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Enduring music: Migrant Appalachian communities and the Shenandoah National Park

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Enduring Music: Migrant Appalachian Communities and the Shenandoah National Park

An Honors College Project Present to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of
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by Madeline Nell Marsh

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Senior Thesis

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Introduction

Enduring Music: Migrant Appalachian Communities and the Shenandoah National Park

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“Mountains isolate people and the effect of isolation on human life is to crystalize it. Those people... have had no navigable rivers, no lakes, no wagon roads, except often the beds of streams. They have been cut off from all communication with the outside world. They are a perfect example of an arrested civilization and they are the closest link we have with the Old World.” (Algeo 41).

These words, used by “the Honorable Samuel Budd” as he attempted to characterize the ‘mountain person’ are essential to my research in understanding this ‘mountain person’ within the context of the region of the Shenandoah National Park. Budd’s commentary, as it is recorded by Katie Algeo in her piece, “Locals on Local Color: Imagining Identity in Appalachia”, captures the common, erroneous narrative applied to the Shenandoah National Park region. Of course, an alarming amount of fictionalization and patronizing generalizations is quickly detected by any reader with a background and/or knowledge of first-hand accounts of Appalachia, but this narrative nonetheless still continues into today. It is enthralling, even putting aside the sinister ulterior motives for which the U.S. Government employed these stereotypes in claiming the land for the Shenandoah National Park project, which willfully displaced over five-hundred Blue Ridge families. Timelessness—or, returning to a Golden Age—where things were once simple and one could know what it used to be like ‘way back when’ has long been a fascination and occupation of the literature and the minds of civilization, especially in light of the modernity bringing Amer-

icans into a seemingly entirely different world today from the one known by our country's first settlers. Thankfully, in the last decade there has been substantial interest in truly telling the story of the Shenandoah National Park, as well as a spark in combing through James Madison University's oral archives to debunk descriptions like that of Samuel Budd's. Though a wealth of historic and sociological information exists in the archival accounts, my research takes a slightly different line of approach as I too contradict the misconceptions of Appalachia: for, I will do so by exploring the vast variety of folksong remembered by the archive informants as I argue for the sophistication, connectedness, and literacy (by way of oral tradition) of these families.

It is only fair, however, that I confess to my own previous misconceptions of Appalachia that first launched my interest in the region of the Shenandoah Valley as an example of an undiluted Scots-Irish culture. As a fiddler, raised in the Valley, I was well acquainted with bluegrass, old-time, and Celtic music. In high school, upon attending festivals and jam sessions, I quickly recognized the similarities between this Celtic and old-time music, as the songs often only differed in a slight variation, or even simply in a name. My passion for Celtic music and interest in its connection to old-time music, led me to embark on this research, which has now taken on an entirely different life from what I once expected. My fascination, which once motivated me to focus only on the links of the Blue Ridge community to the first Scots-Irish settlers, led my research to a far broader and abounding image of the Shenandoah National Park region of Appalachia. The vibrancy of folksong would illuminate a complex, diverse society beyond what I had previously imagined.

This research takes the form of an archival study of the displaced children of families formerly living in the Shenandoah National Park which spans from Strasburg to Waynesboro,

Virginia. The study looks at interviews from the JMU Special Collections archives of these children in the 1970-80s, nearly fifty years after their forced migration from the 197,438 acres that comprised the park. Change and pressure during the 1930s-40s combined with national policy began the nostalgic preservation and veneration of the culture of these people of the Blue Ridge Mountains; however, through the archives, a clear and diverse picture of the perspectives and lifestyles of people before and after the park surfaces. Through examining the lyrics of traditional and old-time music played by these peoples, the project explores the role lyrics served in sustaining this Appalachian community preceding and following their displacement.

In order to perform this research, I developed a methodology of searching the archives that reviewed each informant account of his or her past in the Blue Ridge park, particularly when an informant would mention music or remember specific songs. My initial approach to the archives simply listened/read through the transcripts of the archival collection, developing an understanding of the former residents of the park and their lifestyles. I loosely kept a notion of which accounts mentioned music, then reviewed through all of the archives again, filtering them by noting the archives that mentioned music, the use of music, songs, ballads, or tunes remembered. I did not, however, document when the collector, Dorothy Noble Smith, would ask an informant if he or she played a specific song. My reason for ignoring the suggestions made on the part of Mrs. Smith is based in the fact that the informants almost invariably responded to a suggestion with “Uh-Huh” but no further recognition. The concern in recording a song suggested by Mrs. Smith is that the informant may have misheard or simply vaguely agreed because it sounded familiar. This research is faithful to the songs *recalled* and distinctly *instilled* in the memory of the former inhabitants of the park. Once I found these archives, I kept account of all songs,

ballads, and tunes mentioned, noting from who and where they came as well as how many times they appeared in the archive. My research then devoted my attention to the songs themselves, their specific variations, and their presence in the greater repertoire of traditional music. Having understood the history of these songs, some native and many non-native to the area, I applied them within the context of the informants lives.

Though literacy was limited in the mountains, oral tradition through song was alive and well, revealing a sophisticated people with a form of literature that developed and varied according to place, time, and culture. This continuance of oral tradition in the Blue Ridge should not, however, be sensationalized to such a degree that the people of the area are mistaken as living relics. The living relics myth of the Blue Ridge imagines an archaic, quaint people living in the celtic used-to-be of Scotland/Ireland, untouched by the influence of the world around them. This is a myth that I, admittedly, held at one time before I delved into the actual music and world of these families, which the archival accounts so wonderfully portray. It is the mission of this research is not only to debunk this myth of local color fiction, but also to call attention to the modernity and development of the families of the mountains prior to the present Shenandoah National Park.

The lyrics function as a literature to the Blue Ridge people via multiple facets, preserving, changing, and adapting to the specific, localized culture and histories of this region in oral accounts. Though literacy was limited in the mountains, oral tradition through song was alive and well, revealing a sophisticated people with a form of literature that developed and varied according to place, time, and culture. These lyrics incorporated outside influences along the way, revealing a sophisticated, non-insular community. The work of Fiona Ritchie and Doug Orr in

Wayfaring Strangers: The Musical Voyage from Scotland and Ulster to Appalachia, chronicles the transfer of traditional ballad and song to Appalachia and guides my analysis of the lyrics and the ways in which lyrics change over time as a result of experience and geographic place. The findings of these songs are given in three thematic chapters that focus on balladry of love and displacement, minstrel ballads, and Crimesong ballads.

It is my hope, that through this study of the Blue Ridge area of Appalachia, the research will illuminate a diverse, rich, and localized culture that inspires a better understanding of the Blue Ridge mountain families. Despite the hardships of not only settling in the mountain regions of Virginia, but also in being forced out of them, the Blue Ridge people reflect a profound resilience and adaption. Throughout all of the challenges and changes of their history, one thing remains constant in the lives of the Blue Ridge communities: their enduring music.

Chapter 1: The History of the Shenandoah National Park

“If they’d left those people there, and let them farm and leave them just like they had been, it seems to me that that would have been more interesting to the tourists that came through, than just to not see anybody in it” (Lam, 31).

The Shenandoah National Park spans a sweeping 197,438 acres of the Blue Ridge Mountains from Strasburg to Waynesboro, Virginia. My research focuses on this 311 square mile region of Appalachia and its surrounding areas. In telling the history of these peoples, historians use multiple terms to identify the same peoples that are said to have populated the mountains predominantly. These people are referred to as the *Scotch-Irish*, *Scots-Irish*, and *Ulster-Scots*. Despite the slight variation, the names which will be utilized at length throughout this chapter all refer to the same Scottish people who moved from Scotland to Northern Ireland, then from Northern Ireland to North America. Though the history of these Scots-Irish people will be addressed in-depth, the many other settlers of the Shenandoah region will also be explored in an effort to lend a fuller and more accurate depiction of those who settled the Blue Ridge Mountains. Then the chapter will move into the establishment of the Shenandoah National Park and the wrenching displacement and subsequent re-settlement of these peoples who came to be known as the Blue Ridge ‘mountaineers’. At this point, the stereotypes and generalizations of the ‘isolation’ of these people will be addressed with the historic presence of both the railroad and radio that penetrated the culture, and notably the music of those living in these mountains. Throughout the history of the settlement and forced migration of the Blue Ridge natives, a theme of diversity and connectedness to the outside world is present, confirming the complexity of these people.

Settling the Region: Early Settlers

The original settlers of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Appalachia began their first of many journeys from Scotland to Ireland in the 17th and 18th centuries. The new name, ‘Scots-Irish’, relating their heritage would come to distinguish them after their migration to the Ulster area of Ireland. The term Scots-Irish as this research will use it refers solely to a more or less homogeneous population group who made two major migrations: first a move from West Scotland to Northern Ireland and then from Ireland to North America, where they populated the mountainous terrain from about Maryland to Georgia. ‘Ulster-Scots’, however, will be employed to describe the people of the first migration from Scotland to Ireland, prior to their becoming Scots-Irish. This migration was incentivized by King James VI of Scotland when he gained the thrones of both England and Ireland from Queen Elizabeth I. To gain control over the “savage” and “unruly” Irish now under his dominion, he sent a mixture of English and Scots families to populate the area and garner loyalty to his authority (Wood and Blethen 5). James’ hope was that the families planted among the Irish would eventually convert the Catholic and Gaelic-speaking Irish to Protestantism, the English language, and by-default the authority of the Crown.

Though the Great Famine of Ireland did deeply affect Ulster area and motivated a second major emigration for the Ulster-Scots, the Ulster-Scots began emigrating even thirty years prior to the famine. Families would send out their most adventurous members to settle in America and report back. The settling members prepared stable homesteads for the latter migrating family members to arrive to (McKee 27-29). These Ulster-Scots originally settled in Pennsylvania and then migrated down the Great Wagon Road and populated the Shenandoah Valley. The path taken by these settlers would become known as the “Irish Tract”. Matthew McKee in his piece, “A

Peculiar and Royal Race': Creating a Scotch-Irish Identity, 1889-1901" focuses on the more hilly-billy connotations of the term 'Scots-Irish', as he aptly describes the common Appalachian identity as follows:

Late nineteenth century creators of the image of southern Appalachian identity portrayed its inhabitants in both negative and positive forms and often accorded them a Scotch-Irish heritage. Commonly held to be the dominant ethnic group, they were portrayed at one extreme as feuding, moonshine drinking, in-bred hillbillies, or, at the other end of the scale, as independent, buckskin-clad frontiersmen. While both portrayals ran concurrently, the positive image tended to be associated with the past, whereas the negative stereotype dominated the discourse in the 1890s. (McKee 67)

To homogenize the 'Scots-Irish' to one specific type of people, whether in the extreme of elitist Presbyterian ministers or that of mountain hillbillies, is to overlook the diversity that is the Scots-Irish race. In colorful miscellany, the Scots-Irish populated the area of the Shenandoah, with a sweeping scope from Presbyterian ministers in the Valley areas to farmers and tanners in the Shenandoah National Park (McKee 28). This complex cultural identity of the Scots-Irish aids in comprehending why the music of the region, correspondingly, was varied.

What is more, there is an extensive influence and settling of many ethnic groups besides that of the Scots-Irish, which include Germanic families, Native Americans, and African-Americans. In fact as early as 1731, a certain Mr. Joist Hite purchased from the royal patent, Lord Fairfax, a 10,000 acre tract throughout the Valley which he settled with both Germanic and Scotch-Irish homesteaders under the leadership of Robert McKay (Dohme 13-14). The newfound part-

ners managed to purchase another 70,000 acres, which they agreed to split in such a way that the Germans would settle in the eastern half from Winchester to Luray, while the Germans would settle Winchester to Strausburg. The Blue Ridge mountains of the Shenandoah National Park actually span` both of these Germanic-Scotch-Irish split regions (Suter 8). Meanwhile there was a large Native American population spanning the Shenandoah region, which even helped and cooperated with the new settlers. But, by 1740, as more and more settlers gushed into the forests, diminishing game and land, there began to be antagonism towards the European settlers from those who first populated the region (Dohme 17). Though it would be extraneous to recount all of the deep interrelationships of Native Americans and settlers in the Blue Ridge region, it is absolutely imperative to note that these relationships did exist and native-settler interaction was highly common.

For all of the diligent documentation that exists on the first European settlers, there is only a small knowledge of the African-American population with in the Shenandoah, though the population was very much present. It is thought, however, that most Africans were either slaves or voluntary settlers within the German, Swiss, Scots-Irish, and English population under the Beverly land grant in Augusta County (Suter 10). The African-American population continued to grow, most in slavery, though a handful were free as is documented by the Virginia Assembly (Suter 11). Though the presence of African Americans in the mountains themselves small and there was minimal interaction between white families and free and enslaved African-Americans when they would come off the mountain or interact in sales, as is recorded by the archival informants.

Early Settlers: Education and Land Acquisition

The Shenandoah National Forest was the limits in access to education, it should be noted that from an early day education and land ownership belonged to wealthy land-owners, not the actual inhabitants of the mountains. Darwin Lambert's, *The Undying Past of Shenandoah National Park*, shows the monopoly on land-ownership of "piedmont and valley planters, farmers, and businessmen from the beginning of the white [European settler] era" (Lambert 143). Tenant farming was a common practice for the people of the Shenandoah wherein often large herds of cattle were grazed across the mountains; Caves and Meadows families of the area are examples of this farm practice. In Dark Hollow, the cattle would graze and the tenants would tend to the cattle assiduously, though no formal agreement existed (Lamber 137). Without this formal agreement, the landholders maintained a non-obligatory position with the tenants that allowed them to benefit from tenant work-efforts. It was also known that Presbyterian ministers were esteemed in the Shenandoah Valley and Blue Ridge. They were often put into positions to that allowed them to increase their own economic success and social status (McKee 27-29). Nancy T Sorrels and Katharine L Brown in their piece, "Presbyterian Pathways to Power: Networking, Gentrification and the Scotch-Irish Heritage among Virginia Presbyterian Ministers, 1760-1860", state that "During that first century of Presbyterianism in Virginia, ministers who were initially religious leaders of modest dissenting frontier farmers, became substantial landholders and often slaveholders" (McKee 28) A deep respect for the education of the ministers also placed in them positions of power regarding education. The intermingling of these factors all worked to sway the balances of wealth, education, and power to those who did not live on the mountains, and ensure a sense of limited agency to the residents of the mountains themselves.

Settling the Region: Later Waves of Mountain Migrants

After the first settlement another wave of migrants came to the mountains, many of whom sought relief from the conscription of the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. Though the Blue Ridge was slightly more isolated from the direct warfare in the Revolutionary war, the Civil War brought the fighting directly to Swift Run Gap of the park area and many other regions (McKee 28). The missing men of the Shenandoah Region who fled to the mountains to escape fighting in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars are documented well by the Dayton Heritage Museum in Dayton, Virginia. Amidst the upset of the wars, it was not uncommon for people to flee deeper into the remote regions of the mountains to avoid the conflict.

Mr. James Burner, a former resident of the area of the Shenandoah National Park, speaks of the population of the mountains to flee war, and the subsequent origins of his own family. Upon being asked about the origins of his family, Mr. Burner speaks to the population of the mountains in the following interview:

Well some of them originated right from colonial people. Most of them lived back in the mountains for several reasons. I think possibly the most of them was during the Civil War - era - that some of them were just plain draft dodgers. They didn't want to be conscripted...They moved back in the mountains. They hid out. Some of them went back in there for trouble reasons. Some of these names, now - if you look back to even the signing of the constitution of the united states - these names, now are right there...They had good names and a lot of 'em had good beginnings. The Deaverses and the Corbins and Dodsons - all those - they go on back now to early colonial times. But these were

people that got in trouble or wanted to get away. They liked the wilderness. They didn't wanna live in towns. They didn't like -maybe they had brushes with the law.. A lot of 'em were runners... for one reason or the other... because they couldn't have picked that type of life from - but after a generation or two, it became a way of life. That's the way I look at it...And then they are young and they weren't happy. And they wanted to go back.

Now, you won't find a one of them now that's not proud of that - of being a mountaineer.

(Burner 28-29)

Mr. Burner's commentary on the populating of the mountains and the fleeting shame of being a 'runner', that became enveloped in a larger identity that was one to be proud of—to be a mountaineer—is essential to understanding the Blue Ridge people's conceptions of themselves. The background of those living on the Blue Ridge faded in light of the new identity of being a mountaineer. This conceptualization of self reaches into the songs sung by this society, which created their own culture, infused with a diverse range of backgrounds.

The New Deal: Building A Park

After centuries of a lifestyle on these mountains, the identity of the mountaineer was broken by the implementation of the Shenandoah National Park, which successfully moved men and women off the mountain and forced them to redefine themselves. In the 1920s, a deep interest in building a park on the land began from the Federal Government that described the land as a "450,000 acre vacation paradise almost at your door, which you can leave as a heritage to your children and your children's children, is worth even more, and is a challenge to every American

who wants to enrich the future of his country” (Powell 76). Concurrent with such glorifying descriptions of the land, the Government also described the ‘mountaineers’ as an irresponsible people who did not value or care for the land properly. Many accounts spoke of the people of the mountains as an impoverished people, “irresponsible, untaught, untrained, often non-law abiding, unfitted to meet the competition of modern life” (Powell, 76-78). Charles and Nancy Purdue in their work, “Appalachian Fables and Facts: A Case Study of the Shenandoah National Park”, refer to these stereotypes and generalizations about the natives as “culture-trait fable” (Purdue 88). It was this fable, however, that made it possible for the people of the Blue Ridge to be considered dispensable and irrelevant in the grander picture of a national park.

A profound collection of letters of families being forcibly displaced from the mountains is captured in the book, *Answer At Once*, which truly describes the attitudes of these mountain peoples towards the horrors of their forced expulsion from the Blue Ridge Mountains. These letters are stored in Luray, Virginia. In order to build the park, the Commonwealth of Virginia Public Park Condemnation Act of 1928 was enacted, acquiring three thousand tracts of land from “condemned” homes of nearly five-hundred families (Powell 2). The collection brilliantly uses the voices of the actual displaced families to tell their own stories. The letters take the form of complaints, pleas, and requests at the hands of park officials over the ten years or so of the final implementation of forcing all families out of the park. The letters vary in literacy and eloquence, but speak for themselves to the literacy among the residents.

Archive informant Mr. Howard Lam, who lived near Jollett Hollow of the park region, explains his own and his neighbors understandings and misunderstandings about the move in his interview, showing the confusion in and resistance from these families. He speaks of his initial

understanding of the park saying, “I understood, that when they the government] first started that, they told them nobody would have to move. And then later on, after they got the land, then they started to” (Lam 30). He goes on to hedge that part of the reason that some residents consented to land-selling was the possibility of work. Lam tells of the resistance of a Mrs. Jenkins of the Jenkins family whom pictures document her being physically forced, by being carried, out of the house and put into a car (Lam 30-31). There were confusions, broken promises, and force.

Once relocated, many of these families would be brought to “resettlement projects” such as a one just outside the park boundary that boasted twenty-eight farms and homesteads (Lambert 249). Many people were also placed in “welfare-purchased houses” with minimal rent. That being said, of the total homesteads created, they only absorbed one-hundred-and-seventy-two families of the four-hundred-and-sixty-five recorded in 1934 (Lambert 249).

During and after this relocation, these families were placed into New Deal public works projects like the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) and the building of Skyline Drive; it is through these programs that the families adjusted to their new, estranged life off of the mountains. These CCC camps combined ‘mountain boys’ with ‘city boys’ but they each shared a “shortage of money made worse by the nationwide depression” which Darwin Lambert in *The Undying Past of Shenandoah National Park* claims to be the common-bond of the men (Lambert 223). Through these work programs, many of the young men would end up building the Skyline Drive through the very mountains that were once their home.

At the time of the New Deal and the park’s implementation, the way of life of the peoples of the park was immediately uprooted. Where once gradual and natural change was occurring in their culture and music, suddenly the most drastic change threatened to uproot all that these peo-

ple had known as familiar. A history was threatened to be annihilated, just as their homes had been, and its only preservation was worded in the songs as their literature. After the 1930s, a surge in scholarship and literature about and from Appalachia begins accordingly. People scrambled to place the history of Appalachia in more than a malleable song. What came out of these efforts was often a romanticized and idealized picture of Appalachia.

A Connected Region

An essential part of this history, which further discredits the isolationist, uneducated myth of the Blue Ridge people, were the two major feats of modern technology that connected the former residents of the park, with the outside world: the railroad and the radio. These two technologies should truly be described as incentives of creativity in Appalachian music, because they brought with them people with songs to share. The arrival of the railroads in Virginia through the Carolinas created an interconnection of stories, peoples, and music of a variety of cultural backgrounds. The C&O Railroad created in 1869 connected the Blue Ridge region of Appalachia to the 'outside' world. Songs were able to spread at a rapid pace as the railway brought visitors from all over the country through the mountains of Virginia.

In addition to the railroad, the invention of the radio heavily contributed musical repertoire of the people of the Blue Ridge; this variety of new tunes in combination with the old, shows the region to be far less isolated in its exposure or interaction with the outside world. The literature of music again shows the Shenandoah National Park peoples to be far more advanced than they were credited. Scott Hamilton Suter in his book, *Shenandoah Valley Folklife*, tells of the Saturday night gatherings of musicians to listen to the Grand Ole Opry on station WSM

(Suter 18). Presently, we would say these tunes have “become traditional in the valley” because they have been passed down from the point of their first debut, through generations (Suter 18-19). Non-local music was introduced via the radio and those tunes would carry-on into and form into the lives of the Blue Ridge people.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the history of the settlers and former inhabitants of the Shenandoah National Park reveals richly diverse population and lays to rest many of the misconceptions of the isolationist myth of the Blue Ridge Mountains as well as the fables of the mountaineer stereotype discussed. It is with great anticipation that the music of the people of the Blue Ridge will be explored in the following chapters, revealing these multifaceted, varying influences upon these people. Their literature—balladry—will speak volumes of an identity entirely singular to the people of the blue ridge.

Senior Thesis

Chapter 2: Balladry

“As old as hills” (Yager 39)

I. History of Balladry and the Blue Ridge

Rooted in one of the earliest traditions of storytelling known to mankind, the oral tradition of balladry naturally continued from the Scots-Irish in Ulster into the Blue Ridge Mountains. Scholars of the Shenandoah section of Appalachia have often drawn a direct connection between the region and its Scots-Irish ancestors. This tendency is a common theme to much of the musicological research of Appalachia, in which collectors such as James Childs and Cecil Sharp would seek to draw a perfect connection of the music to its European ancestry that presented an antiquated culture essentially unblemished and unmodified by time (Gold and Revill 55). These efforts on the parts of scholars reaffirm a distinctly Scots-Irish culture existing in the 'Irish Tract'. What these links between the ballads do miss, however, is the variety and the deviation in the multiple versions of the ballads. The ballads, many of stories of displacement and of lovers, carry into the musical repertoire of the families of the Shenandoah National Park, but the songs are adapted and modified. Though the culture and perpetuation of many of the ballads indisputably relates the natives of the Shenandoah National Park to their Scots-Irish ancestors, the ballads also bear influence of other more varied traditions.

Interest in balladry, especially that of Appalachia, continues to draw in scholars, but if these scholars were to simply look at the recorded songs by famed collectors, they would miss the richness and breadth of musical influences in Appalachia. According to local historian and Shenandoah folklife enthusiast, Dr. Scott H. Suter, the custom of balladry has "remained a part of the Valley repertoire since the earliest settlement" (Suter 22-23). Contributing to the current knowledge of ballads in Virginia and the Shenandoah region is the Virginia Folk-Lore Society founded in 1913. The Folk-Lore Society collected ballads throughout the state with a particular focus on the collection of *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* by famed collector, Francis James Child

as well as the work of Cecil Sharp (Suter 24). Sharp labored on collecting English folk music throughout his lifetime (1859-1924) and like Child, was selective about the types of music he was looking for and therefore contributing to the Virginia Folklore Society. The selectivity of course was to search for ballads of Anglo-Scottish origins, which tipped the research heavily toward these ballads and recognized the pedigree of these specific ballads rather than that of the various other influences (Gold and Revill 59). This perception of Anglo-homogeneity of Virginia's music is dissolved once of the people of the park are studied. The innate American element to folk, apparent since even the mid-nineteenth century is overlooked.

Ultimately, the Anglo-favoring collectors like Cecil Sharp work against the very purposes of this thesis because his work is focuses on acknowledging the British influence on songs of which "Pretty Polly" (i.e. "The Cruel Ships Carpenter") is one, and neglects the Scots-Irish, African-American, and many other musical influences (Ostendorf 193). Emily Kader in her work, "'Rose Connolly' Revisited: Re-Imagining the Irish in Southern Appalachia" argues that Sharp single-handedly undermined the Irish influence with his work (Kader 425). Each facet highlighted on its own, though important, tends to subtract from the greater image of the variety that is Appalachian music. What the musical collections of the people of the Blue Ridge exemplifies is great variety, with an undoubtedly Irish background. There was certainly an English presence in the area, as exemplified by Edward Nicholson Jr. who attests that his family first arrived to the area in 1715, settling at the 'foot of the mountain' (Smith 12). However, the advent of the radio as well as the prominence of the railroad, markedly influenced the songs of the peoples of the Blue Ridge. These influences came from a number of backgrounds, which will be discussed in future, chapters; the fresh music introduced into the Blue Ridge Mountains that will be dis-

cussed in the chapter, however, are of a more country-influence from the Grand Ol' Opry radio station. As the remembered ballads of archive informants Mattie Yager, Arlene Carr Abel, Edward Scott, and Paul Harris will show, however, there was a great variance in the types of ballads sung beyond the recorded British repertoire. These informants reveal a loose succession of influences from that of Anglo-Scotts to the early country of 'modern' American mountain folk.

In his book, *Shenandoah Valley Folklife*, Scott H. Suter speaks of the song, "Barbara Allan", a traditional Scottish ballad that was sung by a 'mountain woman' from Swift Run Gap in the Shenandoah National forest region (Suter 25); though the Scots-Irish presence in balladry is important, tunes like "Barbara Allan" tend to take the center-stage of research, while other popular non-Scots-Irish ballads exist. The veneration of "Barbara Allan" aligns well with the work of Child's in connecting the centuries-old Scottish ancestry of Virginia's music. Many fiddle tunes such with heavy Scottish and Irish background such as, "Whiskey Before Breakfast", also have carried on in the repertoire of mountain musicians. Though ballads and tunes such as these certainly point to the Scots-Irish lineage in the region of the Shenandoah National Park, there is what may seem to former song collectors as an astonishing prominence of other musical influences in the memory and playing of former park natives.

II. "Bury Me under the Weeping Willow Tree"

Beginning this study of the variety of balladry found in the music memory of the people of the Blue Ridge, is a song identified by former park native, Mattie Yager. Mattie, who was

raised near Old Rag Mountain in Madison County, identifies “Bury Me under the Weeping Willow” as one of the songs familiar to her. This ballad is an excellent example of a song more similar to “Barbara Allan” with Scots-Irish motifs, but it is also adapted to the local context of the mountains. In her interview, Mattie plays the melody to this ballad which she states was “as old as hills” on an autoharp (Yager 39). Recorded by the famous Carter family of Virginia in 1927, the song is written as a first-person narrative about a woman whose lover jilts her the day before their wedding. Though a lover’s lament is far from a unique theme to folk balladry, the influence of the Americana ‘native’ style of balladry in the song is apparent, because the song follows a first-person and sentimental, or personal, narrative (Ritchie 188). Connecting this song to its English and Scottish roots, however, is the motif of the ‘willow’ itself. Allisoun Gardner-Medwin in her piece, “The ‘Willow’ Motif in Folksongs in Britain and Appalachia”, underscores the prominence of the willow as a symbol for “for sorrow, specifically for lost love,” of jilted-lover from sixteenth century England and Scotland through the nineteenth century (Gardner-Medwin 241).

The chorus reads as follows:

Oh, bury me under the weeping will tree

Yes, under the weeping willow tree

So he may know where I am sleeping

And perhaps he will weep for me.

(Carter Family)

The elucidating knowledge of this motif of the ‘willow’ explains the narrator’s motive in desiring to be buried beneath this specific tree as well as why this song remained popular to the folk of the Blue Ridge mountain. In lamenting her heartbreak, the narrator states that her ex-lover would know where to find her if she lie beneath a weeping willow tree as she assumes he too would know the symbolism of a weeping willow. Additionally, it would align well with the history of the Scots-Irish settlement in the Shenandoah National Park area that the Scottish/English concept of the ‘willow’ would continue to retain its meaning and popularity with the former residents of the park like Mattie Yager. Though the ballad style may change, the centuries-old motif did not, which lends a beautiful combination of American folk with its roots in Appalachia.

III. “Going Across the Mountain” by Frank Proffitt

Another example of a popular folk ballad of the Blue Ridge, “Going Across the Mountain”, does not utilize the familiar Scots-Irish motifs but rather relates the migration of a mountain man who leaves his home to fight in the Civil War. Recalled by former native of Sugar Hollow, Arlene Carr Abel, this song is remarkable for the connection it reveals between the people of the mountain and the outside world. The ballad relates the farewell of a soldier joining in arms with the Union in fighting against the Confederacy during the Civil War (1861-65). In the story of the ballad, the protagonist leaves his home and love in the mountains, but vows to return to her after the war. The famous folk musician Pete Seeger (1919-2014), who journeyed around America with his famed “Seeger banjo” also recorded a version of “Going Across the Mountain” which can still be accessed today (Ritchie 262-63). This song defies the misleading assumption on the part of Appalachia-romantics as well as that of the National Government who laid claim on the

land in-part because of the ‘backwards’ and ‘disconnected’ ways of these people. “Going Across the Mountain”, written by Frank Proffitt in the early 1920s, describes his grandfather’s experience of leaving his mountain home to fight for the Union.

There are several elements that make this ballad of migration distinctly local to Appalachia, as it provides an example of how balladry morphed as times changed in Appalachia and discussed the more contemporary and relevant histories and experiences of natives. First instead of crossing oceans into the New World, the more contemporary narrators of folksong were crossing mountains into a world with which they had meager but some connection. Second, the fourth line of the first verse identifies the time period because the narrator says, “Going across the mountain/You can hear my banjo tell” (3-4) which alerts the listener that a banjo is being played, which was a distinctly American-made instrument from African-Americans who brought the instrument’s concept to America in the 1740s. It is also apparent that the narrator is joining the Union side because of his reference of the “boys in blue” as well as his pledge to “give old Jeff’s men/ A little of my rifle ball” (15-16) in speaking of Jefferson Davis, the former president of the Confederacy. This song thus reflects a particularly local account of Appalachia, though it is inconsistent with the the usual assumptions about the area. This account moves well beyond the Scots-Irish roots of the area.

IV. “When It’s Lamplighting Time in the Valley”

Moving a bit more into the music contemporary to the time of the dislocation of the Shenandoah park families, Edward Scott, a non-native to the mountains who served in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), identifies a song he would have learned from the ‘mountain peoples’ called “Lamplighting in the Valley” (Scott 17). What is first fascinating about Edward’s ex-

perience is that he claims, “I had never seen a mountain until I left home”. He identifies the deliberate segregation of the mountain folk who also ironically helped to build Skyline Drive through what once was their homeland. He claims that they had a barracks to themselves and there was little integration. He claims he learned “Lamplighting in the Valley” from them and that the tune originally came from ‘a little radio program’ in Harrisonburg (Scott 17). This bit of information also illuminates the infiltration of the radio and its definition as to what was ‘mountain music’, followed by the mountain folk claiming it as their own. A natural question presents itself then: why would these people claim a 1930s Vagabond’s early country song as their own? It seems that the answer is the fatalist view of the future and inaccessible dream of what once was in their area, would resonate well with those forcibly removed from their former way of life that essentially becomes a dream in the dark reality of their uncertain futures off the mountain.

In understanding the question of the function of “Lamplighting Time in the Valley” as a song in the lives of the people of the Blue Ridge Mountain, it useful to keep in mind Edward Comentale’s commentary in his essay, “‘Thought I Had Your Heart Forever’ or the Modernity of Early County Music”. Comentale defines early country music as “a specifically modern form, emphasizing a distinctively modern detachment...that increasingly informs its musical production and reception in the twentieth century” (Comentale 212). He presents the genre of early country music as one that is a fragmented new version of the livelihoods of people in which “the family, the farm, the fiddle, the landscape itself—appears loosed from foundations”(Comentale 213). The context of songs like “Lamplighting” shows the fragmentation of the family and separation of man from his cabin home (1). The first person narrator never discloses the “crime” (18) that caused him to “sin against [his] home and [his] loved ones” (15) that he should pay peni-

tence on this earth to “evermore roam” (16). A ‘lamp’ burns “bright in a cabin” somewhere but the narrator is never able to return home. The narrator claims that only “in dreams I go back to my home” (6) and eventually he shall “change all my ways and I’ll meet her / Up in Heaven when life’s race is run” (19-20). The narrator is removed from home and familial ties and even the valley landscape itself, as seems common to the anxieties of other early country lyrics. This song seems to address well the same changes those in the Blue Ridge were facing. With the advent of the radio and soon their eviction from their mountain homes, the old way of life was unstopably changing.

In minding this unstoppable change and uncertain future for the rural person, country music, as Comentale wisely points out, seems to be acutely self-aware, if not altogether self-conscious that the former, rural way of life is passed. The Vagabonds hit and other popularized folk and mealy sounds of early country music constitute a response to the new materialism of the time—one of which the people of the Blue Ridge Mountains were also subjected to (Comentale 218). In “Lamplighting” as in many of these early country songs, everything has already been broken and/or fallen. In “Lamplighting”, the despondent perspective of the narrator is one that speaks from a crime already committed to a family he is already broken from. His hopes and dreams are irreconcilable to his present situation and he “never can go [home]” (12). The home is abstract and only accessible to the narrator through ‘dreams’ (6). These lyrics serve to wrestle with the uncertainties and anxieties of the time.

Considering the implications and literary of “Lamplighting”, the meaning of the ballad of concurs with the adoption of it by the former residents of the Blue Ridge working alongside Edward Scott and the other men of the CCC. When these men had been separated from their cabin

homes, families, and former way of life, this song, would resonate with the idea of a past that can never be revised, one remaining in a dreamlike state. Scott's recollection of the song shows the receptiveness of the Blue Ridge people to outside music as well as their adaptation of the music to their own lives.

V. "The Blue Ridge Mountaineer"

Though "Lamplighting" is an example of a sort of chosen exile and the reality of modernity that hints at the Blue Ridge person's experience in leaving the mountain, the song "The Blue Ridge Mountaineer" profoundly encapsulates the peoples' reaction to their forced migration from the region. Additionally, a poignant difference exists in the reaction from the father to his son to this removal. Archive informant Paul Harris, who grew up on his family's sixty-three acre mountain place, records the song written by his father, Mr. Edward A. Harris, called "The Blue Ridge Mountaineer" (Lambert 254). The verses recount Mr. Harris's experience in the "Blue Ridge hills" (1) and the way in which his land was taken with him. Each verse, consisting of four lines, ends with the refrain "But now I'm down in this low land/ Where the water is warm and land's all poor" (Harris 41).

Prior to moving off the land, the Harris family would help look after the cattle of "Valley farmers" who graze between seventy-five to one hundred cattle per farm on the nutrient-rich 'blue grass' of the Blue Ridge (Harris 4). Paul Harris recalls raising large sums of cabbage and potatoes that they would haul to sell beyond the mountain. The farm was well-outfitted as well with a spring house, hen house, stables, and the like (Harris 2-3). It was this lifestyle that the Paul's father recounts in his song. He recalls the farm saying:

I have a good spring and a spring house combined.

I hate to go and leave it behind.

I have a good orchard and lots of good fruit.

I often watch my big hogs root.

(Harris, E.)

After Harris's father spends the first several verses fondly describing his former home's wilderness landscape, then speaks of his subsequent forced removal from the land. Part of this scenery of his home that Harris's father describes are "the whippoorwills" (2), "the lightnin' [that] gave such a beautiful sight" (3), and "where the wildcats hopped from rock to rock" (8). He claims he "lived up there as happy as could be" (9), until "one cold dark evening about four o'clock/ On my front door I heard a knock" (11-12). This 'knock' brings "government people with papers, in there hands/ saying "Old man, we have taken your land" (13-14). He also compares the bountiful harvests of crops, such as potatoes, to the meager yields in the 'low land' of potatoes "so little I ate them skin and all" (28). From this point, the narrator (Harris's father) copes with his displacement from those mountains he loved so well, saying:

"My wife and dear children stand by my side.

No we are trusting our Savior to send us a guide.

But come, dear children, don't grieve and cry,

God will prepare a home for you and I.

(Harris, E.)

In these lines, the home God ‘prepared’ could have a dual meaning, of both being a physical home after the family’s relocation, but also a heavenly home to look forward to. Similar to “Lamplighting”, this ballad hopes in an eternal home after a separation from home in the physical world renders a run homecoming in one’s current life impossible. Lastly, the narrator laments the family and home he left behind, despite the impoverishment of his conditions in a “tumble down shack” (45). He concludes the song with the following six lines (just a bit longer than the other verses):

I tho’t of my dear old mother I was forced to leave behind.

I tho’t of my dear old father, who to me was so kind.

I tho’t of my old mountain home which I loved so well.

My feelings at the moment no human tongue could tell.

Oh I would like to be back in my tumble down shack,

where the wild roses bloomed ‘round my door.

(Harris, E.)

Despite his father’s sadness at leaving the mountains, Paul Harris’s attitude towards the family’s move proves to be far more positive. In recounting the migration, his response is shocking negative about his family’s former lifestyle in the mountains and seems to view the move as a necessary progression for his family. He states:

But the park treated my dad..I think they treated my dad fair enough. Cause they gave him a decent price for his home. It likely killed him, but after all we family didn't mind, because we wanted to get out anyhow. And the next question, if we hadn't got out, we'd all been just as dumb as could be cause we couldn't learn nothing up there. And after we got in this family meeting decent people, business people, working with them and working for them, why we got to learning what we do. We didn't learn it back there in the hills. You didn't learn nothing back there..you wasn't much more than an animal. (Harris 18).

This analogy Paul Harris makes, likening his experience in the mountain to that of an animal is jarring in comparison with his father's romantic love for his mountain heritage; these incongruent accounts of a proud 'mountaineer' and his son show the variance of experience in the mountains particularly after displacement. There is not a common narrative from former park-inhabitants of wishing to be back in the mountains, though those narratives do occur. Instead, there can be a son with an acknowledgement for his father's love of the land but ultimately a sharply different perspective on his new situation. One man harbors far less of an attachment to his home in 'the hills' than the other, and perhaps for the heritage that the mountains contain.

VI. Conclusion

Upon understanding the contemporary nature of these ballads sung by archive informants, one may be discouraged at the loss—the loss of heritage, of ‘pure’ Scots/Irish/English balladry, and even the loss of history. It is true. However, the oral tradition is never static. Born in the custom of the oral tradition is an incessant oceanic surging of lyrics and songs which morph and churn in a constant state of change. Certain motifs and themes, such as the use of a ‘willow’ to denote a forlorn lover, remain, but the content is altered. If balladry truly serves its intended purpose as a literature to the lives of these people, then its re-imaginings and new forms make sense in the context that the Blue Ridge people’s lives had changed drastically in not only their migration from the forest but also in the wars and advancement of technologies propelling them into the twentieth century.

As Fionna Ritchie describes the emergence and popularity of these ballads ‘native to America’, she states:

The native ballads tend to be more topical, based on dramatic events in living memory, such as murders, battles, explorations, adventurous occupations, and colorful local incidents. They are more subjective, sentimental, and personal than the older Child ballads and frequently have a first-person narrative, concluding with a moral to the story. (Ritchie and Orr 188)

The new songs of popularity, arising around the 1920s-30s, such as “Lamp Lighting Time in the Valley” and “The Blue Ridge Mountaineer”, are naturally a better representation and literature for the lives of the people of the Blue Ridge mountains. Over time an appreciation for the Anglo-Saxon roots of Appalachian music declined and in its place arose an admiration for this

music as a creation of the “common man” (Ostendorf 193). The “common man” function and purpose of Appalachian balladry, reflecting contemporary and evolving concerns, would of course necessitate a shift in subject matter and lyric because of the changing landscape and culture all around the mountain natives.

Chapter 3: Minstrelsy in the Blue Ridge Mountains

“My daddy, he played the banjo...After he died, we still had a banjo” (Lang 13)

The musical literature of the people of the Blue Ridge mountains was not homogenous, neither before nor after the advent of the radio when more modern folk songs were being introduced to Appalachian audiences. There exists a comprehensive variety of song that indicates the sophistication and at least somewhat culturally informed state of this particular mountain society, despite the stereotypes of its being insular. This variance and diversity, which moves well beyond the constraints of a well-preserved time capsule of Scots-Irish and English heritage, is propounded by the deeply ambivalent convention of minstrelsy. In fact, the propensity of historians of the nineteenth century to promote a myth of Appalachia as timeless place is an example of ‘local color fiction’ (Straw and Blethen 46). As it was briefly discussed in the former chapter in the ballad, “Going Across the Mountain”, the banjo itself is not a creation of white but rather an instrument brought to the America by Africans in the 1700s and later recreated by a former slave. Ultimately though, it would be a white minstrel by the name of Joel Walker Sweeney who would popularize the 5-string banjo; Sweeney of the Virginia Minstrels serves as an example of the theft of culture and heritage that was minstrelsy and ultimately left an enormous redesign upon old-time, mountain music as we know it today. Though there are a plethora of minstrel songs identified by the Shenandoah archive informants, this chapter will focus on two highly popular songs called “Golden Slippers” and “Old Dan Tucker”. Each song does well to indicate the prominence and resonance of the particular songs to the peoples of the Blue Ridge Mountains, as well as to supply a range of points of view of minstrelsy. To understand the function of the narrative of these songs, is to better understand the lives and perceptions of these informants which

include Elzie Cave, Nettie Breeden Lang, James Burner, Arlene Carr Abel, and Virginia and Robert Kenney.

Local Color Fiction

Before the history of minstrelsy as well as the content of the songs sung in Blue Ridge can be covered, it is first important to understand the literary genre of Local Color Fiction and the way in which specifically functions for the histories of those in the Shenandoah region. “Local color fiction” is a term used to define region’s uniqueness, by its defined characteristics, which at the same time marginalizes and/or overlooks the variety of ethnicities and backgrounds in a region (Allred 155). So, in defining the ‘unique’ characteristics of a region, the historians homogenize the culture and the variety of music that characterized it. This in turn limits the understanding of the literature—and the music. The term is useful to this research because it acknowledges that the ‘white’ Scots-Irish history is not the only history of the region. Rather, the Scots-Irish music has benefitted from the styles of many styles, all melded together in the distinctive playing and Appalachian culture of the Blue Ridge mountains. One of these prominent styles is that which originated in the tradition of minstrelsy. As the archive informants list numerous songs which can be traced back to minstrels, there is no question that more than a Scots-Irish music culture dominated the lives of these people.

In fact, the function of ‘local color fiction’ not only stands for ethnicity but also relates to the overall fictionalized stereotypes of Appalachia and is a disservice to the society of the Blue Ridge. Katie Algeo in her essay, “Locals on Color: Imagining Identity in Appalachia”, speaks to the pervasive stereotyping that transpired towards Appalachia and the natives’ inability to control

it. The genre of local color fiction had a profound and lasting effect on the definition of the Appalachian region(Algeo 27-28). The characteristics of Appalachia that historians, scholars, and musicologists use to define it present the ‘otherness’ of the region and its ‘backward’ ways. By 1880, the ‘southern mountaineer’ became a type, one of a “fierce and uncouth race”(Lambert 171, 173). Algeo captures the effect of local color writing well in her statement, “representations of culture in local-color writings also tend to focus on cultural survivals such as log cabins and vernacular dialect, contributing to the sense of a cultural stasis and underplaying the diversity present in Appalachia” (Algeo 34). Of course, this stereotype was inaccurate as we now know of the mix of piedmont planters, Germans, English, Native Americans, and many others who inhabited and tamed the area of the National Park. The prevalence of minstrel song in the remembered music of park families is important not only in the fact that it shows the regular movements of people and exchange of cultures and stories through song within a vast expansive of the country, but also in that it shows the relevance of the songs to the people of the Blue Ridge. Thus, the reverence for and veneration of these songs breaks down the otherness inherent in the misleading local color fiction of both Appalachia and of African-Americans in the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries.

History of the Minstrels

In order to understand what is both despicable and heartening about the popular entertainment of minstrelsy, it is imperative to understand the roots of the minstrel shows and what inspired them—that which they stole (Lott 3). The spirituals, tales, folk ballads, and the banjo, all of which are generally associated with caucasian Appalachian peoples of European descent,

actually originated with and belonged to African-Americans from whom the blackface minstrels stole. Though it is unclear exactly how the blackface minstrelsy began, the performers seem to have been inspired by the popularity of New York's first black theater company founded in the early 1820s. The African Grove theatre gained popularity and performed many original pieces and produced even international recognition for some of their performers (Southern 4-5). In the 1840s, both white and black "troupes" of minstrels emerged. The blackface minstrels were white men who had exposure to African-American music and then covered their profiles with black cork soot on their profiles, singing the songs they picked up often in an exaggerated dialect and playing the banjo (Davis 30). The songs, such as "Darling Nellie Gray", "Golden Slippers", "Old Dan Tucker", and many more, gained high popularity with white audiences and the songs played at these traveling performances would be absorbed into the musical repertoire of the communities they reached.

In Dan Stein's piece, "'A happy go lucky sort of type of fellow' The Productive Ambiguities of Minstrel Sounding", he argues that this popularizing of African-American culture through minstrelsy by white performers to white audiences marks the beginning of the commercialization and "primary paradigms for the whole enterprise recognized now as the popular culture industry" (Stein 152). Not only the songs, but also the instrument of the banjo, used to play songs was of course of African origin. It was considered "black folk instrument" (Winans 407) into early twentieth century, until the advent of minstrels adapted and presented the instrument to larger audiences. It was minstrel, Joe Walker Sweeney, of the Virginia Minstrels who 'popularized' the banjo to the wider audiences. Confirming the expectation that the Appalachian peoples first were introduced to the banjo through minstrelsy, Robert Winnans in his research, "The Folk, the Stage,

and the Five-String Banjo in the Nineteenth Century”, found that the earliest mountain folk style of banjo playing was “essentially identical to the early minstrel style” (Winans 416).

“Old Dan Tucker”

“Old Dan Tucker”, popularized by minstrel Daniel D. Emmett of the Virginia Minstrels, is a prime example of a piece from the blackface minstrelsy. Archive informants Mr. and Mrs. Elzie Cave as well as Nettie Breeden Lang, who were all from Dark Hollow prior to the establishment of the park, recall this as a ballad known to and played by them. Though the exact date and place of the song’s origin is unknown, it was spread by the Virginia Minstrels and Daniel D. Emmett lay claim to the tune. As Curtis Owens, a scholar of folklore, suggests however, “Old Dan Tucker” is a song that extends much beyond Daniel D. Emmett the self-proclaimed writer, even though the song is thought to have been in existence long before he published the lyrics under his name (Owens 448). Emmett’s personal perpetuation of the tune of course carried much of the typical connotations of the minstrelsy in the jarring imitation and caricatures of African-Americans and the use of exaggerated dialect often in reciting the lyrics (Shrubsole 27). This song appears everywhere from the Carolinas to Ohio with many added lyrics and versions. Part of the reason for this spread is the traveling nature of the minstrels; one could almost consider the songs planted in whatever soil at which they arrived and once there, they take root and adapt accordingly to the place and culture of wherever they are. At least it is this nature of growing that seems to have occurred in Dark Hollow for the informants who carried these songs with them. The following analysis, particularly in keeping in mind that the impression and connotations of

the blackface minstrels who first brought it would fade over time, may help in understanding why the Caves and Mrs. Lang would remember them.

From even the first listen or read, the ballad of “Old Dan Tucker” presents a disturbing scene in its repeated refrain which reads as follows:

Get out the way old Dan Tucker
You're too late to git your supper
Supper's gone and dinner cookin'
Old Dan Tucker's just a-standin there lookin'
(Owens 446)

This refrain places the person of Old Dan alone, outside the home, hungrily staring in at a dinner being cooked, and being commanded to leave the premises. In the context of this song and time-period, “supper”, would mean lunch, which is significant in that it means Old Dan not only missed the time-frame to have lunch, but also is excluded from the largest, most important meal of the day, dinner. He is rejected from the society and his “otherness” is presented constantly throughout the song; he is dirty, ‘backwards’, silly, and unable to fall into the time and life patterns of society. Because of his inability and these blatant distinctions that make a pariah to regular civilization, the constant refrain is “Get out of the way” as if he is blocking some sort of progression to the town “just a-standin’ there lookin’”.

Old Dan assumes a number of the aforementioned idiosyncratic characteristics throughout the progression of the song that seem to be account for why this narrator and the town ostrac-

cize him. First, we know he is grubby and 'backward' when we are told that he "washed his face in a frying pan" and "combed his hair with a wagon wheel" (2-3). So as the first reason of otherness, this man is not welcomed in the home because he is dirty. Next, we are told of his rustic, mountain entrance that sounds oddly close to the very stereotypes made of the Appalachian natives themselves. The narrator reports Old Dan coming to town "riding a billy-goat and leading a hound" (7) at which point the clownish portrayal of him is heightened when the goat throws Old Dan "right straddlin' a stump" (9). At the end of both these first and second verses to the song, the refrain reminds the audience and Old Dan Tucker that his is unwelcome and must "get out of the way". The repeated line that Old Dan is "too late" for his supper shows that the society that the narrator inhabits has ways of life, schedules, and culture does not have time or patience for Dan. He is "too late" and "a-standin" in the way.

Not only is Old Dan excluded from the home and thus personal lives of the people, but also he is prohibited and rejected from the society that is the town as a whole. The narrator in the third verse describes "The watchman feet was a-ruuning around / Crying 'Old Dan Tucker is come to Town" (13-14). There is much ruckus and even a "fight" (12) that breaks out on account of Old Dan coming to town. The listener is aware, however, that Old Dan did not start the fight because the narrator repeats that "Old Dan Tucker's just a-standin' there lookin'". It is his comic presence alone that seems to incite the chaos.

The switching of voice from first, second, to third person that the narrator makes in the ballad also speaks to the representation of Old Dan as an outcast to society, creating a 'we' versus 'them' (or in this case 'him') dichotomy. The narrator speaks in third-person about the mythic Dan Tucker, but then addresses him specifically in the refrain telling him "you're too late", then

he moves back to his audience saying “Old Dan Tucker’s just a-standin’ there lookin’”. By the third verse of the song, the narrator speaks in the first-person stating, “I came to town the other night” (11), to watch a “fight” (12) arise in the town upon Old Dan’s entrance.

There seem to exist two to three possible functions of this song for the former residents of the park. First perhaps they identify with Old Dan and his ‘otherness’. Second, to point to someone and ostracize someone when you also are ostracized lends a sort of power hierarchy. Old Dan is sort of a motif in himself because he is the odd-ball of the community. There seems to be some existence of a hierarchy of occupation and person as result of those with and without land and the different types of settling of the areas. Certainly, there were social taboos in existence. While it may be possible that Old Dan was also a comic (mis)representation of the African-American, this seems to be more unlikely. The lyrics do not suggest a race for Old Dan and the implications of his race were made by the obvious association created by the blackface performers themselves. Without the minstrels living in the mountains to regularly reinforce this image, it seems Old Dan would take on more of a general outcast character in the community instead of one of color. He is outcast for his persona and ‘backwardness’.

Certainly, some could hypothesize that the Blue Ridge natives would have possibly related to the sense of outcast that Old Dan Tucker, but this seems unlikely in considering how comic he is and also in the somewhat sophisticated social structure that most certainly did exist in the region. Though, it should be noted that Mr. and Mrs. Cave both perhaps were more isolated from society in that Mr. Cave’s family had settled the land for generations with the occupation of “farming patches” (Cave 16). Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Cave ever went to school, but Mrs. Cave claimed “I could read some, and I got by” (Cave 14). Mrs. Cave spoke of her father who used to

play banjo and claimed that it used to be played often. She was also able to quote lyrics to many songs in their interview. The Caves do however talk of their respective community in Dark Hollow which congregated frequently at Apple Butter Boilings, Christmas, and at regular church services. Whether at community work gatherings or church services, the people of Dark Hollow consisted of their own society, one which had its own customs and traditions. Such a society would also be able to relate to the idea of an outsider who did not conform to their social norms.

Nettie Breeden Lang, an informant who also records playing the song, presents a lifestyle of much more seclusion. Her father owned a copper mine and she rarely left home for anything but the grocery store which was about six to seven miles away. She records rarely getting off the mountain and going to very few dances (Lang 14). She reports her playing “Old Dan Tucker” on the banjo. One must wonder then, why or how the comical tale of a misfit person coming into a town with a watchman that sounds much different from these peoples’ own lifestyles, was perpetuated. If in fact the society of Dark Hollow could relate to this figure who doesn’t fall into the ‘civilized’ lifestyle, than the inhabitants of the area seem to take a higher level of sophistication, modernization, and development of their society. What the song does illustrate, however, is the influence or “theft” , through the non-local minstrel tradition. From this minstrel tradition, the Blue Ridge culture is introduced to forms of African American music, which in turn adapts those non-local forms of music to local concerns.

Golden Slippers

Despite the absolute theft and deliberate exploitation that was the tradition of blackface minstrelsy, gifted African-American songwriters like James A. Bland were able to infiltrate the

music scene and spread a prolific number of tunes to regions of Appalachia, including the Blue Ridge, which would be treasured and played by peoples into the present day. Davis shows the positive impact of such a controversial tradition in stating, “minstrelsy was a misleading representation of African-Americans to civil war soldiers. It was however, a major way of spreading these songs” (Davis). Arlene Carr Abel of Sugar Hollow, James Burner of Page County, and Virginia and Robert Kenney of Dicky Ridge all affirm the old-time “Golden Slippers” as a song common to and frequently played in the areas now claimed by the Shenandoah National Park.

Bland’s “Golden Slippers” was published in 1879 and was frequently played for black-face minstrelsy. James Bland was absolutely prolific in his time and his songs remain into the present day, but certainly Golden Slippers particularly is a song you cannot attend an old-time jam without hearing. The song speaks of the narrator’s special “golden slippers” which are saved for a special occasion of a “wedding day” and also the narrator claims “I [he] will wear up in the chariot in the morn” along with a “long white robe” (2-5). The narrator speaks of his worldly belongings like his banjo (9) in contrast with his almost ethereal, royal garments like his white robe and golden slippers. The narrator seems to be longing for heaven when he is awarded his inheritance.

The relevancy of this song to the Blue Ridge natives may lie in its overarching message that a person in a world devoid of niceties and luxury, that a person may hope to expect those material objects later in heaven. For Arlene Carr Abel as well as Virginia and Robert Kenney particularly, who were raised with difficult lifestyles of farming, with little education, the dream in something more may have contributed to the veneration of the song. No matter exactly how it

was popularized though, there is no doubt of the profound impact James A. Bland's "Golden Slippers", like Dan Tucker, had on the Blue Ridge communities.

Conclusion

It is a strange story of theft that is the history of minstrelsy. What is astonishing though is the perpetuation of folk-song that it gave and in some cases, the genius of African-Americans such as James A. Bland who wrote incredibly popular songs. This early exposure of the people of the Shenandoah National Park to the variety of cultures and peoples because of the advent of minstrel shows, reveals the peoples of the region to have a life exposed to the world with greater depth and brilliant origin and knowledge, that is apparent and manifested in the music. The boundaries of Appalachian, minstrel, and African American all intertwine and so it would be inaccurate to separate them from one another; yet, they are each fictionalized identities that were and sometimes still continue to be marked by 'otherness'. In this way, it is exciting to consider the function of minstrelsy in the Blue Ridge because the binary of otherness is dismembered. These songs tell a story and encapsulate a perception of life that was relatable and respected by the people of the Blue Ridge.

Senior Thesis

Chapter 4: CrimeSong Balladry

“All sad. Every one of them. They was sad ballads” (Burner 20)

Within the frightful lyrics of popular murder ballads derived from the informants of the Shenandoah National Park reveal the families connection with the outside world as well as their complex conception of murder ballads. Though broad-sweeping, the genre of CrimeSong retells crimes of all kinds with a specificity to culture and place that is reflected in their lyrics; my research investigates the fixation upon murder balladry in Appalachia, particularly in the Blue Ridge mountains. The first study of CrimeSong balladry will be that of the “The Jealous Lover”. Tracking this tune quickly poses a challenge because of the sheer breadth of variations of the song. Some versions refer to it as the “The Jealous Lover”, while the more popularized rendering is called “The Jealous Lover of the Lone Green Valley”. The version of the murder ballad, “Jealous Lover” as it was sung by William Drummer, will be utilized because it most closely corresponds with the variation known to the archival account of Mr. James Burner (Fowke). As this chapter will assert, the plenteous versions of this murder-ballad are explained by the popularity of the specific themes it enacts, and therefore it easily melds other songs and stories within it; such that the version remembered by Mr. Burner may very well be a mix of the older British ballad “The Jealous Lover”, which speaks of a “Luella”, and it may even reference the Edgar Allan Poe murder-story, “Morella” in order to create the song he refers to as “Poor Morella”. Following the study of this more traditional ballad, the ‘modern’ murder-ballad, “Little Mary Fagin”, will be discussed. “Little Mary Fagan”, which recounts the actual murder of a girl named Mary Fagan from Georgia in meticulous detail, is important to the tradition of CrimeSong, for its distinctly

American flavor. While “The Jealous Lover” is more generalized, which allows for its great variance, “Little Mary Fagan” is specific. Yet, “Little Mary Fagan” remains true to many of the conventions of murder-balladry. It is these very conventions though that give cause for concern to the reader (or listener). It is in the scenarios that the woman is invariably placed in a situation where she is on her knees, pleading for her life from a murderer who is usually a lover. The woman is murdered and at moments, such as in the case of the lyrics of “The Jealous Lover” it is left to the singer’s discretion to punish the murderer with a final lyric. The popularity of CrimeSong murder balladry to the former residents of the Shenandoah National Park, exemplifies the connectedness of these people with the outside world through tunes like Mary Fagan, as well as the a fidelity to the balladry traditions of old with “The Jealous Lover”. In analysis of these ballads, the unsettling reality of the constant retellings of these songs will be explored and critiqued, lending a hopefully broader respect for but also keen awareness to the possible issues with these ballads, particularly as they leave the reader with an emphasis on his or her own moral judgment.

CrimeSong Balladry

Before much analysis can be made up on the songs of “The Jealous Lover” and “Little Mary Fagin”, the genre of CrimeSong itself and the way it is manifested in performance and theme within old-time murder ballads, demand discussion. These tunes classified as murder ballads that “were mostly tragical, and were denominated ‘love songs about murder’” in these areas of North American culture, where the oral culture that superseded written word, tended to be moralizing (Underwood and Parris 6). Yet, the songs still perpetuated a culture of violence in-

flicted on women by men, though some of these murder ballads limited the violence (Hastie 14). Anne Cohen in her book, *Poor Pearl, Poor Girl!: The Murdered Girl Stereotype in Ballad and Newspaper*, argues that the archetype of murdered girl is a “archetype of some kind existing in the minds of those people who write newspaper stories and those people who compose ballads, such as it influences, if not their perception of events, at least their framing of these into narratives” (Cohen 23). Cohen’s point is valuable in understanding songs like “The Jealous Lover” and “Little Mary Fagan” because she underscores the murdered-girl model’s ubiquity in balladry. The presence of this model is so strong, in fact, that it is easily apparent in the ballads played in this region of Virginia.

What is even more disturbing is the frequent absence of a punishment for the murderer, such that the murder appears to almost be glorified or at least presented in an a-moral style. Cohen, in discussing the elements of the murdered-girl genre song steps, speaks of this issue, stating “*occasionally* a fifth element—regret—is added, in which the murderer is sorry for his deed” (Cohen 20). This occasional implementation of justice within the songs brings into question the effect these lyrics would have upon their audiences. When the men perpetrating the violence are not brought to justice, the songs validate the right of men to inflict physical violence upon women as a method of controlling them.

“The Jealous Lover” (or, “Poor Morella”)

Burner identifies a song that seems to be an adaption and variation of the song, “The Jealous Lover of the Lone Green Valley”. He describes the process of passing-on tunes and the

new names they are given using the example of “The Jealous Lover of the Lone Green Valley”, though he calls it “Poor Morella”. Mr. Burner says:

They didn’t know the names of ‘em [songs]. But these tunes stuck in their mind...And they called ‘em something else. Somebody would say, ‘well, play about, play a little about that dead girl or in the tomb or something, you know. Well, they knew they was talking about ‘Poor Morella’. (Burner 20)

He quotes only the first verse of the song in the following version on the left, which corresponds very closely to first verse of “The Jealous Lover” on the right.

Way down in the lone green valley
 where the violets fade in bloom
 There lies my sweet Morella,
 a molderin’ in her tomb. (Burner 27)

Way down in yonder valley
 where flowers fade and bloom
 There lies my sweet Louella,
 In the cold and solemn dew[tomb].

(Fowke 2)

After many unsuccessfully attempts at finding the exact version matching Mr. Burner’s words, my research whittled down to two possible sources of this special adaption of “The Jealous Lover” as explanations as to how it came about. The first, is that the Edgar Allan Poe short-story, “Morella”, was adapted into this variation of the murder ballad. The second possibility is this reference actually corresponds more closely to “Poor Florella”, a British broadside ballad, and perhaps the region had changed the “F” for an “M” over the years of its singing. As it will be

discussed later, it is certainly possible that this version of “The Jealous Lover of the Lone Green Valley” is actually a blend of both.

The distinctive name, ‘Morella’, which only if not solely appears in the Edgar Allan Poe story, “Morella”, (Gargano 260) has links in its murder-plot that make it a possible adaption for the people of the Blue Ridge for their song, “Poor Morella”. The Poe story of “Morella” was first printed in April 1835 by the *The Southern Literacy Messenger*, a publication out of Virginia (Watts 249-251). It is very possible that this publication would have reached the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and at the very least, the surrounding area of the Shenandoah National Park at the time of its publishing in the early nineteenth century. If this is true, then it further confirms not only the singularity and variety within CrimeSong balladry, but also the use of CrimeSong balladry to work out crises of all kinds.

Poe’s “Morella” relates the story of a deceased woman who is reincarnated as her own daughter to the horror of her husband, the narrator; eventually, the narrator will murder his daughter to rid of the presence of his wife. Though the narrator is initially in love with the woman, Morella, his enamor “faded into horror, and the most beautiful became the most hideous” (Poe 470) as he is tormented by the literary study and knowledge of his wife. He begins to wish his wife, who is with child, dead. She is apparently aware of this wish, but in typical balladry fashion, the narrator states, “yet was she woman, and pined away daily” after him (Poe 471). This theme of the woman pining, even with the knowledge that her lover is repulsed by her and/or should wish to have her dead, is also the theme of “The Jealous Lover ”; the narrator of “The Jealous Lover” closes with the murdered woman to forgive ‘Willie’ as she says, “you know I’ve always loved you, and wanted to be your wife” (23-24). After her death, Morella is re-in-

carnated into her daughter and haunts the narrator. It is not until the narrator murders the daughter, that he rids of her. He aligns with the “tomb” detail of the song, “Poor Morella”, saying finally that “she died; and with my own hands I bore her to the tomb”(Poe 474).

According the version of the song, the girl in the “Jealous Lover” is usually called “Florella” or in the case of the Drumm version, “Luella” (Fowke 2), these closely-tied names both show the Scottish and Anglo origins of the song as well as the devotions in the name of the murdered-woman. “Florella” is likely a variant from the famous Scottish heroine, Flora MacDonald, who aided in Prince Charles Edward escape the antagonism from the English King George II (Creznic 23). Flora eventually moved with her husband, Allan, to North America, settling in North Carolina in the 1774 (Creznic 23). ‘Florella’ is thought to be a variant of ‘Flora’ as well as the traditional English name, ‘Luella’, which is the name that appears in Drumm’s version of “The Jealous Lover” (Fowke 2). Both names within the song versions provide ample evidence of the Scottish-English origins of the song, which aligns well with the Scots-Irish ancestry of the people of the Shenandoah. The name “Morella” may very well be a phonetic-issue from ‘Florella’ and ‘Luella’.

Regardless of its exact origin, “The Jealous Lover” is an excellent example of balladry in the traditional, British and Scottish styles. Told in the third person, as is typical of balladry, “The Jealous Lover” tells of a man who asks his bride-to-be to go on a walk with him so they may plan their wedding day. Throughout the course of the walk, the woman, ‘Morella’ begins “a-pleading for her child” (11-12). Eventually the jealous lover fatally stabs Morella and the song ends with her body in a tomb. The singer, William Drumm, adds his own extra verse at the song’s close to punish the protagonist, saying:

He on the gallows swinging
Upon the gallows high,
For the murdering of his sweetheart
On the fourteenth of July

(29-32)

What is disturbing about the usual absence of this verse is the moral-gap left to the listener to discern as to the wrongful act of the jealous lover. Instead, the listener would only be told that as she was “down on her knees a pleading/ A-pleading for her life” (17-18) and then that after the attack:

She died not broken-hearted
Nor did in sorrow dwell,
But in one moment parted
From the one she loved so well

(21-24)

Holding true to the convention of balladry, the woman on her knees pleading for her life is killed because of what appears to be a combination of jealousy and a child out-of-wedlock. Her murderer, however, is not brought to justice, but rather the listener is told she died peacefully and quickly, as if to almost soften the sinister crime. The message conveyed in this ballad, then, is ambiguous to all reading or listening because it leaves the audience to decide the morality of the murderer, rather than moralizing or warning of the wrongs of killing with a final verse. Unfortunately, the archival recording of Mr. James Burner does not recount whether he excluded or

included the 'gallows' for the jealous lover, but the haunting nature of the missing verse should certainly give cause for concern.

Little Mary Fagan

Unlike the vagueness and conventionality of "The Jealous Lover" the CrimeSong ballad of "Little Mary Fagan" is highly specific and rich with themes of murder, injustice, retribution, and morality. The song originated in 1913 in a trial in Atlanta, Georgia (Schmitz 59). Leo Frank was convicted and sentenced to be hanged for murder, and Newton Lee, the watchman also was charged as being an accessory to the murder (Schmitz 59). Virginia and Robert Kenney of Dickey Ridge, within the area of the Shenandoah National Park, record being familiar with the tune, "Little Mary Fagan". The Kenneys are proud to claim a long Scots-Irish ancestry, though they do not identify the details of their family's population of the mountain. Virginia Kennedy recounts the story stating, "Old Mary Fagan got killed. She worked in a pencil factory. Somebody killed her. And this man.... they could never find him see" (Kenney 37).

Though the ballad of fifty-two lines and thirteen verses, is too lengthy to meticulously analyze, the general features and events as they appear in the song's narrative discourse, can be broadly given: A young girl called "Little Mary Fagan" went to collect her weekly pay from a pencil factory at which she worked (1-4) and the narrator tells the audience that she left her home at the specific time of "eleven" (5). By the third and fourth verses, Mary is met by a 'Leo Frank' who threatens to take her life (9-12). She responds by falling "down on her knees" and pleading, but Leo fatally beats her with a stick (13-16). At this point, the story continues to be graphic as it describes in detail the blood that "rolled down her back" (18). The narrator records a watchman

named ‘Nemphon’ (Newton Lee in the real case) who observes the murder and calls the authorities, but the officers mistakenly blame him for the crime. The listener is then told of the mourning of Mary’s mother (33-36). In the next two verses, the narrator shifts to first-person and addresses the audience saying, preaching to them about the evil nature of the crime and need to bring Leo Frank, or ‘Frankie’ as the narrator calls him, to justice (37-44). What is strange in this version is that Frankie never seems to be convicted for the crime, even though he is in the true story. Instead, the narrator leaves it to “The courthouse in the sky” to inevitably condemn him (44). The last line of song states that “Christian does of heaven / Sent Leo Frank to hell” (51-52).

While the conventional elements making “Little Mary Fagan” a typical murder ballad are fairly self-evident, there are also many unconventional traits to this distinctly American song. They conventional characteristics are the murdered, young girl, who pleads for her life. The unconventional qualities, however, are much more rich and truly set the song apart, making it an interesting narrative to be present in the Blue Ridge. First, there are specific details, not only of brutality, but also of place, time, and the interior thoughts of the characters. The listener is told exactly when Mary left the house—at eleven—as well as what she thinks about as she is dying when “she remembered telling her mother / What time she would be back” (19-20). Second, there are multiple characters in play within the story, including the mother, Nemphon, officers, Judge Roan, and then of course Leo and Mary. Further amplifying the plot to this ballad is the racial injustice endured by Nemphokn who is said to have been an innocent, but had nothing to say to defend himself. Third, within the fourth to last verse, the narrator switches to the first-person and directly addresses the audience which is rare in CrimeSong. The narrator urges the listener to want penalty for Leo Frank saying, “Suppose that ‘little Mary’ / Belonged to you or

me” (39-40). Lastly the narrator is only vaguely brought to justice in the song, and seems to flee the repercussions of the gallows in the flesh in exchange for an eternal damnation in hell.

It is difficult to discern exactly why this specific murder became popular to the Kenneys or others of the Blue Ridge, but both its conventionality and unconventionality make it a fascinating piece to study. Unlike the “Jealous Lover”, “Little Mary Fagan” makes multiple efforts to show the injustice of the murder, not only from Mary and her mother’s perspective, but also from that of the wrongly convicted watchman. The specificity of the song is vital to its nature because there is something valuable to the listeners about knowing the details of the story—which is far different from the stereotypes and generalizations made in other murder ballads like “The Jealous Lover”.

Function of CrimeSong in the Blue Ridge Mountains

Though the exact function of CrimeSong within the psyche of the former residents of the Shenandoah National Park, can never quite be known, the comments of another archive informant, Mrs. Elzie Cave, may shed light on the people’s view of the ballads. Mrs. Cave’s comments regard the retelling of ghost stories and the like, which also provides a good commentary and reasoning for why these murder ballads are continually retold. Mrs. Cave comments on retelling these stories saying, “You take back at that day and time and people now, I don’t know why. Worst kind of thing happen[s] and you never hear nothing more about in a week. You see in the paper or you hear it on the television and that’s the end of it” (Cave 19). Her point is that these communities see value in passing on these stories, in remembering them. Depending on the songs explored, however, some may seem to be remembered to warn and moralize and audience,

while others, like a good ghost story, are almost to relish in discussing the unknown—the darkness of this world. Arthur Field complements this notion in his work, “Why is the ‘Murdered Girl’ So Popular”, he argues that the connection between “the modern pre-occupation with murder mysteries and the ‘murdered girl’ ballads at hand” are connected by their “use of both as outlets for feelings of aggression” (Field 117). Field’s suggestion of the murder-balladry as a two-fold outlet for aggression is plausible, of course, but also creates a further muddled morality to these stories. Just as many written stories do not regularly have a moralizing end or even a satisfying conclusion, so also CrimeSong ballads like “The Jealous Lover” leave the listener to judge the morality and condemn or condone the killer. Of course, there is an unsettling notion though that must be grappled with that these songs’ wild popularity and incessant retellings may condone a crime culture, specifically a crime culture against women.

What is more, it may be important to note the performative element to these songs, which also lends itself to interpretation. Though the folk tradition is for a monotone, distant, unattached narrator singing the words, any efforts on the part of the singer in voice inflection or emphasis could have rendered these songs in different ways to the audience. Lydia Hamessley in her work, “Giving Voice to “Pretty Polly”” looks into the performative nature of Appalachian music and its validation of sexual violence and misogyny towards women. Her ultimate goal is to “create a performance of Appalachian music that retain[s] the exuberance of the fiddle, the twang of the banjo, or the detachment of the voice (performances that, in effect, sound Appalachian) while presenting the violent lyrics in a way that does not celebrate or ignore the misogyny” (Hamessley 14). Hamessley rightly gives such an importance to the way these songs are performed, that a difference in performance could mean an entirely different interpretation all-together. Though it

is impossible to know how exactly the murder ballads were sung in the Blue Ridge Mountains, it remains possible that the ballads carried different meaning—towards or away from justice—for these peoples.

Conclusion

What shall we say then, to such things? The thematic use of the murder of women to work out crises that occur within the psyche of man and perhaps of society continues throughout the veneration of CrimeSong balladry. Is murder balladry simply a morbid-fascination within oral tradition? Certainly, it could be when no retribution occurs, but the question remains otherwise unresolved. Though “Little Mary Fagan” condemns the perpetrator, “The Jealous Lover” does not always. Even in light of Mrs. Cave’s commentary on the importance of remembering something awful that occurred, there still remains a sinister undertow to any tradition that exalts violence in song. Perhaps just as the complete effects of murder-stories in literature as well as in film are continually critiqued presently, there will never be a definitive answer to the absolute effects of CrimeSong in the Blue Ridge.

Epilogue

The repertoire of balladry, Minstrelsy, and CrimeSong that thrived within the Blue Ridge Mountains presents the former residents of the Shenandoah National Park to be diverse peoples with a rich and broad-ranging access to music. As CrimeSong and each of the three subjects of ballads suggest, there is such diversification in the musical repertoire of the families of the Blue Ridge; and, this variance can be both beautiful as well as alarming, depending on the song. It was by no means a perfect area and contained many flawed as well as good qualities. It is undoubtedly a clique, but with the good also comes the bad. This reality is just as evident in the veneration of CrimeSong as it was the popularity of minstrelsy. Just as the music is not 'pure' in the sense that its Scots-Irish roots are unaltered, so also the song content and morality was not consistently 'pure'. It captured death, life, displacement, crime, heaven, and everything in between. The music of the Blue Ridge people reflects outside influences from minstrels, radios, railroads, and more, which contradicts the former parochial conceptions of the region. What is so striking and beautiful about the range of songs played within the Blue Ridge mountains, is the value of local history and the constant re-imagination of these histories and stories to fit the lives of contemporary listeners of the songs so that they too may identify with them. Furthermore, the variety of these songs studied reveals a non-insular, adaptive community which was certainly connected to a world beyond their own mountains.

Some who have read this research may find it surprising or even disappointing that the music studied here does not confirm a perfectly archaic Scots-Irish society. For, those mountains did not boast a society of Rip Van Winkles, who like Old Dan Tucker, came down off the mountain as though they had existed in a long slumber in a dream-state of a lifestyle mirroring the

eighteenth century Scotland and Ireland. Instead, the folk music reflected the contact of the mountain people with a more cosmopolitan modernity.

It is no wonder, having studied these songs in-depth, why there has been such a powerful interest in the preservation of these ballads. The ballads serve as an essential history and literature to a peoples long-forgotten after the construction of the Shenandoah National Park. This music of the Blue Ridge families—one that assimilated outside influences—also accommodated itself to the ever-changing circumstances of these people. Even today, the stories of the former natives of the Shenandoah National Park, which may seem limited to a Special Collections archive of a University, endure through the sharing of music.

Song Lyrics

The Blue Ridge Mountaineer

Written by E.A. Harris

I have spent my days in the Blue Ridge Hills
where I couldn't hear nothin but the whipoorwills.
There the lightnin' gave such a beautiful sight
I could hardly tell when it grew night

Refrain:

But now I'm down in this low land
Where the water is warm and the land's all poor

Where the old rattlesnake crawled all
Summer long, till the frogs were all gone
I had a home near the Blue Ridge Top
Where the wildcats hopped from rock to rock

I lived up there as happy as could be
Never had the least idea anyone would ever bother me
But one cold dark evening about four o'clock
On my front door I heard a knock

In come the government people with papers, in their hands
saying "Old man, we have taken your land.
You must vacate by April 1st."
I felt right then my heart would burst.

My wife and dear children stand by my side.
Now we are trusting in our Savior to send us a guide.
But come, dear children, don't grieve and cry,
God will prepare a home for you and I.

I have a good spring and a spring house combined.
I hate to go and leave it behind.
I have a good orchard and lots of good fruit.
I often watch my big hogs root.

But the government is now traveling very slow;
They chased me over in Old Tuckahole
The left me standing an ole poor gall,
That is the reason my head is so bald.

I climbed up a tree and I looked all around.
I couldn't see nothin' but the persimmons hangin' down.
I planted some potatoes, I dug them in the Fall;
they were so little I ate them skin and all.

I woke up next morning at the rising of the sun.
I cast my eyes 'round me while the treats began to fall.
I wish I was back on Old Browns Gap,
Where I used to raise potatoes as big as my cap.

I tho't of my dear old mother I was forced to leave behind.
I tho't of my dear old father, who to me was so kind.
I tho't of my old mountain home which I loved so well.
My feelings at the moment no human tongue could tell.

Oh I would like to be back in my tumble down shack,
where the wild roses bloomed 'round my door.

WHEN IT'S LAMPLIGHTING TIME IN THE VALLEY

(Harold Goodman / Sam C. Hart / Joe Lyons / Curt Poulton / Dean Upson)
The Vagabonds - 1933

Also recorded by: Marty Robbins; Tex Ritter; Slim Dusty;
Wayne King; Hylo Brown; Bob King; Lester Flat; Ann Case;
Mac Wiseman; Norman Blake & Rich O'Brien.

There's a lamp burning bright in a cabin
In a window it's shining for me
And I know that my mother is praying
For her boy she is longing to see

When it's lamp lighting time in the valley
Then in dreams I go back to my home
I can see that old light in the window
It will guide me wherever I roam

In the lamplight each night I can see her
As she rocks in her chair to and fro
Though she prays that I'll come back to see her
Still I know that I never can go

When it's lamplighting time in the valley
Then in dreams I go back to my home
But I've sinned against my home and my loved ones
And now I must evermore roam

So she lights up the lamp and keeps waiting
For she knows not the crime I have done
But I'll change all my ways and I'll meet her
Up in Heaven when life's race is run

When it's lamp lighting time in the valley
Then in dreams I go back to my home
I can see that old light in the window
It will guide me wherever I roam

Going Across the Mountain

Going across the mountain,
Oh, fare you well;
Going across the mountain,
You can hear my banjo tell.

Got my rations on my back,
My powder it is dry;
I'm a-goin' across the mountain,
Chrissie, don't you cry.

Going across the mountain,
To join the boys in blue;
When this war is over,
I'll come back to you.

Going across the mountain,
If I have to crawl,
To give old Jeff's men
A little of my rifle ball.

Way before it's good daylight,
If nothing happens to me,
I'll be way down yander
In old Tennessee.

I expect you'll miss me when I'm gone,
But I'm going through;
When this war is over,
I'll come back to you.

Going across the mountain,
Oh, fare you well;
Going across the mountain,
Oh, fare you well.

(As sung by Frank Proffitt on the album "Frank Proffitt of Reese, North Carolina," Folk-Legacy CD). Frank's grandfather, a great admirer of Abraham Lincoln, chose to "go across the mountain to join the boys in blue" and fight against the Confederacy.

Bury Me Under the Weeping Willow Tree

My heart is sad, and I'm in sorrow
For the only one I love
When shall I see him, oh, no, never
Till I meet him in heaven above

[Chorus]
Oh, bury me under the weeping willow
Yes, under the weeping willow tree
So he may know where I am sleeping
And perhaps he will weep for me

[Verse 2]
They told me that he did not love me
I could not believe it was true
Until an angel softly whispered
"He has proven untrue to you"

[Chorus]

[Verse 3]
Tomorrow was our wedding day
But, Oh Lord, where is he?
He's gone to seek him another bride

And he cares no more for me

II. Minstrelsy Chapter

Song Lyrics

Old Dan Tucker:

(Daniel Decatur Emmett)

Old Dan Tucker was a fine old man
He washed his face in a frying pan
He combed his hair with a wagon wheel
And died of a toothache in his heel
Get out the way old Dan Tucker
You're too late to git your supper
Supper's gone and dinner cookin'
Old Dan Tucker's just a-standin' there lookin'.

Old Dan Tucker's a-comin' to town
Riding a billy-goat and leading a hound
The hound dog barked and billy-goat jumped
Threw Dan Tucker right straddlin' a stump.
Get out the way old Dan Tucker
You're too late to git your supper
Supper's gone and dinner cookn'
Old Dan Tucker's just a-standin' there lookin'.

I come to town the other night
To hear a noise and see the fight
The watchman feet was a-running around
Crying "Old Dan Tucker's come to Town."
Get out the way old Dan Tucker
You're too late to git your supper
Supper's gone and dinner cookin'

Old Dan Tucker's just a-standin' there lookin'.
Get out the way old Dan Tucker
You're too late to git your supper
Supper's gone and dinner cookin'
Old Dan Tucker's just a-standin' there lookin'.

Golden Slippers:

chorus:

Oh, them golden slippers
Oh, them golden slippers
Golden slippers I'm goin' to wear
Because they look so neat

Oh, them golden slippers
Oh, them golden slippers
Golden slippers I'm goin' to wear
To walk the golden street

verses:

Oh, my golden slippers am laid away
'Cause I don't expect to wear 'em til my wedding day
And my long tailed coat, that I love so well
I will wear up in the chariot in the morn
And my long white robe that I bought last June
I'm goin' to get changed 'cause it fits too soon
And the old grey hoss that I used to drive
I will hitch him to the chariot in the morn

(chorus)

Oh, my old banjo hangs on the wall
'Cause it ain't been tuned since way last fall
But the folks all say we'll have a good time
When we ride up in the chariot in the morn
There's ol' brother Ben and his sister, Luce
They will telegraph the news to uncle Bacco Juice
What a great camp meetin' there will be that day
When we ride up in the chariot in the morn

(chorus)

So, it's good-bye, children I will have to go
Where the rain don't fall and the wind don't blow
And yer ulster coats, why, you will not need
When you ride up in the chariot in the morn

III. Crime Song Chapter

I. "Jealous Lover" (William Drumm adaption)

The moon was shining brightly
And the stars were shining too.
Up to her cottage window
A jealous lover drew.

She said, "Come love, let's wander
And plan our wedding day."
The night being dark and dreary
He did not want to stray.

Through green groves and valleys
They wandered for a while,
She always pleading,
A-pleading for her child.

"Retrace your steps, no, never;
No more those woods you'll roam,
But say farewell forever
To parents, friends, and home."

She down on her knees and pleading,
A-pleading for her life,
While in her loving bosom
He plunged a fatal knife.

She died not broken-hearted
Nor did in sorrow dwell,
But in one moment parted
From the one she loved so well.

Way down in yonder valley
Where flowers fade and bloom,
There lies my sweet Louella
In the cold and solemn dew [tomb].

He on the gallows swinging
Upon the gallows high,
For the murdering of his sweetheart
On the fourteenth of July.

II. Little Mary Fagan

Little Mary Fagen,
She went to town one day:
She went to the pencil factory
To get her weekly pay.

She left her home at eleven;
She kissed her mother goodbye;
Not once did the poor girl think
She was going off to die.

Leo Frank met her
With a brutish heart and grin;
He says to little Mary:
"You'll never see home again."

Down on her knees fell
To Leo Frank and pled.
He picked a stick from the trash pile
And beat her o'er the head.

The tears rolled dean her cheek,
The blood rolled down her back,
For she remembered telling her mother
What time she would be back;.

Nemphon was the watchman;
He went to wind his key;
Away down in the basement
Was nothing he could see.

They phoned for the officers;
Their names I do not know;
They came to the pencil factory,
Says to Nemphon, "You must go."

They took him to the jail house;
They bound him in his cell;
The poor old innocent negro
Had nothing he could tell.

Mother sits a-weeping;
She weeps and mourns all day
And hopes to meet her darling
In a better land some day.

Come, all ye good people,
Wherever you may be,
Suppose that "little Mary"
Belonged to you or me.

I have an idea in my mind
When Frankie comes to die
And stands examination
In the courthouse in the sky,

He'll be so astonished
To what the angels say
And how he killed little Mary
Upon that holiday.

Judge Roan passed a sentence;
He passes it very well;
The Christian doers of heaven
Sent Leo Frank to hell.

3Honors Thesis Bibliography

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