plants to, the Bowling family continues to struggle. Iree's thirteen children left the hollow. All but one returned. She says, "They know that here at home, they'll never have to do without – they will always have food to eat and a place to rest their head" (Kennedy 47). I question whether poverty exists more for her children on the outside or in the hollow. Under these, the one constant in their lives is the tradition of growing and raising food.

People survived, had their horses and mules, their cows and their hogs. Had their own pork put away. People didn't have to buy anything but salt, sugar, and coffee. Raised everything else. But you didn't get no flour biscuits or muffins, you got cornbread ... You can raise your own beef, your own pork, your own chickens to lay eggs. You can have your cow to get milk, you can raise your own garden, grow corn to make bread, your own cane to make molasses, your own apples to make jelly ... I sure ain't poor. I got a place to lay my head, food to eat, bed to

sleep in, clean clothes to wear. If somebody ain't got nothing to eat and no place to sleep, no home, that's poor to me. (Kennedy 24-26)

Iree, the matriarch of the Bowling family, explains her traditional view of life in the holler. So many others who are poor do not have the things she lists as being important. To the government and society, poverty is based on monetary income. This, to Iree, as long as her basic needs are met with what she can grow on her own property, there is no need for monetary income. She sees the starving children on television and wants them to live with her, so she can teach them to work. Iree's idea of wealth and success is different from what most consider the American Dream. Iree is happy. The problem is that Iree and her family are on welfare and receiving aid for health care. Yes, the family has all the food they need, but they lack education and good health care. This lifestyle continues the stereotyping of Appalachia. If the government is providing welfare, the family is considered poor ... regardless of what Iree thinks. It is hard to argue against the hillbilly stereotype when so many living in the culture perpetuate it. The ones living the mountaineering lifestyle who are not on welfare, who work, and have an education continue to fight the popular stereotype that people like Iree, do not know exists because they never leave the confines of the hills.

Whites living in the middle classes are afraid of the hillbilly, because this class of people "may serve to undo whiteness as racial supremacy, helping to introduce multiple, indeterminate, and anti-racist forms of white identity" (Wray and Newitz 4). Wray and Newitz argue that,

Because white trash is, for whites, the most visible and clearly marked form of whiteness, it can perhaps help to make all whites self-conscious of themselves as a racial and classed group among other such groups, bringing us one step closer to a world without racial division, or at the

very least, a world where racial difference does not mean racial, symbolic, and economic domination. (4)

In the early part of our nation's history until approximately the 1970s, class structure was as follows: wealthy whites, middle-class whites, Asians, white trash, blacks and possibly Mexicans on the same level as blacks. In her essay "Crackers and Whackers," Constance Penley states, "A Southern white child is required to learn that white trash folks are the lowest of the low because socially and economically they have sunk so far that they might as well be black. As such, they are seen to have lost all self-respect" (Penley 90). This is mentioned specifically to point out that by eating the same foods as blacks, some white people have been categorized as white trash.

In Harper Lee's great Southern novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the Ewells a distinctly white trash, poverty-stricken family, consider themselves above Tom, the black man accused of raping Mayella Ewell. As the blacks sit in the balcony of the courtroom, Atticus Finch defends Tom against the evil, ignorant white trash accusations of the Ewells. The reader realizes that Tom is innocent, but begins to realize more about the class of the Ewell family. The reader can assume that Bob Ewell is sexually abusing his daughter and encourages her to testify against Tom. Another lower income white family in the novel is also shown as ignorant when it comes to Tom. Mr. Cunningham arrives at the jail with the mob ready to lynch Tom, but Atticus and the children, specifically Scout, route him away from evildoings by singling him out of the crowd and making him human again. This portrayal of the lower income white man in mainstream American literature has perpetuated the white trash stereotype. Even young Scout has more sense than Mr. Cunningham. It is this uneducated, slow talking character that was attached to the mountain folk early in this country's history.

The Lester family in Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road* is also part of this stereotyped white trash rural family. Typically portrayed as poor due to ignorance, the poor rural farmer is also considered racist, lazy, and incestuous. Lester states,

A man can't run no farm unless he's got a mule to plow it with. A hoe ain't no good except to chop cotton with, and corn. Ain't no sense in trying to grow turnips with a hoe. I reckon that's why them damn-blasted green-gutted worms got in them turnips. I like winter turnips just about as bad as a nigger likes watermelons. (Caldwell 24)

In his laziness, he complains that he does not have a mule for proper farming. Part of the stereotype is that the white trash family blames its ill-being on others. It is not the families' fault that they are poor. It is the higher classes and the government. Also in his tirade about growing turnips, he shows his racial ignorance by making a stereotypical remark about black people and watermelons. "While the white trash character is deeply engrained in the American literary consciousness, it is a character frequently made accessible either through the trope of 'the grotesque' and/or through humor. In Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road*, the spectacle of depravity was offset by its comedic tone," states Jillian Sandell in her essay "Telling Stories of 'Queer White Trash'" (Sandell 212). Authors apply these common stereotypes to the poor white characters to show them as deserving of their misfortune. These are the "bad poor;" the poor who are ungrateful, grotesque, and lazy. It is these mainstream characters that continued to be the standard for mountain folk. Even in the film *Sergeant York*, Alvin is a hard drinker and fighter until lightning strikes near him and he finds religion. It seems the Tennessee hillbilly's war time (WWI) success is directly linked to his religious epiphany and his class status change.

Some myths about food and animals as food were created from "Victorian misapprehension." In *Food in History* from 1988, Reay Tannahill uses the example of

rice as the main Chinese food in exclusion of everything else. We could say the same for grits being specifically a Southern food, or food prepared with a lot of lard. It was during the Victorian time period that these “misapprehensions” took root. However, some of the myths or mis-apprehensions about food date back to biblical times. Tannahill states, “There was right and there was wrong; and anything that was not wholly right was by definition wrong” (Tannahill 56). Right means pure or clean. Wrong means impure or unclean. It was determined that anything that “Yahweh” put on the earth in its original state is clean. Because he gave “every beast of the Earth ... every green plant for food,” Tannahill thinks that clean must be herbivorous.

All beasts that ate grass and chewed the cud and had cloven hooves were assumed to be clean. Not the horse, camel or ass, whose hooves were not cloven. Not the pig, which had cloven hooves but did not chew the cud. Not the hare, which chewed the cud but had no hooves at all. Since animals with claws were mainly carnivorous, they were obviously unclean, and even a theoretically ‘clean’ animal could be rendered unclean if it had a blemish. (Tannahill 57-58)

Tannahill goes on to explain clean birds and fish are those that stay in their environment. Fish that did not swim (shellfish and mollusks), and birds that did not fly (ostrich, swan, pelican) are considered unclean. Chickens were considered to be flying birds. So, with rabbits and hogs certainly considered unclean, this is a strong argument for stereotypes revolving around Appalachian food where the hog is the main staple and used in its entirety.

Jean Soler states, “Carnivorous animals are not included in the plan of the Creation,” in her article “The Semiotics of Food in the Bible” (60). She further mentions that “carnivorous animals are unclean” (60). Therefore, man is not supposed to eat animals that eat other animals. Technically, pigs are considered herbivorous, but they

are omnivores. They eat anything. Although the Bible only specifically states three animals deemed unclean – the camel, the hare, and the rock badger, the pig also must fall into the category of unclean because pigs 1) do not chew the cud, but have hooved feet; and 2) eat other animals. Other unclean animals consumed by the mountaineer are squirrel, possum, and raccoon (varmints). Those who eat “unclean” animals are therefore considered unclean themselves. Therefore, the hillbilly is both uneducated and unclean because of the food choices he makes.

However, the hillbilly made food choices that were readily available to them. “Varmints” were eaten mainly because they were plentiful and “their hunting offered a challenge” (Caudill 20). The reason Jed Clampett found oil in the first place, is because he was “shootin’ at some food” (Henning). Young David, in Giles’s novel, is sent into the woods by his mother to bring back a squirrel or rabbit to add meat to the family’s diet of “garden sass” (Giles 3). Meat was needed for balance in the mountaineer’s diet. Joel Davis confesses to eating possum in his 2005 essay “Of Possums and Papaws.” Like many types of meat that are not on a typical American menu, people comment that they taste like chicken. Davis vehemently denies that possum tastes like chicken. “It tastes neither fowl nor foul. And like everything else that has ended up on my Papaw’s table over the years – from squirrel to bull testicles – I have eaten possum several times,” claims Davis (153). In his “Coons and Possums” article in *Foodways*, Wiley C. Prewitt, Jr. states, “The coons and possums in the South offered a significant addition to any rural kitchen” due to the large amounts of fat they accumulate during the summer and fall (149). Recipes for coons and possums still appear in twenty-first century Appalachian cookbooks like this more elaborate method of preparation: “stuffing the body cavity of a scalded and scraped possum with a combination of its own browned, chopped heart and liver, onion, bread crumbs, boiled egg, spices, and a dash of Tabasco.” However, more recently, very few hunters still kill and eat possums today because of the stereotype that

is associated with the “varmint.” Prewitt, Jr. states, “People associate possums with rural poverty and reject them perhaps because they are too common, too easy to hunt, and too greasy – the same reasons they were once so valuable” (150). Varmints tend to be considered nuisances for destroying gardens or flower beds, burrowing under buildings, creating holes in yards or pastures, and overturning garbage cans. Not only are they readily available, society typically wants them dead. They are considered unclean and unwanted. Daisy Mae Clampett always has an unwanted varmint or critter in her arms that she has befriended causing hysteria from neighbors or Granny’s mouth to water thinking about the possibilities for her pot.

Pigs, on the other hand, were also readily available and delicious. Caudill states, “The first settlers brought no domestic animals other than the pack of savage dogs and a few pack horses or mules. But in later years herds of sheep and hogs were driven in front of the family caravan” (Caudill 20). The settlers would let the pigs run loose to feed on nuts and berries in the woods, and they reproduced in the wild. Often depicted on early television shows or cartoons, the hillbilly is seen sitting barefoot on the porch petting a hog. This stereotype makes fun of the extreme importance the mountaineer placed on the animal as a source of food and other utilitarian household items. In his “Pork” section in *Foodways*, Charles R. Wilson says,

Pork, along with corn, soon dominated the foodways of colonial southerners, establishing the familiar “hog and hominy” diet that would last into the twentieth century. The hog and its meat had a bad reputation with upper-class colonial southerners, though. The squeamish Virginian William Byrd II complained that frontier settlers he met ate so much pork, to the exclusion of other foods, that it caused scurvy and facial disfiguration. (Wilson 88)

Wilson quotes Robert Beverley who wrote in 1705 that “Hogs swarm like Vermine upon the earth” (Wilson 88). This early stereotype of the hog is derived from God’s list of unclean animals in the Bible.

In his essay “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption,” Roland Barthes states, “... food serves as a sign not only for themes, but also for situations ... To eat is a behavior that develops beyond its own ends, replacing, summing up, and signaling other behaviors, and it is precisely for these reasons that it is a sign” (Barthes 25). He argues that the type of food eaten symbolizes a way of life. He uses a snack bar as an example of “participation in modern life” (Barthes 25). It represents a working life that is fast paced. Barthes claims that “... in the past, only festive occasions were signaled by food in any positive and organized manner” (Barthes 25). Barthes’s essay is based on modern French society, but the point is that food is becoming more and more mainstream. In the twentieth century, people met in public to eat for business or entertainment. In the nineteenth century, food was only for socializing when it was an organized, festive occasion – reunions, marriages, deaths, barn raising, et al. Food is an ever changing sign of society. In the twenty-first century, we have a cable network devoted entirely to food.

In her 1997 essay “An Anthropological Approach to the Problem of Obesity,” Hortense Powdermaker states that “poor people eat differently from rich people” (207). The difference she explains is that “fattening, starchy foods are common” among poor people. In families with good cooks, there seems to be a habit for obesity. A stereotype of the hillbilly female is being overweight. The idea of the overweight woman has changed throughout centuries and various cultures. In the Victorian age a woman needed to be pleasantly plump to show that she was in an upper class standing. Plump women were considered beautiful, did not work, and were well fed by wealthy husbands. It was an accomplishment for the husband to have a well fed wife. Ideas of female

beauty began to change in the 1920s with the age of the New Woman. According to Powdermaker, "Obesity for women is ... somewhat symbolic for lower class" (207). Obesity for men is different. Men who are overweight are viewed as successful. More importantly to the mountain heroine, the image of an overweight woman is symbolic of motherhood. Powdermaker argues that either "consciously or unconsciously, our symbolism for a maternal woman is on the plump or obese side" (207). Maybe it is more appealing to be nurtured by the plump female than a slender one. Regardless, it is true that the diet of the mountaineer is rich and fatty. Working hard requires eating hard. More importantly, the stereotype of the plump hillbilly woman with babies hanging from her clothes is often juxtaposed with the sophisticated, well-dressed, slender city woman. With both placed in close proximity, no female would ever aspire to be the plump hillbilly. However, the stereotype is incomplete. It does not reveal the happiness or the distress of either character.

Jean Soler addresses the stereotype of incestuous relationships in the hills beginning with Bible verse. Soler states,

The incest prohibition [in Leviticus 18] is a logical one. It thus becomes evident that the sexual and the dietary prohibitions of the Bible are coordinated. This no doubt explains the Bible's most mysterious prohibition: "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk" (Exod. 23: 19 and 34: 25; Deut. 14: 21). These words must be taken quite literally. They concern a mother and her young. They can be translated as: you shall not put a mother and her son into the same pot, any more than into the same bed. Here as elsewhere, it is a matter of upholding the separation between two classes or two types of relationships. To abolish distinction by means of a sexual or culinary act is to subvert the order of the world. (Soler 64)

This strange comparison relating food with incest between mother and son substantiates the stereotyping of hillbilly food and incestuous relationships. The hillbilly is seen as unclean, incestuous, and slovenly whether by choice or by ignorance. As late as the twenty-first century, those, like the Bowlings, living deep in a hollow in Kentucky are labeled as incestuous mainly due to their geographic location. Because they are imbedded in an environment that is difficult to escape (i.e. “the same pot”), many cousins married cousins. Finding a spouse was difficult when travel was limited. In his acclaimed account of the region, Harry Caudill comments that not only travel was limited for finding a spouse, but also:

The animosities of the feuds shut a prospective bridegroom off from adversary clans, so that he tended to turn to womenfolk of his own blood-line or of others friendly to the faction to which he gave his allegiance. Frequently he paid courtship to cousins of the second or third degree, and eventually marriages between first cousins became commonplace. As the process of “marrying close to home” continued over the decades, the mountaineer came to be fantastically inbred. To this day “double first cousins” are frequently encountered in the mountains, and occasionally a person is found whose duly married parents bore this consanguine kinship to each other ... The inbreeding with its attendant genetic pitfalls contributed much in later years to the erosion of the highlander’s self-reliance. (Caudill 84-85)

Now, even though the Bowlings are not quite so limited for means of travel, it is still a difficult journey on winding mountain roads. Furthermore, because so many cousins married cousins, it is difficult to find a spouse that is not family, distant or closely related.

Chris Offutt addresses hillbilly stereotypes in many of his works including his autobiography *The Same River Twice*. He says, “Hillbilly was what the people in town

called us at home; that and worse – hick, ridgerunner, redneck, inbred, ingrate, and my personal favorite, pigfucker. My mother is my sixth cousin. My brother and sister are also my cousins but nobody in my family ever seduced a hog” (70). Earlier in his autobiography he addresses the lack of connection to the outside world when living in the hills. He says that the roads were built into the hills linking them to the world, but they still “failed to connect” (19-20). Offutt does leave Kentucky and travels all over the United States. He makes a connection between the people living in the West to those of the Appalachians. He says, “They are deprived of the old outlets, but stuck with the need to live up to their heritage” (71). He is referring to the cowboy/pioneer lifestyle created out West. There are no more Comanche to fight nor unexplored territory to conquer out West, just as there is little need for the modern Appalachian to make moonshine and feud. He suggests that the male gender is losing its heritage in the mountains. While women continue to pass down the knowledge of cooking, gardening, preserving, sewing, and other crafts, mountain men are limited in today’s society of what is acceptable behavior.

In his story “Grandma’s Table” in *Cornbread Nation 3: Foods of the Mountain South*, Steve Yarbrough depicts a hillbilly grandmother who is sensitive to the way she and her food are viewed by her new nephew-in-law. A disgruntled stereotypical Texan, Nick Miller, arrives at Yarbrough’s grandmother’s home on the Mississippi Delta for a brief visit while passing through. When Nick and his wife Lynn drive into the yard in his Cadillac, the chickens scatter, and Nick is annoyed. From the looks of the tar-paper sided house, he does not want to go in nor eat a meal. Of course, supper is already on the table and waiting for them, so he feels obliged. Nick and Lynn argue in the room where they were to spend the night. Nick vehemently whispers, “I can’t sleep on this bed, I can’t shit in that toilet, I can’t eat at that table. Hell, I’d be scared of the food” (95). Nick continues to argue with Lynn about her favorite aunt. They discuss that the family is

poor, but the food is safe to eat and everything is clean and sanitary. Unfortunately, his whisper reverberates throughout the house and the grandmother hears every word. Nick has never experienced this lifestyle or culture before, and he is unwilling to try it. Yarbrough states, "*The Beverly Hillbillies* had entered the American consciousness the year before, and you could tell he was preparing himself for the kinds of concoctions Granny Clampett might serve. Possum fried in lard, owl cutlets, stewed groundhog – that sort of thing" (97). Nick further insults the family when he is asked to say grace and refuses. When urged to say grace for this social occasion, he becomes angry and mocks the dialect saying, "Yes, by doggie, it sure enough is" and says grace:

Yes, *Jeez Us*. Bless these fish. Bless these hush puppies. Bless this house and them that's in it. Bless the dogs and the cows and the chickens and the pigs. Bless all their leavings in the yard outside. Bless the hay and the cotton and the soybeans and John Deere. Bless this cole, coleslaw as you bless our hard, hard hearts. (98)

When he finishes the disgraceful display, he picks up his fork and begins to eat. Yarbrough remembers, "... I swear you could see a light enter his eyes" when he took his first bites of fish and hush puppy. The attitude left his face as he continues to stuff it with home cooked food. It later returns, but at that time, Nick is overcome with the blessing on that table – the food.

The words he had spoken about the grandmother's house, however, stayed with her. Yarbrough remembers that her food then changed. His grandmother changed slowly from the foreign infection. She bought a new car which required a car port. She bought a new refrigerator, color television, linoleum rugs, a stereo, lamps, a new bathtub and toilet, re-papered the walls in every room, stopped raising chickens, had the dog put down at the first signs of ailment, nailed tin siding around the bottom of the house so no animals could get under it, and most importantly to Yarbrough – "She began to buy

canned or frozen vegetables, and these were what we ate for supper. She discovered Swanson frozen roast beef and gravy ... She bought apple pies frozen. She bought pecan pies that came in a box with a clear layer of plastic on top ... She developed a preference for Wonder bread” (99). Her attitude changed. She says, “I’ve got better things to do than stand in the kitchen half the day making pies and cornbread. This ain’t the days of covered wagons. This is the modern world, and I for one refuse to regret it” (99). His grandmother is so offended that instead of Nick’s experience changing him, he changes her. She is so adamant about ridding herself of the unclean hillbilly stereotype that she completely assimilates into the quick and easy “civilized” lifestyle. Nick does not change. When soon after the meeting *Deliverance* arrives in theaters, Nick claims his wife Lynn has ancestors like the Ned Beatty molesters. Yarbrough’s grandmother, on the other hand, took pictures with her new Polaroid camera of her store bought (or brought on) items stacked together. The reader is left to assume that she sends the picture to her niece and Nick Miller. The reader never learns how Lynn deals with Nick’s rudeness. Is she ashamed of her family? Does she divorce Nick for the ass that he is?

In her essay “Gender and Food” printed in the 2007 *Foodways*, Marcie Cohen Ferris states,

Southern literature, music, film, art, and folkways define mythic characters such as the pampered white southern belle, the nurturing black mammy, the poor white backwoods moonshiner, and the paternalistic white plantation master. Each of these stereotypes reinforces a popular understanding of southern food and the role of women within the kitchen. (61)

Identifying the food culture of a specific region is nothing new. People eat what is available to them in the region. Massimo Montanari claims, “Local dishes linked to local produce clearly have always existed. From this point of view, all food is by definition

'local,' that is, of the *region*, especially if we think of popular culture, which is more directly tied to local resources" (Montanari 75). Why is mountain cuisine linked so solidly to the hillbilly stereotype of the mountaineer?

Stereotypes exist for a reason. There is typically some truth in them, but only generalizations. The problem is that most of the generalizations are true for a small population of people, and because of this, the stereotypes will never go away. In 1997, Jay Leno and David Letterman reported on the squirrel brain eating fiasco perpetuated by a mad cow disease report in a British medical journal called the *Lancet*. Two neurologists (Weisman and Berger) had noticed five patients in western Kentucky who had been diagnosed within the last four years with Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), which is a variant of mad cow disease. The only thing the five patients had in common was they had eaten squirrel brains. Burkhard Bilger, author of "Mad Squirrels and Kentuckians," recognizes that the country was "primed for the next epidemic" already. This minor flare up caused a "feeding frenzy" that was "brief but exceedingly gleeful" (163).

The *New York Times* began by garnishing the story with some suitably gothic details. "Families that eat brains follow only certain rituals," the paper reported, then it quoted Eric Weisman, one of the authors of the *Lancet* letter. "Someone comes by the house with just the head of a squirrel and gives it to the matriarch of the family. She shaves the fur off the top of the head and fries the head whole. The skull is cracked open at the dinner table and the brains are sucked out."

(Bilger 163)

For his story, Bilger hunts with a man named Steve Rector who first heard about the disease while microwaving squirrel heads for lunch at work. He stayed away from squirrel brains for a while, but felt they were too good to give them up completely. Bilger

also interviews Eric Weisman located in western Kentucky who deals primarily with CJD cases. Everyone he had seen with CJD had eaten squirrels. When the *New York Times* article hits quoting Weisman, Kentuckians were furious at the “hillbilly portraits it inspired” (Bilger 171). The Kentucky press began to retaliate over the comments of bringing squirrels to the matriarch and another comment about picking up road kill for the stew pot. Bilger states, “The *Kentucky Post*, meanwhile, berated the eastern media for its ‘snobbish perception that the Bluegrass State is filled with shoeless, toothless, inbred, mouth-breathing, roadkill-eating hijacks so primitive as to chow down on anything that walks, crawls, or slithers” (171). Weisman’s practice began to fail. The locals did not feel that his eastern upbringing gave him any insight into the region’s people. They did not realize he is married to a squirrel eater, who also happens to be listed as a coauthor of the article in the *Lancet*. Squirrel was a natural staple on many Kentucky tables for centuries. Today, there are still people who hunt squirrels and keep them on hand in the freezer. They feel that squirrel meat is the best, and it is low in fat and cholesterol. After the hunting trip, Rector, Bilger’s interview hunting partner, prepares squirrel for their supper. While in the kitchen, he comments that he learned on the Discovery Channel that rat is a delicacy in some foreign country. He says, “It’s just a different concept. It’s like we look at a cow and think that’s somethin’ you eat, and we look at a horse and say that’s somethin’ you ride. But a horse probably tastes even better than a cow” (174).

The co-author of the *Lancet* article also lives in Kentucky. He had found cases of CJD in Florida from people eating squirrel brain as well. He tells Bilger that had he known how many squirrel eaters were in Kentucky, he would not have reported it. He even comments that the risk of contracting CJD from squirrel brains is rather small, but he would not eat one himself.

Bilger found someone to fit the hillbilly stereotype in Steve Rector. There is something to be said about the relationship between what we eat and what we become.

Rector feels he is the last of a dying breed. At forty-two he has the heart of an old man and colon cancer. Rector's friend Jimmy, who he talks about with the reporter, was finally able to commit suicide on his third attempt after his wife left him. The first two times he was too drunk blowing off part of his jaw on the first attempt and part of his shoulder on the second. Those who contribute to the spread of the hillbilly stereotype really have good sources of information on which to base their beliefs!

The hillbilly diet of fatback and cornbread has been the cause of poor health in the Appalachian region for years. In his essay "Social Class and Food," Fred Sauceman says,

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the meat in the diet of poor southerners in the Appalachian region consisted largely of fatback – very little bacon or ham – and cornbread or flour biscuits, all low in protein and vitamins, resulting in the proliferation of diseases such as pellagra brought on by nutritional deficiencies. (103)

The economically disadvantaged mountain folk have successfully and "resourcefully combined the lowliest of foodstuffs – the simple fare of field and farm – to create some of America's most memorable dishes" (Sauceman "Social Class" 103). This resourcefulness led to the stereotype of hillbillies – poor, lazy and uneducated – and, unfortunately, the stereotype created a vicious circle. Many, like Iree Bowling's children, felt they had no choice but to return or never leave the hollow. Society expects them to be hillbillies "sucking out the marrow" of America's welfare. And, if people are paid to stay at home, why would they try to find work? The pocket of poverty, labeled in the 1960s in eastern Kentucky, will remain a pocket of poverty. Those living there, like Iree Bowling, did not realize they were "poor" by the standards of modern society. Iree feels that she is not poor, because she has food and a roof over her head. But because the federal government determined otherwise, they sent social workers into the hills who

educated the mountaineers that their life was uncivilized. Still today, many families live on welfare in the hollows of Kentucky perpetuating the stereotype that offends those who are independent of the government handouts. This society in Appalachia has existed in some places since the eighteenth century. There was no catastrophic event that brought poverty into the hills. People in the region have existed for a long time living off the land and eating what was available. I do claim that, at some point in the twentieth century, the concept of poverty was introduced to the poorer Appalachian regions and has continued to be disseminated since.

Now back to *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Even as child I wondered why the Clampetts moved to Beverly Hills. The song states he was a “poor mountaineer who barely kept his family fed,” but when they moved to Beverly Hills the Clampett diet remained the same as it was in the hills – possum, raccoon, the occasional jack rabbit (that was actually a kangaroo). I always wondered where Granny was finding all the varmints for her vittles. They moved from a landscape that was a perfectly good source of food into an environment that, realistically, would have required a grocery store. Would the show have been less entertaining if Granny were like Gertie in Arnow’s novel? Probably not. It would not be funny if the Clampetts moved to a hostile environment and struggled to assimilate due to lack of money. The Clampetts move is funny because they have money and shun Beverly Hills society. That is one of the redeeming qualities of the show. They do not conform. When it is forced upon them, they reject it. Another redeeming quality is that the Clampetts are the most gracious, hospitable folks in Beverly Hills who unknowingly teach lessons of humility each show. Whether the show was popular for its stereotyping of an American icon like the hillbilly or not, at least there were redeeming moral lessons to be learned.

Class distinctions according to food have been around since the beginning of time. Whether class was determined by the types of food consumed or abundance,

either way, food has always been a determining factor for class. Reay Tannahill states, "The food of the rich, of course, was very different, and in the case of Rome – for perhaps the first time in history – radically different. Whereas in other societies differences had lain more in quantity and quality than in materials, the Roman rich had access to an astonishing variety of foodstuffs" (Tannahill 79). Food is also a language. Tannahill says, "Systems of government may change, but the basic language of food does not: to offer too cheap or commonplace a meal is insulting; the opposite, ostentatious" (80). There is a certain skill that comes with offering food to someone whether it is out of need, friendship, business, loss, ritual, or a simple family meal, food is the language of the Appalachian people.

CHAPTER 8

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

My mother wanted me to write my dissertation about the family. I explained to her that I could not just do genealogical research for my dissertation, and in truth, it has already been written thanks to her. I initially wanted to write about Texas heroes of the Second World War, because I had begun to research friends and family members in this area who had served. As much as I enjoyed the topic, the market seemed saturated as that generation began to dwindle in number.

The idea for this dissertation came from months of reading Appalachian literature to satisfy my third field of study for my doctoral work. My grandmother had told me about a book called *Clay's Quilt* by a distant Kentucky relative, Silas House, who had been a mailman in the town closest to our family farm. She wanted me to read it. I enjoyed House's storytelling and decided to read other Appalachian novels. Friends and colleagues began to recommend more and more texts. I always have trepidations when friends and family recommend books for me. But, on faith, I began to read everything recommended. Still struggling for a topic for my dissertation, I tried an approach learned in so many English classes. I juxtaposed two texts. The first was *A Parchment of Leaves*, Silas House's second novel, and the second was Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* that came as a recommendation. The motif found in both was food. Then I knew that I could incorporate my mother's wish of writing about family with the topic of food found in her culture. I did not realize that I would discover a cacophony with this topic.

My dilemma is that I am a Texan. Although born in Hinesville, Georgia on the Army base, I moved ... or was moved is more appropriate ... at three months old. My father, a Texan, brought my mother, a "hillbilly," to Texas where he was born and raised. Being a Texan should not be a hindrance, but as a child, I learned that my mother had a different way of pronouncing her words. She could not properly, in my mind, say the words "flower," "drawer," or "wash." In fact, occasionally I was completely unsure of what she was trying to convey to me. Around the age of ten, my mother decided she would no longer tolerate my father and me making fun of her pronunciation, and performed a tirade of such distinction we still have not forgotten it over thirty years later. Mom had become a genealogist and found that her pronunciation of such words was derivative of her motherland – Scotland and Ireland. Furthermore, she was a direct descendant from Pocahontas and would not be ridiculed for her heritage. Now, Mom had been long removed from the hills of Kentucky and had grown up from the age of five for the remainder of her childhood, in Felicity, Ohio just above the Ohio River. The town was full of people from Kentucky. That's where my father met her through mutual Army friends.

We would visit Ohio often when I was growing up, and I always felt that Dad and I were outsiders. Everyone sounded funny, but they all said that I did. They made fun of Texas and Texans. When we had first moved to Texas, my grandma visited one summer. Due to the heat it was the last time my grandma visited in the summer. She began packing my mother's clothes and belongings. When confronted, she told Mom it was too hot for anyone to live here, and there were no trees or mountains.

One visit to Ohio left an impenetrable mark on me. Grandma made chicken and dumplings for Dad every time we visited. It is his favorite meal she prepares, and he often tries to have it replicated at various cafes across the country. On this particular visit, Grandma asked if I would like to help. We started into the yard where I helped her chase a chicken for some strange reason. Upon catching the chicken, she wrung its

neck, placed it on a stump and hacked its head off. I stood mouth agape and bewildered. When she hung it from the fence to allow the blood to drain, I lost control of my senses. Grandma laughed and asked where I thought we would get the chicken. Through sobs, I said, "The store!" Grandma continued to laugh and make fun of the city girl who had been raised on a farm in Texas. Only it was a farm without chickens! When my parents returned from their outing, Grandma told them the story after Dad wondered why I was so upset. To this day, I am suspicious of chicken in chicken and dumplings, and on the rare occasion I eat them, I tediously remove the chicken. As I got older, the story was re-told from visit to visit. That is what our family does – we relive things over and over again, so the person the tragedy befell can continue to relive it over and over as well.

Dad and I have continued this "us against them" mentality. Neither of us likes the mountains for very long. We are claustrophobic driving through them which, in turn aggravates our motion sickness. We like wide, open spaces where we can see for a hundred miles. Grandma swore the marriage of my parents would never last, but at this date, they have been married forty-two years. Grandma did not believe it would last until they had reached thirty. This thinking must have been shared with others in her family, because to me, Dad was always an outsider. But, Dad seems to have found his niche with the hillbilly side of the family. After thirty-five years or so, he ingratiated himself to the clan because he is musically inclined. They did not know this until he brought the keyboard he had purchased to perform church services at drag races where he participates all over the country. When he pulled out the keyboard and began to play, he moved up the food chain. You see, Dad had a few things against him in the hills. First, he did not like the landscape. Second, he was a cop. Third, he took one of the daughters out of the fold to a place they thought was hell. Finally, he was too honest. Everyone always knew what he was thinking.

The Roberts family reunion takes place every August and is three days of partying. Family members bring camping trailers to the old home site, circle them around, and Friday night is spent playing bluegrass music, singing, and dancing. Saturday is about the food. Everyone prepares a pot luck dish as a side to mutton. I am unsure when the tradition of frying and boiling mutton became a ritual for the family reunion, but it is. Thankfully, they also have fried chicken and more covered dishes than could ever be tasted. The last Roberts family reunion I attended resulted in me eating only Southern Comfort cake made by the loving hands of Aunt Brenda even though there were three or four huge tables of food. The smell of mutton boiling on that oppressive August day in the deep hills of Kentucky led me to vow the incident would never repeat itself. That was in the early 1990s.

Sunday is spent in the family cemetery for church services. Several preachers from different denominations are asked to preach a sermon. The hillside sermon lasts for quite some time. Everyone disperses when the last preacher prays. Sometimes when the Pentecostal preacher becomes long-winded, he will be “blessed down” by the family. Dad remembers a time when he thought the preacher would have a stroke preaching his hell, fire, and brimstone sermon. Dad never experienced this sort of reunion until he married Mom. These family traditions are abundant in the Appalachian culture and revolve around the communion over the food the women bring. Dad’s family reunion pales in comparison to those on the hillbilly side of the family.

Dad’s “us against them” mentality came from a couple of experiences when he was first married to Mom. Anyone considered a “foreigner” or outsider was in jeopardy when entering the hills of Appalachia unannounced. In 1968, just after my parents were married, they drove to Kentucky to visit my mother’s grandmother. She could not remember exactly how to get to her home in Krypton, Kentucky, so they stopped to ask for direction. With license plates from Texas, Dad was immediately an outcast. No one

would give him direction. Mom told him that he “said it wrong.” When she explained that she was Charlie Roberts’s granddaughter trying to get to Krypton to see her grandmother Begley, they invited my parents in for supper and then drove them to grandmother Begley’s. Grandpa Charlie had once taught someone in that family how to make moonshine many years ago in exchange for a cow.

On the same trip, Dad stopped for fuel at a local station. He tried to pay with a traveler’s check, but the old man in the store would not accept it. He vehemently explained to Dad, “I don’t take checks!” It was a standoff. The old man’s son finally arrived and told his father he would make the check good if it bounced. I went into that store in Krypton, Kentucky in July 2008. The son who took Dad’s traveler’s check is still running the store. His father has long since passed away, but the store remains remarkably the same. It is a general store with wooden floors and a wood burning stove. It is located across the road from frequently used railroad tracks. The man owns the store and is also the postmaster with the post office located in the same building. When we parked in front, he sat on the porch. I asked him if I could take a picture of the store and told him the story of my dad. That is when I learned he was the son. Mom explained to him that she was concerned for Dad if he did not stop arguing, because she knew the old man would shoot him. The son told me that his father was a kind and gentle man who would have never shot anyone. I bought some cold drinks from him and took notice of items in the store. He had a few cold storage units and in them he had sodas, bologna, cheese, condiments, and a variety of things. When we returned to the truck to leave, Grandma told me another story about the man’s father. Bad Anse White (my grandpa’s grandfather) also lived in the Krypton area. A man arrived at his home one day giving him some trouble. He sent his wife to this same store to borrow a pistol from the owner (the same man my dad encountered). She came back, gave it to Anse, and he killed the man.

The stereotype of the violent hillbilly is based largely on fact. A culture of people who descended from generations of warring clans, and who came to America as mercenaries in the Revolutionary War has to provide some legitimacy to the stereotype. My great-grandfather Charlie Roberts packed his entire family and moved to Ohio to avoid repercussions of him killing a man. As a deputy sheriff, Papa Charlie and another deputy served a warrant on a man who refused to go to jail. A gun battle ensued and Papa Charlie shot and killed him. The criminal's family sought revenge. My great-great-grandfather, "Bad" Anse White, on the other side of the family killed many men in a famous family feud. He slept in his barn with his dogs Jesse and James to protect the family. He was lucky enough to die of old age, but he chose to stay in the hills. His wife carried a .45 caliber pistol in her apron just in case.

My uncle Phil (a first generation American whose parents are from Sicily) told me a few stories about his experiences in the hills that are similar to Dad's. His wife, Velma, is from the same hollow, Bear Branch, as my mother. Mom and Velma are step-sisters. Phil loves sitting on the porch watching the sun rise or set, drinking coffee and smoking a cigar. One day he sat on the porch and a helicopter came over the mountain and hovered. He watched it until it disappeared and returned. When it returned, four cars came up the hollow from four different federal agencies. They drove behind the house and to the edge of the woods. Phil suspected what they were looking for but was curious. He walked back to the woods and asked the nearest federal agent what they were looking for. The man told him they had heard marijuana was being grown in those woods. Phil curiously asked what a marijuana plant looked like. The agent showed him one that had been pulled. Then Phil began to look around and pointed to a couple of plants to verify. The agent confirmed that Phil had found a plant. He then left the agents to do their job and returned to the front porch. A neighbor immediately arrived and asked

Phil what the hell he was doing. Phil did not understand – it is not his or his families' marijuana. The neighbor explained to him that he had seen him in the woods with federal agents pointing to marijuana plants, and if he had seen him, then the owner of the plants probably did as well.

On September 12, 2009, in the same hollow where Aunt Velma's family still live, a census worker was killed in Clay County, Kentucky. "FED" was inscribed on his chest with an unknown tool. My family in the area claims the census worker was going door-to-door for the census but was asking inappropriate questions. He asked questions about drugs in the area. By the end of the month, Kentucky State Police claimed his death a suicide in an attempt to provide his family with insurance money from two new policies after he believed his cancer had returned. The census worker had been warned to be careful in the area by an ex-Kentucky trooper. Regardless how the death occurred, the location played a role. The area is infamously known for drugs and anti-government sentiment. Either the census worker used that knowledge to fake his homicide, or someone legitimately ended his life because he represented the government. Ultimately, it was found that the census worker used his knowledge of the infamous area to fake his own death. Investigators learned that the census worker had previously survived cancer, but it had recently returned. He wanted his family to have the insurance money from his death. This stereotype of the anti-government hillbillies in Clay County, Kentucky became the forefront of nationwide discussion. A young editor at the local *Manchester Enterprise* received an email from New York that stated, "What are you people, backwoods ignorant freaks? ... This crime is a reflection of all the residents of Clay County ... You are all disgusting pigs, and if one could level a curse at a community, then I curse the whole lot of you" (McCain).

On a different trip to Hazard, Phil remembers pulling in to a gas station in his black Lincoln Town Car. While pumping gas, five men approached him from the store.

He recognized trouble, so he immediately asks them if they know Elmer Sizemore (his father-in-law). They all know Elmer. He told them that he had Elmer's daughter in the car, and their attitudes changed. I always wondered who I should claim kin to, so not too long ago I asked Mom. What if a person claimed kin to someone who was not liked? She explained that it would not matter. I am a foreigner. Anyone who is not a foreigner, regardless if they are liked, is better than me until I have substantiated my existence.

Phil also told me about his father-in-law asking him to attend a standing poker game with him. Elmer had a group of friends with whom he played poker on a regular basis. The house was in a hollow near home. When they arrived, Elmer gave the secret knock and they entered. When Phil walked through the door he noticed pistols lying on the table. The group had been robbed in the past and each forced to strip down to nothing. The robbers took everything. The old men decided not to allow it again. Phil watched the game instead of participating.

On one trip to Ohio when I was about five, Dad suggested that Grandpa (Pap) should shoot his .44 caliber pistol he had brought for him to see. My dad had worked for the Dallas Police Department for five years and had received his marksman badges each year. Pap always sandbagged and claimed it had been a long time since he had shot or he was having a hard time seeing, but also always suggested it should be a contest. They drew targets and mounted them in various places. Grandma says that Dad came home disgusted like a hound dog. Pap outshot him.

Another time Pap asked Dad to squirrel hunt with him. Dad has never been a hunter, because he does not like to kill animals. Again, Pap sandbagged him into believing that he really needed his help. Pap came back with several squirrels, but Dad said he had only killed a couple of saplings. That was the last time Dad shot with Pap. Pap was a good shot. While in the European campaign of World War II he remembers he and other mountain boys living on rabbits. He said he survived a lot easier than

some, because he was used to killing small game. Pap's brother-in-law Tom could turn his gun upside down and kill a squirrel. Pap always bragged about Tom's ability with a gun.

Guns and dogs should also be part of a discussion on the mountain hero and his tools. Known for their accuracy at great distances, the mountain hero fought in many wars and was used as a marksman or sniper. Grandpa's mother, Ida (pronounced Idee), never let him have a gun, because his brother Clifton had accidentally killed himself while rabbit hunting from a boat. Clifton had hunted for most of the day. When he was almost home, something happened that caused the gun to discharge in the boat. He was only fifteen years old. After that, Ida was paranoid and would not allow the boys to carry guns. One day, Grandpa's dog had a squirrel treed. He went back to the house and told his mother that he had to shoot that squirrel or his dog would be ruined. She gave him one shell only and told him if he could not kill the squirrel with one shot, it was too bad. He was successful.

In the 1980s, my grandparents bought a place in Kentucky that my grandma still owns. After my grandma retired from teaching school and my grandpa retired from General Motors, they sold the Felicity, Ohio farm and moved into a smaller home in the same area. But, they longed to return to Kentucky. They found the Kentucky farm and worked for years building fence, pastures, outbuildings and a house. When it was ready, they sold the house in Felicity to my aunt Avis who still lives there today.

In the 2000s, Grandma fought in the battle of the Route 66 Project that was being waged on her property led by United States Representative Hal Rogers. He wanted to connect the famous Route 66 through his territory in London, Kentucky, but it was going to cut Grandma's land in half and run through creek bottoms full of endangered creatures. Grandma, a member of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth and Kentucky Heartwood, rallied neighbors and fellow Kentuckians to speak out against the route.

Grandma continues to attend the meetings and fight for land rights and the environment in her native Kentucky even though she spends most of her time in Georgetown, Ohio since Pap's death.

Not far from the hollow where my mother was born, her patriarchal grandparents were forced from their mountain home, because the valley used to access the land was flooded. The easiest way to visit the old home place at Tan Trough in Perry County, Kentucky is by boat on Buckhorn Lake. The land has been in the family since the Revolutionary War when an ancestor was given 1000 acres for fighting. Over the years it has been divided among the family and my great-grandparents only owned ninety acres. They were not paid when the valley was flooded. The land was not being purchased for the lake, but those living on the hills that relied on the road to haul supplies in and out were landlocked. With no money to buy another place to live, they rented until a permanent home could be found. Because Pap helped his parents and was the one who actually moved them, they deeded the land to him.

Sometime in the 1970s, Pap was walking on the Tan Trough property, and found his worm² from his old still. Worms were made by wrapping copper tubing around a small birch tree to make a coil. It would be left there a little to insure it took the form; then the moonshiner would cut the tree down to remove the worm. The worm now resides with Mom along with a recipe for moonshine that was handed down for several generations. It is not only the moonshine that was created by the stills. It was a sense of distrust between the mountain man and the government.

Pap ran into some trouble back in the early 1990s, because some of his kinfolk had planted marijuana patches on Tan Trough, of which Pap had ownership. When the government came to Pap, he helped them find the culprit. A family feud erupted over the situation, so guns were always carried ... and still are. Grandma wears a .45 caliber

² A worm is a spiral pipe that condenses alcohol

pistol holstered around her waist when she goes for a walk. She claims you never know what kind of varmint one might encounter – either four legged or two legged.

Pap had more trouble when he shot a neighbor's dog. Living in the national forest, my grandparents have a variety of wildlife on the property. Pap had started feeding deer that would come close to the house to eat the apples from their trees. He made a pet out of one of them. Cobb, the neighbor, had a dog that would walk about two miles to chase Pap's cows and especially his deer. Pap talked to Cobb about it and warned him that if he did not keep his dog at home, Pap would kill it so it would not hurt his livestock or his deer. One day Pap saw the dog chasing the deer in the pasture, so he killed it. He notified Cobb who was furious. On several occasions Cobb drove by Pap's house at night and shot at it. Thankfully the house is a quarter of a mile from the road. Cobb was a mean man. He had served seven years in prison for killing his brother-in-law for no apparent reason. One day he called him in from his tobacco patch and shot him. We are unsure of the cause.

Pap's family spends a weekend in July at Buckhorn State Park with planned family activities ending in dinner Saturday afternoon. They chose Buckhorn because it is closest to the family home place at Tan Trough that can only be reached by four wheel drive or by boat on Buckhorn Lake.

I have attended this reunion a few times. Buckhorn is a beautiful lake and isolated from everything. After the last reunion I attended, my grandma, aunt, and I drove around through the area in which my grandpa was raised. The one lane roads running through the mountains are dangerous. No barriers exist between the road and sure death at the bottom of a cliff. Climbing, twisting and turning, on one of these roads we encountered a logging truck stopped – stuck – in the middle of this one lane road. A bulldozer had been summoned (from where I do not know) and was trying to free the truck from the mountainous curve. They were able to move the behemoth enough so we

could pass. Grandma was concerned for our safety because we were in my truck with Texas license plates. This was 2006.

In August 2009, an incident, I refer to as the “The Great Tan Trough Timber Scandal of 2009,” occurred in the family. Ten or more years ago, Pap deeded the Tan Trough land to his youngest daughter Avis. Rumor has it that Grandma encouraged him to do this, so the sons-in-law would not be able to “get their hands on it.” Avis is the only of the four sisters who is not married. In August, Aunt Cynthia and Uncle Don were watching Avis’s house while she vacationed. Uncle Don retrieved the mail from the box and noticed an envelope from a timber company. Curious, he held the letter in front of his headlights. Cynthia saw him from the house and yelled for him to go inside. They held the envelope to the kitchen light, so the neighbors would not see them. The envelope contained a check for \$20,000 for timber cut from the Tan Trough property. As I previously mentioned, Grandma is an environmental activist and although she is not against cutting trees it is unlikely that she would condone such an event. Long story short, Grandma did condone it and apparently was in cahoots with Avis. Cynthia called Avis immediately to confess that she had seen the check and to confront her sister immediately. Avis divided the money among the four of them, so Mom received a check for \$5,000 shortly after. I tell this story for two purposes. The first is because coal and timber companies are scattered throughout the Appalachians, so this caused quite an event in the family due to strip mining taking place very close to the property. The second is to convey the familial environment from which my desire to research the topic of Appalachian food has risen. This particular piece of land continues to produce stories, and hopefully the stories will continue to be about my family for many years.

Grandma’s grandfather was able to keep his land unlike Grandpa’s folks. Some families were able to keep the mining companies at bay. My great-great-grandfather Dave W. Roberts hired two gunmen to keep the coal men off of his property. Had he

given in to the persuasion of the coal companies, the family history would have been much different.

A few years ago at Thanksgiving, my husband, dad, mother, and I traveled to Kentucky for Thanksgiving with my aunts, uncles and Grandma. It was the first Thanksgiving after the loss of Pap. For some inexplicable reason, Aunt Brenda, Grandma, and Mom entered into a dressing (stuffing) contest. They have all used the same dressing recipe for years, no doubt handed down by my great-grandma and so forth. However, this year, Grandma had a recipe for sausage dressing, Aunt Brenda had a recipe for a white bread dressing, and Mom was sticking to the old family recipe. With only nine people for Thanksgiving dinner, we had three pans of dressing! In a contest like this, there is no real winner. No one should say that one dressing is better than the other. They are all equally delicious in their own way. Unfortunately, Uncle Don (whose wife was not involved in the contest) firmly declared upon tasting all three, that whoever made the third pan was the winner hands down. His wife, my namesake Aunt Cynthia, quickly scolded him and everyone else drew a breath waiting for the tirade. My mother's dressing was by far the winner as Uncle Don stated. The old family recipe was saved, but not without hurt feelings of my grandma and aunt.

The women in my family take their cooking quite seriously. They are the inspiration for this paper. While sitting at the breakfast table, the remaining meals of the day are discussed. While sitting at the supper table, the next day's meals are discussed. Our lives do not revolve around food, but communication in the family seems to. Every visit results in at least one hosted feast at someone's house. Veering from the plan is not allowed and results in ridicule by Grandma or Aunt Brenda. Each pretends that she is not the best cook and lauds the other's carefully prepared dishes, but that is a charade. Each thinks hers is the best. Each thinks she is the best cook in the family. Without Pap

now, the family consists of women and one great-grandson. The only other men are married in. Some have said there is a special place in heaven for the men in our family.

All of the girls have been raised to show hospitality with their food. While working for the City of Midlothian, Texas, Mom was often called by strangers and asked if she would prepare food for a family who had lost a loved one. It has been well-known in town that my mother can feed the multitudes, and that her food is excellent. I found it strange that people would be that bold, but Mom did it. She would take the standard ham, a side dish, and a dessert to strangers while they mourned.

In July 2008 Mom, Grandma, and I went to Buckhorn Lake for the night. My favorite thing to do when I visit Kentucky is to rent a pontoon boat on the lake and travel to Tan Trough to look up the mountain at Pap's home place. Mom rented a cabin for the night, but the marina did not have any pontoons available that day, so I reserved one for the following morning at 8:00 AM. We awoke at 6:00, ate breakfast in the lodge and then arrived at the marina packing our belongings for the trip on the lake. I told a worker that I had reserved a boat, and he said, "We ain't got no gas." He had to repeat himself, because I knew I had not heard him correctly. Unfortunately, I had. Mom and Grandma explained to this Texan, who is accustomed to reasonably decent customer service, that hillbillies do not get in a hurry nor are they concerned about customer satisfaction. I wanted the man to trot his ass down the hill and get some gas! Everyone seemed to find it amusing, but I did not. As mentioned earlier, one of my biggest problems while researching is my Texan-ness.

I was already aggravated after a very long visit from our cousins Dustin and Amy (names are changed in hopes not to offend). Amy and Mom are first cousins. Dustin, Amy's husband, is very talented. He makes grapevine trees, totem poles (his latest creation), corn sleds, wheel barrows, hog troughs, walking sticks, and other Appalachian tools and decorative items from trees on his property or houses that people ask him to

tear down. Mom wanted to see what he had available, so before going to Buckhorn, they called him. When they learned we would be so close, they decided to make a day of it with us – they wanted to have a fish fry. Dustin keeps his freezer full of fish, squirrel (he currently had 44), and rabbit. When they arrived they brought fish, chicken, hush puppies, potatoes, shucky beans³, cornbread, and two desserts. We could not believe all of the food. The opportunity to see family is important to them, and it was celebrated with a big meal. Not only did they bring food, they brought a car load of people – pregnant daughter Wilma and her two-year-old son, a neighbor girl, and finally Amy's mother Natalie arrived. This was a big event for them. Of course, they were told we would have a pontoon boat, so they were disappointed when it did not come to fruition. We talked of family, food, and politics. Wilma told us about her divorce from her husband and explained that her boyfriend is the father of her two children. Wilma has a high school education, but does not work. Her boyfriend does not want her to work. He is a coal miner. Amy works in the Chavies Elementary School cafeteria. She is a good cook, and the head of the cafeteria. Their other daughter Justine has graduated from high school and would like to attend a culinary school in Lexington. Amy took her there, but learned that it would cost \$35,000 for her to attend. Justine now works.

The next morning, instead of the boat ride, we went to Dustin's to look at his wares. Dustin is also building a house on their property. The first thing I noticed is that there is no flat piece of land. The driveway is at a sixty degree incline to a single wide trailer precariously perched on the side of a mountain. Something else that bothered me was that Dustin, who is on disability from a coal mine injury, is building his own house and makes all of these heavy Appalachian decoratives and tools. He sustained his injury at his job installing braces in a mine. He did not mine coal, he traveled to different mines and put these braces in place to keep the mines from collapsing – an obviously

³ Shucky beans are dried and stored in a crock. When cooked, water is added with fat back and

dangerous job. I asked Grandma what she thought about Dustin being on disability, but making extra money building these cumbersome, heavy pieces and tearing down houses for the wood. Because he is family, she does not mind. If it were a stranger in the same situation, she would claim that our hard earned money was going to support him. This is an example of the government perpetuating the welfare system in Appalachia. Many of these people on welfare can work, but it is much easier to receive a monthly check. Finding a job would force them to drive a long distance to earn as much as the government gives them.

I spoke with several younger people in London, Kentucky in July 2008. When they learned I was from Texas, each, without fail, commented that it would be nice to be from Texas. I finally asked one young man if it was Texas or just anywhere else in general. He replied, "Anywhere, but here." Except for Wilma, all of the younger people I visited with had good, steady jobs and worked hard.

When I commented to Grandma about Dustin taking disability, she told me that her parents never allowed their children to accept welfare or free lunches. In fact, none of the eleven children were ever on welfare. They were expected to work hard and use what was available. They carried lard buckets as lunch pails to school every day.

Grandma was an elementary school teacher for many years. She remembers a Hatfield family she taught was very poor. The kids would bring a cold biscuit for lunch every day. She knew they could easily qualify for free lunches but never received them. She told the principal she knew they should receive a free lunch, but he explained that Mr. Hatfield refused to apply for it. He did not want to take "charity" from anyone. Grandma says that every one of those children grew up to be "good livers" and hard workers.

onions for seasoning. Angie also adds a handful of pinto beans to add quantity and flavor.

Grandma says that when she attended school in Hyden, Kentucky, students could bring food items to school to receive credit for lunches. Her oldest sister Ruth lived in a dormitory at school. She was the favored child, because she was the first and very beautiful. Ruth often stayed with her grandparents and was not taught to cook and do the chores like Grandma and the others. When she lived in the dormitory, their father forced Grandma to tote food, like a jug of molasses or sack of potatoes, to the school to pay for Ruth's board. One time, Grandma refused to carry the food, because she was terribly jealous of Ruth. Her father took an ox whip to her for refusing. She did not think it was fair for Ruth to stay on campus when Grandma had to walk back and forth.

When my mother was a child, she refused to eat Ruth's cooking. Ruth was not a good housekeeper, because of her pampered upbringing. Mom says that her house was always a mess, so she knew her food must be unclean as well. Grandma had always warned the girls of contracting tuberculosis, so Mom was afraid she would die from eating Ruth's cooking. Each time they visited Ruth, Grandma threatened to beat Mom, because it is rude not to eat. Mom taught me the same thing. I am not afraid of tuberculosis, like her, but I will not eat food at a pot luck prepared by people I do not know or by people who do not seem to be clean.

Mom's Uncle David (Grandma's brother) says that he and his dad were hunting one day and a family invited them to eat breakfast at their house. David saw the woman's skillet and did not think it had ever been cleaned. He saw black flecks floating in the gravy and did not want to eat. His dad made him eat out of respect for the families' generosity. That explains from where Grandma's ideas are derived. Grandma recalls that the family rarely had a meal alone in the evening. She says her father invited anyone passing, whether they lived in the hollow or not, to stop and eat supper with them – strangers, friends, or family. Her father would ask anyone to eat and her mother was always prepared. Grandma's grandmother invited the entire family to lunch after church

every Sunday. This may have included anywhere from fifteen to twenty people. She would prepare everything herself, so no one had to bring a dish.

My grandmother remembers attending school with homemade bread for her sandwiches and longing for plain store-bought bread that she saw in the lunches of others. The bread certainly did not taste as good as homemade, but the ease and ability of purchasing bread was a trend. However, it was difficult to follow the food trend with a big family. A family consisting of twelve children could rarely afford to purchase something like store bought bread for lunch sandwiches. Her family did not live in town, so she mostly took a biscuit with ham for lunch. She said she envied the kids with sliced bread sandwiches, and often town kids would make fun of those who lived in the hills, because of their food.

On several occasions, my mother has shared her experiences growing up on a farm. She was farmed out while in middle and high school, because she was a great tobacco picker. After the work was complete on their own farm, she would be sent to the neighbors because they always requested her. She has also talked about her role in the hog killing process which still takes place in the Appalachians, but the last generation in my family to participate in the slaughtering process is definitely my mother's. She fondly remembers the time as a young girl 1950s – 1960s, but also remembers the disgusting smell associated with it. She still has the family kettle currently sitting on her patio, and it is still in perfect condition. She can remember washing clothes and scalding the hog using the kettle well into the 1960s. She recalls that it was quite the family affair when a hog was butchered and that removing the hair was a tedious, time-consuming affair. All four of the children (all girls) had tasks, which brought the family together performing the hard work which contributed to the overall enjoyment of the end result. Mom says that nothing tasted better than fresh fried pork. She also likes to tell the story of grandma using the hog's bladder for ear infections. They would hang the bladder in a tree and if

anyone had an ear ache, they would pour the contents of the bladder in the ailing ear. She swears that it works. I argue that my ear would feel better instantly at the thought of hog urine being poured in it!

My mother and I have a lot in common, but we frequently differ on the food. She purchases a jar of pickled bologna that looks like a large intestine every time she visits Kentucky. To me, it is obscene in appearance, and I will not even taste it. She was raised eating pickled bologna, but my bologna came pre-sliced from the butcher or in a sealed package. She also purchases a box of fresh Moon Pies from the bakery in London, Kentucky each time she visits. In 2008 she worked on a presentation she was giving to groups of United Methodist Women about home remedies handed down for several generations. Grandma gave her a lesson from the seat of her new John Deere mule gallivanting through the forest pointing out various plants and their uses. Mom returned from that short outing with a huge list of plants readily available and easy to access on the farm itself. This is a skill that I will probably never possess, because we do not have the same plants in Texas.

On the trip with my aunt and Grandma in 2006, I stopped in Oneida (pronounced Oneedy), Kentucky at a small gas station for a drink and found a twenty-five gallon bucket of lard on a shelf in the storage room when I used their facilities. While in Ripley, Ohio on the same trip, I found an empty twenty-five gallon lard bucket in an antique store. I found it interesting that in one place it was still being used, but in another place the bucket was considered an antique. I have thought about this on several occasions when thinking about the people in eastern Kentucky. Just recently I watched a film set in Wyoming about a New York City couple who had witnessed a murder and were in protective custody. The Wyoming couple who protected them were portrayed as meat eating, gun toting, cholesterol ridden fools, while the New York City couple were vegetarians and far more civilized. I began to think about this same story that has been

produced over and over. When the New York City dweller ventures to the South, the food is one of the first elements of criticism. Likewise, when the Southern rube ventures to the big city, it is the lack of hospitality. There is obviously a dual stereotype taking place, and it will continue. It's part of an ancient story – anytime people meet from different parts of the world the differences are the first thing noticed. It takes a while to recognize similarities.

My goal with this dissertation was to demonstrate the motif of food in Appalachian literature. It is an all-encompassing aspect of many regional texts both fictional and non-fictional. I hope that I have made my family proud with the work. However, I also think that I have caused a source of discontent for this trial of many years did not come without disagreement between my grandmother and me. When grandma first had me read Silas House's *Clay's Quilt* she asked my opinion. I told her I enjoyed it, and that I felt it was extremely true to life. She did not feel the same. I felt it conveyed more modern struggles of the Appalachian hero who, like the realist hero is wrought with flaws. She felt it perpetuated the ignorant hillbilly. Grandma and I tease each other. She knows I do not enjoy it when she makes fun of Texas and Texans, nor does she appreciate it when I tell her that if I lived in Kentucky I would have had to marry someone whose entire family could not make one whole set of teeth. Just recently the Pepsi-Cola Company has produced Pepsi throwback, returning to using real sugar in its products. To market the product, they also have returned to former packaging. Also a Pesi-Cola product, Mountain Dew is also being produced as a throwback. The packaging has a Dog Patch looking hillbilly on the label. Instead of being insulted, I found the stereotype on the label to be more iconic and emblematic of simpler times. I then wondered if my grandma would be offended. When she read my first draft in 2008, she made changes, suggestions, and told stories. When she reached the chapter about Pettit and Stone teaching the women in the hills to make biscuits and educating them on keeping a house,

we reached a breaking point. She told me, and I quote ... "This is shit." I have weighed this over and over and maintain, only after a few weeks of telling my mother I was going to require therapy, that she meant the reason for Pettit and Stone entering the mountains was "shit." Not my actual research and work.

I hope that I did not perpetuate the stereotype, but simply demonstrated the reason for it with respect because there is an endearing quality in the Appalachian way of life. I am truly proud of my heritage and hope that I have, at least, accomplished giving my mother that validation ... and grandma too.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Food demands attention. Food is part of a cultural language that is distinct, but also shares a commonality across all cultures. People communicate using food. Historically, food of the lower classes has not been converted into the basic rhetoric needed to sustain itself throughout time. However, twentieth century Appalachian authors have created a written history of food for its classes. In his essay “Appalachian Foodways,” Fred Sauceman states, “True Appalachian cooking remains, today, unadorned and loyal to its origins in the earth. It is a cooking style that grew out of hard times” (19). Mountain people used what was available to them.

Jim Wayne Miller realized when reading his own autobiographical novel *Newfound* that the topic of food – “the gathering, preparation, preservation, and consumption” and the “attitudes toward food” were abundant. His intent was not to write a book about food, but upon reflection he realized he had written an “accurate account of foodways among people of modest background in the southern Appalachians in the 1930s and 1940s” (Miller 59). It seems that many Appalachian writers have done the same, whether intentional or not. The struggle and success to grow and hunt one’s own food is a common factor in many twentieth century texts. Characters like Gertie, Julie, Ruby, and Vine are the epitome of the Appalachian heroine while Athey Keith, David, and Chris Offutt’s men epitomize the hero. These characters contain distinctly Appalachian features, but cross cultural and literary boundaries to be considered great American heroes as well. Certainly, these characters are as memorable as Scout, Atticus Finch, or any created by the likes of Faulkner or Steinbeck. To readers of Appalachian literature

they are just as significant and just as complicated. From her 2002 novel *Milk Glass Moon*, perhaps Adriana Trigiani's character Etta represents the feeling Appalachian literature conveys,

Ma, I'm a mountain girl ... I like soup beans and corn bread and divinity candy. I like mountain boys who talk like me. I like my girlfriends who live in the hollers and have babies when they're young enough to chase them around. I love the country, the back roads ... and the fact that you don't need much money to survive in Big Stone Gap. I'm one of them, and I will be until the day I die. And whether I live there after college or not, I'm gonna carry all that inside me all my life. That's who I am. (223)

Etta is well traveled, her mother's family all live in Italy. She realizes she likes living in a holler and has no desire to live elsewhere. Etta is represented in literature. There are lots of Ettas living in small hollers like the Bowling family who never want to leave ... even today.

Food is an important element of literature. It can help to establish setting, conflicts, a hero and heroine, relationships with nature and other humans, and provide comfort to readers as well as characters in fictional texts. From a reader-response perspective, when the reader is the third side of the triangle, food invokes a sense of home, memories, and family and allows a reader to relate to a text.

Like the names of Hawthorne and Thoreau represent New England; and Twain and Faulkner represent the South; perhaps authors like Morgan, House, Arnow, and Frazier will represent the mountains of Appalachia putting it on the literary map to become canonical and studied outside of its own region with the appeal of not only the pastoral setting, but the quality of hero and the memories provided by the details in the preservation and preparation of the food.

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