Granny Witches, Mountain Shamans, Haunts, Witches, and Jesus:

The Complex Spiritual Consciousness of Appalachia

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Introduction

Appalachia is a liminal place. A liminal place is a threshold, a place that is neither here nor there, but somewhere in-between. Appalachia is and has always been a portal between the past and present. The Appalachian Mountains are some of oldest in the world, estimated to be about 480 million years old and they long served as a gateway between East and West. In addition, Appalachia boasts at least three of the oldest rivers in the world, the Susquehanna, the French Broad, and the New River.

Throughout history, Appalachia has embraced the liminal as a land of both rich and poor, a land both simultaneously loved and reviled. Appalachia became a melting pot of different cultures, from Native Americans to the Scots Irish to the African Americans sometimes brought to the region in chains, and other European immigrants, such as the Germans. The region has long been considered to be both the heart of America and a place apart. Early on, Appalachia was called "a strange land and a peculiar people (Williams 8-9).

In many magical traditions, liminal spaces are a boundary between our world and the next. These places are known as "the in-between" and considered areas of magic where the veil between the magical and mundane is the thinnest (Ballard 27). Thus, it is no surprise that within Appalachia there exists a complex spiritual consciousness. Spirituality is complex in these mountains because the people are deeply tied to traditional Christian religion and, at the same time, are bound by a spirituality that transcends traditional religious institutions—closely tied to the elemental and the supernatural, involving a deep connection to the natural environment. Appalachia is one of very few areas in the world where Christianity and magical beliefs are often bedfellows rather than bitter enemies.

To understand the complex spiritual consciousness of Appalachia, it is necessary to spend time gaining a deeper understanding of the predominant groups of people and cultures that have

amalgamated in the Appalachian region through the concept of cultural syncretism, the idea that all cultural groups, not just the dominant ones, share in the process of cultural change. As powerful as colonizing groups may be, they are usually strangers in a strange land and must rely on the ecological knowledge of the native people for survival (Davis 62). The evolution of the people of Appalachia through this coalescence is key to the development of unique spiritual practices throughout history. In Appalachia, spirituality became central to the survival of the people through centuries of colonialism and marginalization, so it is also important to grasp how deep an effect history has had on the region and its people.

The unique spirituality that developed in Appalachia, which combined traditional Christian concepts with folk magic, and in turn mixed spells, superstitions, omens, and conjure with a deep reverence for the natural world, providing a sense of empowerment that enabled survival for people living in a world where they were constantly stripped of their personal power. Far from being primitive and backwards, this synthesis of Christianity and magic provides a way to understand life, to provide meaning, and to change direction. It is a holistic worldview that breaks down traditionally imagined barriers between the material and spiritual worlds, providing a balance and harmony that is traditionally lacking in modern western culture and religion.

Chapter One

Colonialization, Marginalization, and Survival: An Historic Perspective

The Cherokee and Cultural Change

Before Europeans came to Appalachia, the area had a long history of human habitation. In the Southern Appalachians, there were at least three periods of major cultural change initiated by colonization prior to 1820. These periods of cultural change would play a pivotal role in the evolution of both European and Native American peoples and have a long-lasting effect on the unique spiritual consciousness that developed in the region.

The Spanish started the process of cultural change in the sixteenth century when they came to the region and began trade in fur and other goods and introduced new crops. They also shared deadly diseases that destroyed much of the native Mississippian population. These circumstances resulted in social chaos that forced native peoples to migrate both to and from the Appalachian area. This weakening of cultural traditions and practices precipitated in the disappearance of pre-Columbian Mississippian life from the region. Remnant populations came together to form historically known native groups such as the Creeks, Seminoles, and the Cherokees (Davis 57).

A second period of social change came when the European and French initiated trade with the Cherokees in the first part of the eighteenth century. The Cherokees welcomed this trade at first, but as game became scarce, the Cherokee people became more dependent on the English goods for survival. The Cherokees would often pay their debts to the English with large tracts of land, which gave the English more control in the region and further decreased the Cherokee access to game. Fur traders became some of the first Europeans to live amongst the Cherokee people and their presence had a huge impact on the culture. Many fur traders married Cherokee women and introduced cattle and hogs to the countryside. The French also encouraged the Cherokee to fight against the British in

1760's. In retaliation, the English destroyed many Cherokee villages and grain stores. The losses and exposure to European ways and traditions continued to make it difficult for the Cherokee to maintain their traditional cultural practices (Davis 58).

The third and final major cultural change for the Native Americans came during widespread white settlement. Although Europeans cleared and settled the land as early as 1745 in what is now Southwest Virginia, the Cherokee control of the mountains made it hard for settlers to push deeper into the region until after the Revolutionary War. The Scots Irish, German, and English settlers that were the first to push into southern Appalachia brought a variety of English plants, grasses, and livestock with them that flourished in the region and took over many of the indigenous species. The timber they cut for their dwellings, fences, and pastures left openings in the mountain forest and by 1820, only the most remote parts of the mountains remained unsettled (Davis 58).

Despite the devastating impact that these periods of cultural change had on Native American culture, the Cherokees also had a significant impact on Appalachian culture as they continued to occupy the region through frontier times. The Cherokee people lived under a matrilineal clan system where gender divisions were clear and "separate categories . . . opposed and balanced one another." Women cared for the community through planting and gathering and men led war parties and traveled long distances to hunt. Men were raised in the households of their mother's families, and after marriage went to live in the households of their wives. The descent of power, authority, and personal items was thus matrilineal. Men dominated the councils that deliberated matters of war and diplomacy, but women had a voice and frequently institutionalized power as well. Among the Cherokee, there was a revered category of "beloved women," postmenopausal women who were held a high level of prestige and played a central role in ceremonies of communal life and sanctioned male authority within the clans in matters of power and leadership (Williams 27)

Examining cultural change within the Cherokee culture suggests the cultural exchange that changed their customs and way of life most profoundly affected Cherokee men. The fur and pelt trade made Cherokee men increasingly dependent on European weapons and changed the role of hunting in their society from food producing to income producing. Apart from the introduction of horses, almost all cultural change that occurred as the result of contact with European settlers threatened the status of the males in the Cherokee culture and other groups indirectly.

Although Cherokee women benefited from the acquisition of European food sources such as fruit trees and livestock and the availability of manufactured cooking utensils and clothing, they were largely unaffected by the capitalist system of the fur and pelt trade. Due to the difference in the cultural effect on men and women, women dominated as the preservers of tradition amongst the Cherokee. While some Cherokee women became the wives of fur traders, most were protected by outside pressures particularly since Europeans saw women as powerless and inconsequential. A consequence of the power of Cherokee women is that women became key to the survival of the Cherokee culture as certain aspects Native culture merged with the culture of the white settlers (Williams 29-30). When old world crops proved unfruitful in the mountain soil, white settlers began cultivating the Cherokee varieties. Corn, pumpkins, squash, gourds, beans, and melons became popular crops, and the white settlers also adopted the Cherokee preservation practices, as well as Cherokee use of medicinal herbs and home remedies (Davis 58-59).

Cherokee Religion and Spirituality

Although there was a wide range of traditions among Native Americans that lived in North America and in the Appalachian, some similarities do exist among Native American religions. The Cherokees are the Native American culture in Appalachia that we know the most about, partly because in the 1880's, Cherokee elders in North Carolina allowed a white man named James Mooney to observe and record information about their culture. Mooney recorded the Cherokee

myths in English and these myths help explain the world of the Cherokee, and in turn, aspects of other Native American religions.

Cherokee myths show that the world of the Native Americans was primarily about balance. Everything in the Cherokee environment is intertwined with spirituality. From corn to bison to wind and fire to mountains and rivers—everything material had an intelligent spirit and played a central role in Cherokee myth and life. Cherokees, like other native peoples, did not seek to rule over nature but to maintain their proper place within it. It was the responsibility of people to keep this balance within themselves and between the animals, the plants, and other people. A healer might listen to the spirit of a plant to find what ailment it could help with, and a hunter might pray to the spirits of the animals for guidance and forgiveness. These practices were an important responsibility of people as the keepers of spiritual-material balance, and balance was vital to survival. The Cherokee believed that if the balance of nature was upset, disaster would ensue. They knew that a loss of balance could cause sickness, bad weather, failed crops, poor hunting, and numerous other problems (Raley).

The Cherokee creation story of Selu provides a good illustration of the importance of balance, harmony, and respect in the spirituality of the Cherokee. The legend tells that Kanati, the First Man, was lonely and bored. He was a hunter and he killed too many of the animals, more than he needed, or could ever use. All he thought about was hunting and sleeping. The animals got sick and tired of his ways, so they met in a council to ask for the Creator's help. They let the Creator know that Kanati was killing too many of them and soon there would be none of them left. The Creator took the animals council and sought out Kanati, who was sleeping in the sun. The Creator caused a corn plant to grow beside Kanati, close to his heart. This corn stalk grew tall and straight and from the top of the stalk rose a beautiful, brown, black-haired woman, First Woman Selu. When Kanati woke up, he remembered the original courtesy that the Creator had given him and respectfully asked Selu to come down, holding up his hand to her. She smiled at him, signaled to

him to wait, and reached behind her for an ear of corn for Selu knew you must always take your heritage with you wherever you go. After she did this, she took Kanati's hand, and they went home together. Selu took the corn and went into the kitchen. The kettle was boiling soon and Kanati smelled the sweet aroma of the heart of the corn and felt harmony with all that lives (Awiakta 24-25).

The story of Selu demonstrates this balanced world view of the Cherokee where man and woman represent the cardinal balances of nature. The balance of these forces is required continuance amid change, the balance of food, vegetables and meat, and the balance of relationships, taking and giving back with respect. The story starts with showing the danger of imbalance as represented by the beginning of the story when Kanati was alone and hunting more animals they he could ever consume or need. The creation of Selu shows that healing is possible even in times of imbalance and disrespect. Even a break in the cardinal balance can be restored to wholeness and harmony through strength, respect, and balance (Awiakta 26).

The Scots Irish Influence

The long and storied history of the Scots Irish begins in the borderlands between Scotland and England with a people known as the Border Reivers or Steel Bonnets. The region along the Anglo-Scottish border had always been unique and steeped in conflict. The border was initially established by the Romans in the construction of Hadrian's wall. The Roman Britons south of the wall were a breed of warriors who secured the outer limit of the Roman Empire against the most dangerous and difficult enemies, while independent Britons north of the wall were opposed to Imperial power and enjoyed their independence. After Roman withdrawal in the 5th century, these two factions blended and merged into a unique culture with a fiercely independent identity, the Border Reivers (Fraser 13-20).

Border Reivers, as the name suggests, lived by raiding, and did not trust either state or religion. They deferred only to their clan chieftains for wisdom. The world of the Border Reivers was a world of midnight raids, taking hostages, and burning houses and haystacks. The people needed always to be in defense of their lives and their property because if they were not, they would either be penniless or dead.

The violence of society in the borders set it apart from the rest of Scotland and England but gave Border Reivers on both sides of the dividing line between the two countries strong links. English and Scottish Border Reivers had everything in common except nationality. They shared prejudices, cultural codes, behaviors, a system of wardens, and social organization. There was a strong sense of unity among the Border Reivers. On the flip side, everything, and everyone outside of the borderlands, was to be distrusted and disliked. This was understandable considering generally what came from outside the borderlands was unpleasant—from a sudden onset of armed power to try to beat the Border Reivers into obedience, to a judicial raid or an invading army to settle a quarrel (Keeling 7-9).

The Border Reivers clashed with the English outside the borders for hundreds of years. The forces that led to the great migration of the Scots Irish to Appalachia can be traced back to this continuous conflict between the Scots Irish and English. When James VI of Scotland became James I, the first king of England, Scotland and Ireland, the Plantation Era began where Irish owned land was confiscated and the Irish people subdued by replacing the native people of Ulster, Ireland, with settlers of lowland Scots and English ancestry. In addition, it was decided that the lawless north border of England needed to be cleared and Border Reivers needed to go. Many of them were killed outright but those that weren't killed were relocated to Ulster (Ballard 22-23).

The Plantation Era of the 17th century was followed by an economic downturn in the linen industry, bad harvests, high rents, and religious persecution which eventually led to emigration from

Northern Ireland to the mid-Atlantic region of North America. Later, the 1745 Battle of Culloden also devastated the Scottish people, particularly highlanders, who were also prompted to flee as refugees. Thus, there were as many as 155,000 to 205,000 people a year emigrating to the United States by 1775 (Horning 130). Another great migration of Scots Irish came after the 1845 Potato Famine.

The Scots Irish people came into North America through ports in Pennsylvania, New York, and Jamestown, gravitating towards the mountains. They took these routes for a couple of reasons. One, the lowlands, were the domain of the English, and the English were anxious to put the Scots Irish as a barrier between them and the Native Americans. Williams notes in *Appalachia: A History* that "the Irish influx would threaten peace with the Indians, but the newcomers' fighting abilities offered a remedy if war were to come" (43). For these historic reasons, the Scots Irish were the first Europeans to come to Appalachia to stay. They settled in the region and established large self-sustaining farms and clachans surviving on a farm/forest economy.

Religion of the Scots Irish

The Scots Irish are a Celtic people. The Celts originated during the Early Iron Age in western Europe around 600 BC and then spread throughout Europe and across the sea to England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. The Celts were prolific to the degree that the Romans considered them, and especially the Druids, to be a competing power. The Romans often felt disparagingly about the Celts due to this competition and initial disdain, as illustrated in the writing of Julius Ceasar, but by the 7th century AD, Roman and Christian monastic scribes recorded Celtic stories and legends, and the influence of Celtic mysticism can clearly be seen in the religious rites of Christian dogmas brought by the Romans.

According to the Romans, who recorded almost all the information available today on Celtic culture, the Celts were polytheistic. The Celts had many gods and goddesses, and each deity held

properties that led to understanding Celtic perspectives on all aspects of survival of the tribe, from war to famine to fertility. The Scottish Celts were known to the Romans as Picts, thought to be notably tough skinned and hard to conquer due to Scotland's mountains and harsh winters. The Romans eventually gave up on conquering the Scots and, built Hadrian's wall which ensured the survival of the old Celtic beliefs and Gaelic language north of the wall (Long 14-15).

As social change tied to the emergence of a politically active Catholic church and the emerging concept of the Nation State swept through Europe, the Border Reivers specifically suffered continuous conflict and wars as the nation states of England and Scotland struggled back and forth. The self-reliance that was necessary for survival in the Borderlands solidified the concept of personal independence for Border Reivers, that was closely linked to the Celtic concept of personal sovereignty rather than the concept of national sovereignty tied to the Christian church at this time. Therefore, the imposition of the Church's religion never really took hold in the borders. The Border Reivers' attitude to religion can be summed up best in the story of baptism in the region. It is said that the Border Reiver would baptize all but their child's right hand. The implication is that the child can easily spend eternity without the right hand, so he was still free to raid cattle in life. The story shows that when confronted with the Church's teaching, the Scots own cultural beliefs take precedence. A deep distrust of the Church's message and even more so the Church's involvement in politics led to the Border Reivers adhering more strongly to their old beliefs. The Borderers stuck to their own sense of spirituality, rites, and customs. Border Reiver ballads reveal a sympathy for the plight of spirits that the church would have characterized as demons and embodiments of evil (Douglas)

When the Border Reivers were forcibly removed from Scotland to Ulster, they were considered Protestant, if only nominally so. However, by the time that the Scots Irish migrated to Appalachia, most of them followed New Light Christianity, a form of Presbyterianism that included

free grace, field meetings, prayer societies, and hostility towards Anglican clergy. Even as backwoods Presbyterians, the direct link to their Border Reiver ancestors was still evident as they would frequently invoke military metaphors in their sermons with prayers for vengeance and their enemy's destruction ("A Smattering of Beliefs: The Religion of the Scots Irish").

Even after embracing Christianity, the Scots Irish held fast to their old beliefs and maintained a steadfast belief in the power of superstitions. They believed in fairies, ghosts, goblins, and the power of folk beliefs and these stories were passed down from generation to generation. The long-term popularity of James I *Daemonologie* attests to this curious mix of superstition and Christianity, as well as the Scottish propensity to deal harshly with older women who might be possessed or might prove otherwise suspicious. One such story specifically demonstrates how powerful these folk beliefs were even in Scots Irish communities that were considered predominantly Christian. Reverend William Richardson, who was the paster of Waxhaw Presbyterian Congregation, allegedly hanged himself on July 20, 1771, while in a "state of melancholy." He was found in prayer but with bridle reins around his neck. Reverend Richard's widow was the daughter of Reverend Alexander Craighead, another Presbyterian minister. After waiting a reasonable length of time, Mrs. Richardson married George Dunlap, an elder and prominent leader of the Waxhaw settlement. Unfortunately, there were some in the settlement that suspected that Mrs. Richardson was responsible for her husband's death. To prove the truth of the matter, an ancient Scottish custom of "trial by touch" was invoked. The belief was that only a murderer's hand would cause blood to flow from the victim's body. The community dug up the coffin of Reverend Richardson and forced his widow to place her hand on his forehead. If the corpse did not bleed, she would be declared innocent. Though Archibald Davie, Richardson's brother-in-law, pressed down on her hand until she wept, Mrs. Richardson was cleared in this trial by touch (Pettus).

African Americans, A Forgotten Influence

By the early 18th century, settlements had been permanently established in Appalachia by the Scots Irish, and as whites moved into the mountains so did free and enslaved Africans. During this early settlement period, whites, Indians, and African Americans lived in very close proximity to each other. Later generations would include many multiracial and multiethnic people, such as the Melungeons, a group believed to have a mix of European, Native American, and African ancestry (Webb). Enslavement was a part of life in Appalachia, but the topography of the region did not lend itself to the large plantation systems found in the lowlands of the Deep South. Labor requirements were different in the Appalachian region and summed up in 1830 by former governor of Virginia, John Floyd, as he shared the advantages of stock raising:

> Slaves are not necessary, very few however to the feeder and still fewer to him who sells from the pasture, and none to those who furnish store cattle, because they most generally raise them on the range, as it is called, that is by turning [them] in the forest or in the mountains during the winter months. (Williams 126)

In the southern Appalachians, non-slave holders were in the majority, and the area also contained many landless whites.

By the time of the Civil War, loyalties were divided in Appalachia, just like in the rest of the nation. Tennessee did one of the most exhaustive studies on this issue and concluded that whether a family-owned slaves or not was a key factor in determining their loyalties. Among Union soldiers from East Tennessee, only 11 percent owned slaves, and none owned as many as 20. In contrast, over a third of their Confederate counterparts were slaveowners and a sixth of the Confederates owned 20 or more slaves. Union soldiers overwhelmingly came from nonplantation counties. The best way to summarize the social loyalties of white Appalachians is that the greater the stake an

individual had in the existing order of things, the greater the chance that he would "go with his state" into Confederate service (Williams 165).

Prior to the Civil War, the mountain economy was traditionally based on subsistence farming and the harvesting of timber. Free and enslaved African Americans farmed and worked agriculture-related jobs. As industry increased after the war, the need for coal expanded. In Northern Appalachia, African Americans were largely excluded from working coal fields, but coal mines in southern Appalachia were more dependent on African American workers. Once the railroads entered Central Appalachia, the coal industry grew even larger, as train access allowed a greater exportation of resources. The coal fields of Central Appalachia thus became a major destination for African Americans leaving the Deep South during the post-Civil War Great Migration, as they encountered far better conditions than they did in the South, and they were not excluded as they would have been in the North. The coal mining industry actively recruited African Americans to work alongside white Appalachians and immigrants from Europe. The motives were somewhat nefarious as the coal companies wanted three relatively equal numbers of workers in the different groups to prevent unionization through language barriers and culture divisions. Regardless, African Americans found some measure of inclusion in Central Appalachia, where they were free of the exceedingly harsh conditions relative to what they were accustomed to, and often received equal pay for their work. Thus, the coal fields of southeast Kentucky and southern West Virginia saw many African Americans move in to work in the coal fields; and like the other groups, they brought their religious and spiritual traditions. A significant number lived in company towns built by the coal industry, which offered similar accommodations to all the workers and were not segregated until Jim Crow laws went into effect (Webb).

The use of automation in the mines increased dramatically after World War II. Coal production was increased, even as the need for manpower decreased. The replacement of deep

mining by strip mining from 1950 to 1965 reduced the need for laborers even further. Since company supervisors were reluctant to use African Americans as machine operators, they were especially affected by mass layoffs. During downturns in the "boom and bust" cycles, African American miners were often forced to leave the coal fields for more urban Appalachian communities and beyond (Webb). However, although Hispanics constitute the largest minority group in the United States in 2023, African Americans continued to be the largest minority group in Appalachia (Webb). The lives of African Americans and white Americans in Appalachia were closely intertwined socially and culturally, and their contribution to the unique spiritual consciousness in Appalachia is significant and influential.

Christianity and Hoodoo

African American spirituality is complex. Although many historical examinations suggest that Christian beliefs had a profound impact on the cultural attitudes of black populations, it can be argued that African spirituality was so embedded in the lives of Africans prior to the slave trade that it was this spiritual connectedness that they held onto. This interpretation makes sense because in Africa, as with the Native Americans, culture and religion were very difficult to separate. In addition, conversion to Christianity was minimal for the first century and a half of the slave experience in America and exposure to Christianity depended on the pious nature of the master and missionaries. In addition, many enslaved Africans rejected the tenants of Christianity in part because the reality of their conditions stood in contrast to the religious teachings of Christ (Newman).

Ritual worship was vital to the lives of enslaved Africans. From this desire to retain their spiritual identifications and their personal connection with a supreme being, the practice of conjuring and Hoodoo emerged. Hoodoo is the inherited and cultivated spiritual culture of African Americans. It is a practice rooted in struggle. It afforded African Americans a sense of empowerment in a powerless world, a means to protect themselves and to make sense of a world

that felt senseless, and a religious counter to the European Christianity of the slave owners (Newman).

As African American religion evolved, the Christian church and Hoodoo would begin to exist together in the religious world of African Americans. Boots, shoes, and two-faces were connected to ghosts, spirits, and tracks, which were ways the Divine manifested itself. In North American Hoodoo, which became Afro-Protestantism, spirits that were also called ghosts, haunts or haints could be controlled, and there were a world of things that allowed people to influence spirits. In the Afro-Christianity that emerged in Appalachia, many material things could contain, control, direct, and initiate the action of the supernatural. Afro-Christianity has kept its individuality in its rituals, prayers, dance, music, practioners, and places of worship. According to Orlando Patterson, "it has an alternative medicine, food, language, music, and relationship to the Hebrew Bible, the Gospels, and Saint Paul" (qtd. in Leone).

German Influence in Appalachia

German immigration to Pennsylvania began around 1680. By 1730, Germans had pushed west and south on the Great Wagon Road into western Virginia. Many German settlers were fleeing Germany due to religious and social oppression. The Germans who settled in the Appalachian region were mainly from the Rhine and Maine valleys where religious fervor was high and witch hunting was rampant. There was a procession of reformed Lutherans and Anabapists that included Mennonites and Brethren, and many of these sects were known for their perfectionist religious doctrines, distinctive worldview, and cosmology that supported a belief in the supernatural and included prophetic signs, omens, divination, and malevolent spirits. Germany is considered the most prodigious country in Europe when it comes to sources of occult traditions. These traditional beliefs were firmly grounded in the national psyche and retained by a great number of families who settled

on the Appalachian frontier. Appalachian folklore and spirituality are thus rife with influences that can be directly linked to Germanic origins (*Signs, Cures & Witchery)*.

Chapter II

Extraction, Exploitation, and their Effect on Regional Spirituality

The diversity of cultures and religions that have converged in Appalachia is key to understanding the unique spiritual practices in the region. However, to comprehend why the Appalachian experience demanded a spiritual consciousness that transcended traditional religious beliefs and relied on magical beliefs and the supernatural, it is necessary to determine how Appalachians approach magic. Most anthropologists would classify magic as an attempt to explain the unknown. A better approach to magic, especially when examining Appalachia would be the interpretation of anthropologist Michael Taussig who asserted that "magic takes language, symbols, intelligibility to their outermost limits, to explore life and thereby change its direction" (Cunningham 55). The region has been under attack in the name of progress from outside economic interests through "colonization" and resource extraction, while the people have been victims of abuse and exploitation in order to maintain control of the region's rich resources.

The forced Indian removals of 1838 would be the beginning of this long history of abuse and exploitation of the people of Appalachia to maintain control of regional resources. When immigrants began to flood into Appalachia, there was immediately conflict between them and the native tribes that lived on the land. The arrival of settlers from a predominantly Christian culture that embraced the idea of Manifest Destiny and man's domination over nature unequivocally clashed with the natives living on the land who valued balance and harmony with nature. The idea that man is the master of the land and responsible for subduing and bringing it to his will conjoined with the Cherokee and other native tribes becoming dependent on English goods and trading land to pay debts (Ballard 28). At times, the native tribes even freely gave away their land to settlers and signed treaty after treaty to try to make compromises for concessions and promises that were subsequently broken (Jake Richards, "Backwoods" 8).

The Cherokee especially tried to integrate with the white settlers via social transformation. William G. McLaughlin asserts in *After the Trail of Tears*:

> No other tribe has so rapidly acculturated, "Christianized," and civilized … within a single generation, [the Cherokee] created social, economic, and political orders so prosperous, stable, and progressive that it rivaled those of most the frontier regions on their borders (6).

Despite the Cherokee's willingness to attempt to be a part of the new society forming after white settlement, there were two key events that occurred that would end any chance of Native Americans being able to peacefully integrate into white society. The first was the inauguration of Andrew Jackson as President of the United States. Jackson was well known for his racist belief that Native Americans were an inferior race and, also, built his military reputation mainly on killing Indians. The second significant event was the discovery of Gold on Cherokee land in Georgia. This event would lead to the first American gold rush. With the influx of gold seekers into the state, Georgia would create ten new counties in Cherokee territory, declare the authority of the Cherokee government in that territory invalid, begin to punish anyone that supported the Cherokee position, and hold a lottery that would allow people to compete for a chance to acquire Cherokee land (Williams 78-80)

In 1835, Jackson went to a division of Cherokee leaders and offered $5,000,000 for their land along with federal assistance to remove the people. Lamentably, this small group of Cherokee leaders agreed and signed a treaty. The problem was that they weren't the majority, nor did they have the authority to make this decision on their own. John Ross, the principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, and most other Cherokee leaders argued the validity of this treaty. Unfortunately, the Senate ratified the treaty which gave the removal of the Cherokee the force of law and all Cherokees were ordered to be removed from their land within two years. When many Cherokees refused to comply,

Jackson's successor, Martin Van Buren ordered the Cherokee to be forcibly removed to Oklahoma territory in 1838, an event that would come to be known as the Trail of Tears.

The removal was done without respect for the humanity of the Cherokee people. A Georgia soldier who took part in the Indian removal act wrote later, "I fought in the Civil War and have seen men shot to pieces and slaughtered by the thousands, but the Cherokee removal was the cruelest work I ever knew (Williams 80). The exact number of deaths of the Trail of Tears is unknown, but some official reports claim ten thousand died of hunger, cold or disease before ever reaching the Indian territory in Oklahoma. A few Cherokees hid out in laurel hills or caves in Appalachia and were eventually recognized as the Eastern Band of the Cherokee nation, referring to themselves as the Free Cherokee. Those that survived the journey of the Trail of Tears became the Cherokee Nation at Tahlequah (Ballard 30).

Extractive Industry in Appalachia

As noted by Holtmeier, "Extractive industries are the core of trauma inside the region of Appalachia" (qtd in Brooks). This core trauma is central to the exploration of the unique spiritual consciousness that developed in the region as a means of survival. Extractive industry in Appalachia stripped the natural land of much of its resources and the people Appalachia of their personal power and agency. Thus, a commentary on extractive industry and the toll it took is central to comprehending the spiritual consciousness of the region.

Prior to industrialization, Appalachia consisted of family farms. In 1880, the average size of a family farm in the region was 187 acres. By the 1870's, northern speculators and outside businessmen had entered the region and began the process of buying up large parcels of land for different industrial enterprises. From the late 1800's to the early 1900's, the amount of land being farmed in the region thus took a significant downturn. By 1930, the family farms that still existed had fallen to an average size of about 76 acres or less. The outside ownership of large tracts of land

for the sole purpose of resource extraction created a situation where significant wealth was drained from the region in the form of corporate profits through the exploitation of the people living in Appalachia. By 1910, outsiders controlled not only the best strands of timber and the thickest seams of coal but also a sizable percentage of the surface land in the region ("Industrialization In Appalachia").

Appalachia was known for its vast forests. Because of the need to support reconstruction following the Civil War and the depletion of resources in the Northeast, timber became the first natural resource sought by industrialists looking to get rich quick in Appalachia. The logging industry slowly seeped into southern Appalachia and brought with it additional railroads and roads to enable the extraction of timber. The number of farms and available farm acreage declined drastically in these areas and many people were forced to sell or abandon their farms to move into camps ("Industrialization in Appalachia").

Trees were harvested with little regard for other resources or future supply. The logging companies paid no heed to young growth, allowing it to be damaged and smaller limbs and brush to ignite in dry weather. Fires were often sparked by the steam powered equipment used in the logging industry itself, such as Shay locomotives, overhead cableway skidders, and giant bandsaws. Major fires destroyed thousands of acres of woodlands, and smaller fires of the undergrowth burned up to 80% of forest area. Novelist Thomas Wolfe of Asheville described the effect these practices had on the region best when he wrote:

> The great mountain slopes and forests had been ruinously detimbered; the farm-soil on the hillsides had eroded and washed down; high up, upon the hills, one saw the raw scars of old mica pits, the dump heaps of deserted mines . . . . It was evident that a huge compulsive greed had been at work: the whole region had been sucked and gutted, milked dry, denuded of its rich primeval treasures;

> something blind and ruthless had been here, grasped, and gone. The blind scars on the hills, the denuded slopes, the empty mica pits were what was left . . . Something had come into the wilderness and left the barren land (qtd. in Eller 34).

By 1919, wasteful logging practices had devastated not only the land but the timber industry as well. Timber production had fallen to half pre-WWI levels. The timber companies had abandoned Appalachia by the 1920's and headed west to the virgin forests of Oregon and Washington. The mountain families who had been forced into the logging industry as their farmland was swallowed up were now faced with few choices: either return to the land on smaller, less productive farms, if possible, or try to survive the Depression in abandoned logging camps (Eller 27-42).

The harvest of timber and the accompanying railroads enhanced the development of coal mining in Appalachia. Although the region had been known for its large sources of coal since its discovery in the early 18th century, there was no real use for it beyond heating homes until the development of steel mills during the Industrial Revolution and later the need for electricity in the twentieth century. Mechanized factories had begun to spring up everywhere and they needed a consistent source of fuel to power their machines. Industrialists seized on this opportunity to profit off newfound energy needs by tapping into the vast coal resources in Appalachia.

Farmers in Appalachia had little use for the coal underneath the surface of their land, so they sold the mineral rights as broad form deeds with assurance that they would keep ownership of the surface to farm. The farmers were taken advantage of from the beginning because they were paid $5 an acre for land that was worth $1000 an acre or more and the courts ruled in the 1924 Squires v. Lafferty case that mineral rights essentially took precedence over surface rights, after the farmers had paid taxes on the land for years. The farmers were forced to leave Appalachia altogether or go to

work in the coal mines now operating on farmland that, in many cases, used to belong to their own families (Weller 49-50).

In the company towns that sprang up around the coal mines, every aspect of life would fall under control of the coal company further disempowering the people of Appalachia, including their spiritual life. In the early 1900's, company towns outnumbered independent towns 5:1 in Appalachia. In the company town, the miners would rent a company house, their children would go to a company school, their families would patronize the company store and the company doctor, and the company church would offer services that aligned with the faith of the coal company owner. On pay day, the miner would receive wages in company scrip, if they were lucky to receive any wages at all after the company deducted their rent, purchases at the company store, medical care, and school. Most miners would be lucky to break even on pay day, and they relied on the benevolence of their employers to maintain their wage and position (Eller 40-41). In addition, underground coal mining was exceedingly dangerous due to the methods used to extract coal and the blatant disregard for basic safety protocols. During the coal industry boom between 1880 and 1923, more than 70,000 miners died on the job. Many more miners perished from occupational diseases but were not included in the official statistics (Kahle).

In the 1970's, a new form of mining became the most popular form of coal production. Mountaintop removal mining allowed coal companies to access coal more effectively and efficiently while reducing the overall number of employed miners and, therefore, wages; but as profits climbed for the coal companies, the land, people, and very soul of Appalachia were further threatened. It is as if now that the resources have been removed from the mountains, these outside interests now want to remove the mountains themselves, an integral part of not only the landscape and culture but a visible representation of the spiritual connection of the earthly and heavenly. As U.S. Magistrate Judge Pamela Meade Sargent writes:

> To a child of Appalachia, to see the mountains laid waste, whether by clear-cutting or strip mining, is to witness a dagger plunged into the very bosom from which you sprang, and which has sustained you. ("End Mountaintop Removal Mining")

The opioid epidemic took root in the growth of the prescription painkiller industry to treat chronic pain in the late 1990's, and in its own way has affected the spiritual lives of Appalachians. Appalachia was targeted specifically by large pharmaceutical companies, such as Purdue Pharma, because the region had higher-than-average workplace injuries due to the coal and logging industries. When the sales teams of these companies came to Appalachia, they were pushing an open door as there had always been a pill problem in the region because of the century-old tradition of medicating pain as a way of tending to the broken bodies of the (Achenbach).

From 2006 to 2014, drug distributors delivered 1.1 billion opioid painkillers to West Virginia even as the state's overdose rate rose to the highest in the country. By 2017, the opioid prescription rates were 45 percent higher in Appalachian counties in the country than in non-Appalachian counties ("Opioids in Appalachia"). From 1999-2017, while Appalachian counties were grappling with an opioid overdose death rate that was 72% higher than the rest of the country, executives at the largest drug distributors in the United Sates continued to exploit and abuse the people of Appalachia by circulating rhymes built around a "poor mountaineer" named Jed who "barely kept his habit fed" and emails mocking "pillbillies." As the Appalachian region struggled to put new regulations in place to help curb the epidemic, a pharmaceutical executive sent out a widely circulated email that "one of the hillbilly's [sic] must have learned how to read" (McGreal).

The pharmaceutical industry is just the latest negative influence on the spiritual and economic lives of Appalachians in over a century of industrial colonization through greed, exploitation, and abuse. Outsiders have come in and taken the land for timber and coal, and

consistently found new avenues to exercise their greed by maximizing their profits. As the corporations have become richer and richer, the people of Appalachia have become poorer and poorer. With each new industry that comes to Appalachia hoping to extract her vast resources and get rich quick, the people of the region have been stripped of more and more of their power and sense of identity. To justify exploitation, outsiders have denigrated the culture and people of the region. Then to further establish control over the assets they have laid claim to in the region, the colonizers have convinced the world that the people of Appalachia should be "othered," the one group of people that it is still socially acceptable to demean and belittle (Lewis 117-130). It is easy to understand how this trauma of being on the losing end of greed and exploitation would cry out for a different relationship with the land and the world around them. The people of Appalachia have needed a way to feel empowered, to explore life, survive their hardships, and this need is often translated to the spiritual, which manifests itself sometimes in the mystical and magical.

Chapter III

The Old Ways and Protestant Christianity in Appalachia

Considering the centuries of extractive industry, disempowerment, and the melting pot of cultural influences present in Appalachia, it is little wonder that Protestant Christians and folk magic practitioners are so closely aligned in the region. In practice, they form a single community with a shared history, worldview, and values. Inherited knowledge and wisdom from past generations translate into folk beliefs and practices, often referred to as "The Old Ways," combined with an ardent belief in Protestant Christianity. Just like much in Appalachia, the spiritual practices of the region reflect the liminal space in which they are practiced, with no clear line between where religious beliefs end and magical beliefs begin. To truly understand spirituality in Appalachia, it is necessary to examine the values and beliefs of the people from a holistic perspective that includes folk magic, religious beliefs, and reverence for the natural world (John Richards 1). As Richards, Burchill, Crider, Kendrick, and Bonner point out: "Folklore and superstitions in the reaches of rural Appalachia are as strong as religion and passed from generation to generation. One did not question beliefs as old as the mountains but took them as facts of life and let them be (25)."

Christianity in Appalachia

The Appalachian region has a long and deep connection to the values and beliefs of Protestant Christianity and religion is a very pervasive part of the culture. It is important to understand the religious roots of Appalachia, the relationship between religion and the worldview of the Appalachian people and the relationship between religion and magical beliefs in order to grasp the unique spiritual consciousness that evolved in the region. The Appalachian descendants of European settlers have roots in a variety of religious traditions that can best be described as "extremist Protestant." Most English settlers were dissenters from the Church of England, and the

Scots Irish settlers were generally Presbyterians that followed the religious revolution of John Knox from the Church of Scotland. Both traditions shared Calvinist doctrines of sovereign election to the ranks of the saved and limited atonement for individual sin. In addition, the Appalachian region was highly influenced by German Lutheran Pietism that emphasizes biblical divine commands of believers to live a holy life and Anabaptist churches that prized free will in their theology and de-emphasized the doctrines of election and predestination (John Richards 16-17).

During the American Revolution, the predominant religion in Appalachia tended to be Presbyterian Calvinism even though few of the settlers were church members and organized religion was not standard. The First Great Awakening of the eighteenth century left its mark on Appalachia by creating a tradition of revivalism and an increased emphasis on experience and feeling. The tradition of revivalism led to a shift from Calvinism to Arminianism which argued that God allowed humans to exercise free will in accepting his grace. This shift to accepting free will meant that beliefs shifted to accept that atonement was only available to those who chose to accept God. It is overwhelmingly accepted that the biggest influence on Appalachian religion was the second Great Awakening, or the Great Revival at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As revivalist gatherings swept through Kentucky into Southern Appalachia, religious fervor and testimonies of intense religious experiences inspired large numbers of people to actively seek salvation. As church membership rose and the emphasis on religious experience led many to convert from Presbyterian to Baptists or Methodist, the Presbyterian ideal of an educated clergy was soon replaced by part-time, uneducated, traveling lay ministers, who were believed to preach from their hearts thanks to the power of the Holy Spirt. As lay ministers became more prevalent, many of the churches in Appalachia refused to be associated with organized denominations, and more often divided into sects, sub-denominations, or independent churches. While the major Protestant denominations became more national and institutionalized, they moved towards more formality and tended to turn

away from personal experiences with the supernatural. Thus, the sects and sub-denominations of rural Appalachia became further distanced from mainstream Protestantism and began to be known collectively as Appalachian Mountain religion (John Richards 16-17).

Appalachian mountain religion is one of the only array of uniquely American religious traditions, and it is found almost exclusively in the region's mountains and small valleys. It does not exist beyond Appalachia, except through out-migration and embodies a distinctive religious ethos (John Richards 17). According to Williams, the distinguishing characteristics of Appalachian mountain religion can be attributed to the synthesis of traditions drawn from the following main sources: Pietism and the founding of faith on inner conviction, sacramental rituals such as communion, foot washing and adult baptism from Pietist and Baptist traditions of Germany and the British Isles, preaching as chants from Welsh Baptists, "revival culture" and camp meetings from the Scots Irish Presbyterians, and simplified and equitable church organization and congregations with Pietistic and Baptist roots (101). Common theological beliefs that permeate Appalachian Mountain religion are a belief in an All-Knowing, All-Powerful, and just God that is at the same time remote and unapproachable, a belief that Satan is real and not just a metaphor for evil, and a belief that humans are spiritual beings in a physical body. Religion in Appalachia is their central value and connects all aspects of life. Humphrey shares that Appalachian people believe that there is a relationship between the theme of Zion in the Bible, a mountainous place of great beauty and eternal peace, and the Appalachian Mountains. For the people of the of the Religion of Zion, their place is a gift from God, and there is a sacred bond to one's geographic place. According to Humphrey, in the religion of Zion, my place includes land, home, family, kin, community, and, for many, even church and graveyard… . It is the experience with plants, animals, people, and the seasons of the year that make all of this "my place" (124). Many of the people that follow Appalachian Mountain religion still practice ancestral folk magic because they believe that God gave

people certain gifts to help others, and this knowledge is a wisdom passed down from their ancestors rather than a form of ignorance (John Richards 18).

Appalachian Folk Magic and Medicine

Due to the unique theology and beliefs of Appalachian Mountain religion, folk magic and conjuring have survived for centuries in Appalachia and play a pivotal role in the spirituality and worldview of the Appalachian people. Just like their Border Reiver ancestors, the descendants of European settlers in Appalachia are conditioned towards self-reliance. They steadfastly believe that God listens to their prayers and knows what they need, but they also believe that God only gives them what they can handle. To this point, it is only natural for them to try everything to make ends meet before giving up their problems to God. In addition, the lay ministers that were prevalent after the second Great Awakening were circuit riders who traveled from community to community only staying about a week in each place to preach, baptize, and bless. Once the lay minister left for the next town, there was no promise of when he would return, so every man was his own preacher for most of the year. Doctors were even more scarce, and every community had a couple people who helped with a variety of ailments, from bleeding and infections to nightmares and cures. These same people would deliver babies, perform baptisms, marry couples, and bury the dead. These people were as varied as their names, but they were often called faith healers, yarb doctors, granny women, Mountain shamans, witchdoctors, conjurers, and root workers (Jake Richards "Doctoring" 5-8)

Appalachian folk magic is a mix of cultural beliefs from the native tribes such as the Cherokees, European settlers, and Africans. It is widely accepted that European settlers from Scotland, Ireland, northern England, and Germany were responsible for bringing much of the folk magic and folklore to Appalachia, and many of these practices can be traced back to the Celtic ancestors of these immigrants. It is also believed that the folklorization of magic in early American society had a tremendous effect on the history of Appalachian folk magic and medicine as well. In

the early eighteenth century, magic and occultism died out of many social classes in both Europe and America. There are numerous reasons for this occurrence, from the rise of Enlightenment philosophy to the spread of evangelical Christianity and opposition from English Protestant denominations to political maturation and government coercion. As a result, magic and occultism disappeared among certain social classes and became confined to poorer, more marginal segments of American society that were insulated from the folkorization of magic. Colonists in Appalachia held fast to the beliefs of their ancestors in witchcraft, astrology, and the ability of wise men or women to find lost objects and cure diseases (John Richards 3-4).

The folklore and magic that these colonists had brought to the Appalachian Mountains from Scotland, Ireland, and England reflected the medieval beliefs of their homelands which had roots in the pagan spiritualities of Western Europe and the Celts. As the colonists settled in Appalachia, the cultural influence of both Native Americans and Africans was also shaping Appalachian folk magic. It is well documented that there was extensive contact and intermarriage between the Cherokee and Europeans who settled in Southern Appalachia, and it is highly likely that Cherokee folklore and medical knowledge was shared with European settlers through intermarriage. It is widely accepted that the greatest influence of Native Americans was in folk medicine and knowledge of flowers, berries, roots, and leaves native to Appalachia (Cieslik). Appalachian folklore also incorporates a strong influence of Cherokee concepts such as the "moon eyed people," "the little people," and the "Wendigo." African Americans also had a strong influence on the development of Appalachian folk magic as sources indicate that Euro-Americans often sought the assistance of African American practitioners for conjuring, root work, and voodoo to address health and other problems. Many white settlers believed that African Americans possessed extraordinary healing abilities and knowledge (John Richards 6). Values of the Africans and Cherokees emphasized living harmoniously with nature, maintaining ritual purity, and the importance of kinship in social

organizations. The African and Cherokee attitudes about the physical world were also similar as both believed the spiritual merged with the environmental. Everyday activities such as hunting, curing illness, making a meal, or embarking on a journey had religious significance and the world around them was imbued with religious meaning. Just like their Celtic ancestors, European settlers in Appalachia believed natural openings or doorways were sacred places, and graveyards, mountaintops, and waterways were gateways where one can glimpse the spiritual world. Since the ancestral values of the European settlers were already so like the beliefs of the Africans and Cherokees, even in cases where belief systems weren't directly influenced by Africans and Cherokees, they were at the very least reinforced (John Richards 20).

Appalachian mountain religion teaches that humans are spiritual beings in a physical body and spirit is present in all aspects of our place and world and Appalachian folk magic practioners believe the other world is all around us (Cieslik). We exist in a world inhabited by little people, ghosts, spirits, demons, and angels. Appalachian spirituality is completely interwoven with nature, and it is a way of living with God by how you perceive nature and treat others through your everyday routines in life (John Richards 4). Living with nature was necessary for survival, and folk magic is as full of nature lore and rules for farming as it is of ghosts, witches, demons, and superstitions.

In Appalachia, the family provides the foundation upon which the community is built and provides the people with a connection to the past and a sense of solidarity in the face of adversity and social change. Knowledge of folk magic and medicine is usually acquired directly from a family member and gifts, such as the ability to heal seen as an inherited trait. The variations that can be found in Appalachian folk magic and medicine can be attributed to the strong family basis of this magic (John Richards 6). There is no one right way to do Appalachian folk magic and the practice can vary based on family and region. Much of this variation is likely due to practices among ancestral

clans, but also due to the oral tradition of passing this magic down from generation to generation. As practices were passed down, they changed and evolved (Jake Richards "Backwoods" 10)

Appalachian Folk Magic Practices

Most folk magic practices in Appalachia are centered on the everyday. The focus is on family, friends, and nature, and practices are directed towards health, relationships, crops, animals, weather, acquiring good luck and avoiding bad luck. It is a practical way for Appalachian people to provide meaning to the events that happened daily and hopefully change the direction of these events in their favor. Appalachian folk magic is not designed for spiritual awakening or raising consciousness because of the strong influence of Christianity in the region. Despite a reliance on magical practices for the here and now, Appalachian practioners strongly believed that spiritual growth could be gained only from following the Bible as a rule and guide for life and living in harmony with nature as God intended (John Richards 8). Thus, the Bible serves as the master spell book in magical practices in Appalachia.

Silas House offers a perfect example of this amalgam of Appalachian spirituality in *A Parchment of Leaves* through the character of Esme Sullivan:

> She believed that spells and witches were as real as Scripture. Esme Sullivan was the kind of woman that kept an acorn on every windowsill to ward off bad spirits and boiled old shoes in a Dutch oven to guard against snakes coming into the yard. When her cat set with its back to the fire, she prepared for a snowstorm. (4-5)

Through examination of Appalachian folk magic practices, it is evident that the belief in the power of these practices is just as strong as the belief in the Bible. In the Appalachian worldview, there is no distinct boundary between the sacred and the secular. God is seen as being both immanent and transcendent. All of life is viewed as being sacramental, and the presence of God is affirmed in even small and routine everyday tasks. There is a strong belief in the reality of the supernatural. Anything

out of the ordinary is likely accepted as a spiritual manifestation, or a warning. Warnings of death, and messages from the spirit world are thought to be common occurrences. Spirits regularly communicate with people in the Bible so why would they not do the same today? Magical and supernatural beliefs are a sign of the strong faith of the Appalachian people. The Bible teaches that God works in mysterious ways and is present in all things, so it only follows that we would need to look to signs and work with the practical world around us to understand how God is informing us to live (John Richards 20).

Despite living in a world where outside powers denigrated personal worth, the people in Appalachia believed strongly that working in harmony with the physical world was the way to determine how God wanted them to live and that these folk practices were knowledge and gifts from God to assist them in living harmoniously with the world around them as God intended. The following examples of folk practices demonstrate the synthesis between magic and Christianity. These practices demonstrate a people with firm faith in God and respect in his divine guidance as well as deep cultural belief in their own self-reliance and power to intervene on their own behalf by working in harmony with nature and the world around them.

Superstitions and Incantations for Work

Life was hard in Appalachia and there was nothing more ubiquitous than work. Although these practices all have an element of the supernatural and magical in them, they likewise served practical purposes at the same time. Nature lore and farming superstitions were very important for people who relied on outdoor work for a living and the survival of crops and animals to feed their families. Before 1920, Appalachians had no radio and very few daily newspapers. The only way to know what the day would bring was to rely on knowledge preserved through oral traditions for generations. The Appalachian people thus learned to interpret the language of nature. Crops were planted based on phases of the moon, and there were rules for planting, harvesting, preparing, and

preserving crops, particularly with long winter months (Gainer 112-113). Some examples are as follows:

- When the pitcher of water sweats excessively, it is going to rain.
- If swallows fly low, it is a sign of rain.
- Cows at peaceful rest in the evening indicate rain before morning.
- When the evening's red and the morning's gray, it's the sign of a bonny, bonny day; When the evening's gray and the morning's red, the ewe and the lamb will go wet to bed.
- Rain before seven, clear before eleven.
- Lightning in the north is a sign of dry weather.
- When the hornets build their nests high above the ground, it is a sign of a hard winter. If the hornets build their nests low, it will be a mild winter.
- If there is thunder if February, there will be snow in May.
- When the locust blooms are heavy, it will be a cool summer.
- After you hear the first katydid, it will be six more weeks until the first frost.
- If you want tobacco to cure well, cut it during a new moon.
- Plant beets when the sign is in the heart.
- Plant corn when the white-oak leaves are the size of a squirrel's ears.
- Kill the first snake you see in the spring and no snake will bite you.
- Make all pickle stuff in the light of the moon, and the brine will rise quickly to cover it.
- To make soap, stir it with a sassafras stick in the old of the moon.
- Never peel the bark of a tree in the old of the moon
- Keep a goat in the barn, and there will be no sick animals there.
- Pork killed in the light of the moon will turn to grease.

- Hold your breath and bees will not sting you.
- When lightning strikes twice in the same place, there is mineral in the ground.
- Frost will never kill peaches that bloom in the dark of the moon.
- Plant flowers when the sign is in the sign of the flowers.

Although most of this lore would generally be classified as superstition today, it is important to remember that these rules were used for centuries by people who lived close to the land and followed them with good results at a time when their lives depended on the accuracy of these rules.

Just as the signs of the moon are prevalent in the lore around farming, fishing and hunting by the moon was also a practiced folk tradition. It was widely believed that the moon's position and phase influenced the behavior of wildlife and made certain times more favorable for hunting and fishing. For fishing, many fishermen believed that the days leading up to the full moon were the best time to catch larger fish because fish were more active and the increasing brightness attracted baitfish, which in turn attracts predatory fish. The waning moon was often regarded as the time when fish were less active and harder to catch but might be more abundant near shorelines and the prime time for bank fishing. Hunting in Appalachia also followed the signs of the moon. During the full moon, people believed that wildlife was more active at night and, thus, a prime time for nocturnal game hunting. Animals were thought to be more cautious and alert in a waning moon so it would be more difficult to catch them unnoticed, whereas animals were more likely to be active during the daylight hours during a waxing moon, so this was a prime time for hunting during the day (Dagny)

Work songs were most often sung by women and came from hard lives. These songs often served as an incantation for successful completion of the job at hand and were also used to ease the burden of the work. One of the most widely known types of work songs was for churning butter.

The churning song known as "Come Butter Come" often had many verses and internal variations, but the most common version goes:

Churn, butter, churn

Come, butter, come!

A little good butter

Is better than none.

Work songs continued to be common as Appalachians moved into Industrial work. The songs sometimes poked fun at the bosses or expressed longing for rural life left behind. The rhythms were used to set the pace of the work and the repetitious phrases were designed to magically keep the singer and the other workers safe in a dangerous working environment (Ballard 49-53).

Folk Magic and Medicine

In a region where doctors were scarce, it is no surprise that one of the most abundant sources of folk magic in Appalachia was associated with healing. The greatest threat to Appalachian people was sickness and death, and humans are very vulnerable creatures. Most Appalachian folk magic centering around healing hearkens back to the Cherokee concept of balance in all things. Balance in the human body, mind, and soul was vital to health, and it was believed that anything can set you off balance and make you ill or susceptible to hidden dangers either physical or spiritual (Jake Richards "Backwoods" 26)

Healing power was believed to come from a personal relationship with God. Healing would always first come through prayer and then through the healer's body as vessel for the Holy Spirit to work. Healing could be understood as the ideal of removing sickness from the body, but it was also accepted to come through death. Healing was aimed at making the body whole which would facilitate getting well but would often only come from being returned to God. The Appalachian acceptance of healing was much more expansive than the traditionally accepted ideas of modern

medicine where the only way to heal is to get better physically. In Appalachia, the biblical standard of "Thy will, not mine, be done" was absolute (Ballard 104).

Blood and breath figure prominently in folk healing in all parts of the world and Appalachia is no exception. Since Appalachian communities base so much on the Bible this idea makes sense. Breath is associated with human creation. In Genesis 2:7 offers an illustration: "And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils, the breath of life and man became a living soul" (Ballard 69). Blood is the life force that flows through all members of the animal kingdom and the sacrifice made by Jesus to save the world from sin. As the old hymn by Lewis B. Jones goes: "There is power, power, wonder-working power in the blood of the lamb"; and in Appalachia, blood is always associated with a job that requires additional power (Ballard 105-106).

It is widely believed that some people in Appalachia have special gifts given to them by God. One of these is the ability to use their breath to cure diseases. In the Celtic tradition, many believed that this gift is only given to the seventh son of a seventh son or the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter. This gift was commonly used to cure thrush which was caused by a fungal infection. Thrush would cause severe blisters in the mouth that would often inhibit feeding in an infant. Thrush is easily cured today but years ago, it was very risky and potentially deadly (Ballard 69). When using this gift, practitioners would repeat a verse in the mind three times as they blew their breath in the mouth of the infant. This process would be repeated every morning for three days in a row (Foxfire "Remedies").

Blood stopping was another gift. Tradition taught that these workings must be passed down from mother to son or father to daughter with each generation being taught by the opposite sex of the previous generation, but that was not always the case, and many Appalachians used this practice to stop the flow of blood after an injury (Ballard 106). In this practice, the left hand is passed clockwise over the wound while reciting a bible verse such as Ezekial 16:6 or the following words:

Jesus was born in Bethlehem,

Baptized in the Jordan River.

When the water was wild in the woods,

God spoke and the water stood,

And so shall thy blood.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

It was also believed that the practioner could not cross running water for 24 hours after doing this spell or the flow of blood would begin again (Jake Richards "Backwoods" 27-28)

Burn whisperers were also common in Appalachia where handling fire was an everyday occurrence. To soothe a burn, the practioner would ground themselves in the energy of the land and pull energy up through their body and hands. They would then place their strong hand over the affected area without touching it and move their hand in a clockwise motion over the burn while repeating three times: "Come thee angels from the North; take both fire and frost." Different parts of Appalachia have different versions of this charm, and, in some versions, the three helpers are three brides instead of three angels which hearkens back to the Celtic Goddess Brigid (Ballard 107-108).

Faith healing such as those used for breath, blood, and burns was prevalent in Appalachia, but herbs and tonics were also heavily used. Until the early 20th century, the closest doctor in Appalachia would be many miles away by horseback, so the fields and forest were the drugstore for most Appalachian people. Granny women, yarb or herbalists, and root workers from the black community that knew how to identify and make medicine with plants; these individuals were the backbone of healthcare and healing in the mountains (Beyer 58). The Appalachian belief that God owns and provides all was an integral part of the lifestyle, and knowledge of the land and wild plants

available for consumption and medicinal use today is still a source of pride for mountain people (Foxfire 130).

Appalachia is the most biodiverse region in the United States, and the mountains were viewed as a healing landscape by both Natives and European settlers. Appalachia has 1,100 plants which have been identified as having medicinal uses, but the people largely relied on about 90 to 100 plants with some of the most common being apple, catnip, corn, mullein, onion, poke, slippery elm, sorghum, tobacco, walnut, and sassafras (Beyer 39). Sassafras was thought to be a blood cleanser and was used for everything from weigh reduction to curing syphilis (Beyer 67). Poke root was boiled and applied warm as a poultice to the skin for eczema, ringworm, and fungal infections. A strong poke root tea was the cure for scabies (Beyer 87). Tonics were used to treat everything from digestive disorders to skin conditions and liver ailments. They were used as a strong tea or decoction, where herbs, roots, or barks were boiled, and then sweetened with sugar or honey. The Appalachian tonic tradition was a way for the people of Appalachia to take charge of their health and keep themselves in balance (Beyer 47).

About 80% of the charms for women in Appalachia have to do with the birthing process. Women's role was to bear children, and this was very dangerous at the time. There are superstition processes for determining if a woman were pregnant to divining the sex of the baby to the birthing itself. To predict the sex of the child, three hairs were plucked from the crown of the expectant mother's head. She was to lay down as Christ was laid which means to have her head pointing west. The gold wedding ring is suspended from the three hairs dangled over her navel while Psalm 23 is recited:

The Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want,

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul.

He leadeth me on the path of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil:

For thou art with me

Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table for me

In the presence of mine enemies.

Thou anointest my head with oil,

My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life,

And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

If the ring rotated in a circle over the belly, the baby would be a girl. If the ring swung back and forth, the newborn would be a boy. A common cure for pregnancy symptoms was for the pregnant woman to crawl over her lover in the morning. This would transfer the symptoms to him. Birthing pains were often eased by opening the Bible to the Book of Matthew. The Bible would be placed depending on who was in the most danger. If it were the mother, the Bible would be placed on the chest; if it were the child, the Bible would be placed on the stomach. A knife, arrowhead, or axe was also placed beneath the bed to cut the pains and render them harmless. Chicken feathers were burned under the bed in case of possible hemorrhage during labor. Six feathers had to be gathered by the father or another man of the house, with the feathers plucked straight from the chicken. Stillbirth was common in Appalachia, and it was thought to be important for women to have a way to dry up her milk without adding further to her grief. A charm often used for this was camphor on

a cotton wad placed on the child's grave to dry up the mother's milk (Jake Richards "Backwoods" 31-32).

Charms and Incantations for Luck and Protection

As we have explored in depth, life was hard in Appalachia. Appalachian people could not afford unexpected misfortune. Bad luck in Appalachia wasn't merely an inconvenience: it was a matter of life and death in some cases. To mitigate such happenings, the Appalachian people had many charms and tricks to invite good luck and ward off bad luck. Many charms were used to invite good luck. Horseshoes were commonly hung above the door with the open side pointing up to keep luck from running out. It was also believed to be good luck to open the Bible at random and find the words "verily, verily" on the page. Another tradition for good luck with regards to money was keeping a jar of money by the door to ensure more money. Cornmeal was generally sprinkled at the bottom of the jar to make a soft place for the money, keeping the money off the hard bottom of the jar and thus the family from hard times. Money from the jar could be spent, but it should never be completely emptied. A particularly easy charm for good luck was to put a four-holed button or a heads-up penny that one found in the right shoe. Superstitions surrounding good luck included having a rabbit cross your path, meeting a cross-eyed person, or laying your hand on the hump of a hunchback person (Gainer 126). Spiders were never disturbed if they were nesting in the kitchen as they were a sign of luck and abundance. If a spider had set up camp in the kitchen, it was believed that the family would never go hungry (Jake Richards "Backwoods" 23-24).

Warding off bad luck was just as important, if not more so, than inviting in good luck in Appalachia. Bad luck was terrifying because it might be fatal in rural Appalachia and never worth the risk in the volatile environment in which people lived, so it was always better to pay attention to the wisdom of the ancestors and be safe rather than sorry. Dogwood was never to be burned inside, and dogwood blooms should also never be brought into the house, because it is said that this was the

type of wood on which Jesus hung at Calvary. Women were not allowed in the coal mines as they were said to bring bad luck to the mine. If one pointed at a graveyard, especially if there was a new grave in it, it would invite sickness and death (Jake Richards 25-26) If you sneeze while putting on your shoes, you need to go back to bed, or bad luck will find you. It is unlucky to throw a gift away. It is unlucky to marry someone who was born in the same month. It is also unlucky to change a baby's name. You should never count the box cars in a train or the carriages in a funeral procession as both can bring bad luck. When you stumble over an object, go back, and walk over it without stumbling to avoid bad luck. These were just a sampling of the myriad of superstitions surrounding bad luck, but it is enough to get an idea of the terror attached to bad luck, how the fear of bad luck permeated everything in daily life, and the extremes Appalachian people were willing to go to avoid bad luck (Gainer 127-128).

Luck is associated closely with protection in Appalachian folk magic. It was very important to protect one's energy against something that can do one harm. In Appalachia, there was a constant influx of negativity from outside interests and a deep-seated belief in the presence of the supernatural because of ancestral teachings and a deep faith in the Bible. Harm could just as likely come from bad energy as it could from spirits, witches, and curses. Protective spells had two functions: warding a person or place from negative influence or cleansing a person or place from negative influence already happening. Rosemary was often used in folk magic to keep bad vibes from the property. It would be grown by the front door to discourage individuals with bad energy from entering the threshold. Garlic often served a similar purpose. Placing a clove of garlic on each four corners of the household offered protection and mitigated negative influences. Many Appalachian folk magic practioners also placed candles strategically around the home for protection against negative influences or entities that would enter through doorways or windows. Mojo bags are a charm that has direct roots to African hoodoo and was often used in Appalachia in the form of

asafetida bags. Asafetida is an herb that is like onion or garlic. It was placed in a bag and worn on a person or placed in their house to ward off evil and sickness. Another belief rooted in African folklore often used in southern Appalachia were shades of "haint," or cobalt blue, used to protect from spirits that cause harm. Roofs or porches were painted this color for the same reason. Bottle trees are also often found in Appalachia to protect against evils spirits. Blue bottles were stuck in trees outside the home, and it was believed that evil spirits would become trapped in the bottles and destroyed when the sun rose in the morning. Dogwood trees were regularly planted in Appalachia, not just for their beauty, but also because they were believed to be the tree on which Jesus was crucified and, thus, the wood is said to be protective. A dogwood on the property was believed to keep the family safe from any potential evil (Dagny). Although these practices may seem little more than rank superstitions, they were very real to the people who practiced them, and many in and from the region continue to practice them today. The people of Appalachia understood that there is much more to the world than can be seen with our eyes, and these practices offered a feeling of control in a world where so much was felt to be out of the people's control.

Omens, Signs, and Divination

In such an environment where the people thought they had little control, another way to feel connected to God and gain a sense of control over outcomes in life was by paying attention to omens and signs and practicing divination. A belief in signs and omens in Appalachia can be directly connected to the Bible in Ecclesiastes 3: 1-2: "Let there be lights in the firmaments of the heavens to divide day from night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years" (Richards 57). Signs are natural and observed occurrences that give one a glimpse into current and future events. Much of the nature lore associated with work has to do with signs:

- When a rainbow appears after a rainfall, it is a symbol of hope, renewal and blessings and a reminder to stay optimistic and resilient in the face of any potential challenges.

- If you see a cardinal, it is a sign of good fortune or a message from a departed loved one.
- If you have an itchy nose, people will soon be coming to visit.
- If cows are laying down, that means it is about to rain (Dagny).
- If there is a feather crown in your pillow, it is a sign that you will go to heaven when you die (Gainer 125).

Omens are also natural and observed occurrences, but they are generally unusual and noteworthy and foretell danger or dire consequences (Ballard 140-141). Throughout Appalachia, there are many omens that have universal meaning:

- A chicken laying an uneven number of eggs can be a portent of danger to come.
- A wild bird flying in your house means someone will die.
- If a broom falls for no reason, bad fortune is soon to follow.
- Deaths come in threes.
- Hearing a screech owl at dusk means that someone will soon die.
- A rabbit that crosses your path before sunrise brings with it unhappiness.
- A howling dog at night is a warning of impending danger (Dagny).

The strong belief in omens and signs was indicative of how connected the Appalachian people were to the world around them. They were constantly aware of their surroundings and the potential meaning that God could be conveying in the world around them.

Living in a world of uncertainty, many Appalachians would practice forms of divination. Much of the divination used in Appalachia was of the yes and no variety. This type of divination was often used to predict pregnancy. A fresh egg would be rubbed counterclockwise over a woman's womb. The Lord's prayer would then be recited with an ending such as "Lord, you give dreams and visions of righteousness in Your name. Show me how it is here." The woman would then blow on

the egg, and it would be dropped in a clear glass of water. If the egg sunk to the bottom, it would mean the woman was pregnant or "heavy with child." If the egg floated, the woman was not pregnant. Playing cards were also used for yes or no forms of divination. Black suits mean "no" and red suits mean "yes," and probability was determined by the suit of two out of three cards. Scattering forms of divination were also used in Appalachia. A handful of sunflower or apple seeds could be thrown on a handkerchief while whispering a question. If the seeds were evenly spaced when they landed, the answer is yes. If the seeds were not evenly spaced, the answer is no (Jake Richards "Backwoods" 124).

Another form of divination used widely in Appalachia were "water witches." Water witches were people that were thought to be gifted with the ability to find underground water to dig a well, but they were also used to find lost items, treasures, or people at times. Water witches would use a forked stick from a willow, cherry, hazel, or hickory tree, known as a dowsing rod. The type of wood used was dependent on the family, and the stick had to be taken from a branch pointing east on the full moon. This detail was due to the belief that as water is pulling on the rob, it will therefore be more easily drawn to it. The dowsing rod was held by two points outward, fists down with one end pointing up to the sky. The prongs are pulled apart and kept at just the right tension before snapping. The dowser holds the rod and walks in different directions. As the dowser approaches underground water, the stick will begin to bob, and once it reaches the full water source, it will point straight down (Jake Richards "Backwoods" 130)

Bibliomancy is another divination method used in Appalachia that represents the marriage of Christian and magical traditions in the region. Bibliomancy involves asking a question and then opening the Bible at random. The page or verse that the Bible opens to after the question is asked was believed to hold the answer to the question asked (Jake Richards "Doctoring" 11-12). The book of Psalms was a particularly popular book for bibliomancy as it was designed to guide the believer

through life and, therefore, using this book for spiritual guidance was directly correlated to being a message from God on how to approach a specific situation (Dagny).

Witches and Haints

Henry Caudill *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* suggested that proof of ignorance among the Appalachian people is their belief in witchcraft, preternatural phenomena, and superstitions. However, the belief in witchcraft, superstitions, and supernatural phenomena is universal and ancient, so this justification for ignorance among the mountaineers appears uninformed (Gainer). The belief in this facet of the supernatural is instead a reflection of Appalachian Mountain religion which had strongly held beliefs passed down from Native, African, and Celtic ancestors that spirit was very present in the world and the otherworld was all around us. The strong belief in witches, ghosts, and demons was less the result of ignorance than a sign of the strong faith people had in God and His mysterious ways. People in Appalachia firmly believed the devil was still present in the world and that he was actively trying to win their souls from God (Gainer 135). In addition, the pioneers were religious people that brought few other books with them other than the Bible and shared an oral tradition of songs and stories passed down by their ancestors for generations. Long winter evenings were a time to gather and share stories and exchange ideas. Many of these stories witches and ghosts were told as much for their entertainment value as they were as cautionary tales (Gainer xxi-xxii).

Witches in our modern understanding fall into two categories. The first category would be what we now consider "granny witches," or root workers, and the other folk "magic practitioners." These were people that had the power to perform beneficent acts as a gift from God. An example would be a baby born with a fetal caul who was believed to have the gift of prophecy (Gainer 139-140). Although these practices are often referred to as white witchcraft today, it is highly unlikely that these people would have considered themselves witches in previous generations. The reason for

this is that most Appalachians would have believed a witch was someone who had renounced God and sold themselves to the devil for his service. Becoming a witch would have been the ultimate sin in Appalachian culture (Gainer 135). Much of the fear of witches was likely brought to Appalachia by German ancestors. At least three-quarters of all executions for witchcraft during the European witch hunts were in Germany (Barstow 61). Many of the beliefs that were responsible for the witch craze were preserved in Appalachian culture. Appalachians believed that to become a witch, one would have to shoot a homemade silver bullet at the full moon while renouncing the Almighty or stand on the oldest grave in the graveyard and renounce God so one can meet the devil (Richards 19). There were certain characteristics that set the Appalachian witch apart from the rest of the community. Anything that made someone unusual could be enough to start rumors of witchcraft such as old age, physical deformity, or a strange birthmark. Witches in Appalachia were accused of the classic activities such as cursing animals, using magic bridles to "ride" people at night until they were exhausted, cursing milk and butter, and causing sickness (Beyer 15). The Appalachian people had many folk practices designed to protect themselves from witches. A common practice for protection against witchery was turning your pockets inside out or wearing your shirt inside out. Sprinkling mustard seeds around the bed or sleeping with a knife under the pillow were also ways to prevent being bewitched at night when sleeping (Beyer 102).

Haints were malicious spirits. They could be an ancestor who lived and died wrongly, a wayward spirit that hopped along for a ride, a demon, or some other entity. Signs of haint or plat-eye activity in Appalachia occurred when items disappeared or moved by themselves, items tossed or broken on a regular basis, foul smells such as rotten eggs, insomnia, nightmares, or one's hearing sounds such as talking, or having an uneasy feeling in the house that eases when you leave. Protection against malicious spirits was very important in Appalachian folk magic and people had many practices to keep them away. Some of these include laying out salt lines, carrying a bag with

gunpower and sulfur, driving nine used horseshoe nails into the base of the doorframe, marking three crosses over every door with white chalk, and keeping the Bible by the door opened to Psalm 23 (Richards 104).

In addition to witches and haints, Appalachia is rife with other legends such as little moon people, cryptids, and other supernatural horror stories. The mountains lend themselves to the mystical and magical, and the region's checkered extraction and exploitation history allows for no shortage of material. Whether the stories are true will always be up for debate, but these long held beliefs and stories are an indicator of the power of the liminal space that is Appalachia, a place that serves as a portal between this world and the next and a place with complex religious and ancestral beliefs.

Conclusion

Appalachian folk magic reflects the unique spiritual consciousness of the region. The synthesis of beliefs about harmony in nature from the Cherokee, values of independence, self-reliance, and personal sovereignty from the Scots Irish, a tradition of folk magic from Germany, and African beliefs that material things can contain, direct, and initiate the action of the supernatural—all coalesced to create a set of practices that allowed Appalachians to embrace Christianity while preserving folk magic practices. These practices allowed Appalachians to maintain a spiritual connection to their land as a sacred place. Appalachian Mountain Religion reinforced these belief systems with an emphasis on experience and feeling. God was remote and unapproachable, but His messages for directing life could be found in the world around one. With a lack of organized clergy to direct how every day people interacted with God, the Appalachian people were able to come to their own understanding of how God and Spirituality worked in their lives and to integrate the magical practices of their ancestors seamlessly.

This unique spiritual consciousness gave the Appalachian people a way to understand the world around them. In a region that was disempowered by outside interests through the colonialism of extractive interests, the magical practices that were a part of this spiritual consciousness were vital to feeling a sense of empowerment in a powerless world. These practices gave Appalachians power through a belief that they could control worldly events by the manipulation of worldly things. Through this power, Appalachians had the ability to change the direction of events in a region that was often in dire need of change because of pressures from outside interests.

In modern times, the spiritual consciousness of Appalachia is often disregarded as ignorant or backward because it does not align with the dominant paradigm present in society today of "science and reason" and commodization. In fact, Appalachian spiritual consciousness, which

accepts that humans are part of Creation and having an intimate relationship with the land, the seasons, and the family fosters much more care for the environment and its inhabitants and the planet itself. This worldview breaks down imagined barriers between the material and spiritual worlds and provides a site of resistance against commodization. Survival of this worldview, as Roger Cunningham notes, "can not only help Appalachian people resist their oppressors" but can also help shape thought on the overall understanding of the Universe and humans place in it (60).

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