



# Mildred Haun Review

A Celebration of Appalachian Literature, Culture and Scholarship

2022

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# Black Moth

John C. Mannone

There's death among these grape leaves.  
A white-painted trellis scaffolds the vine.

At first, pale orange, then paler yellow  
caterpillars ravage the grape leaves  
after they had their evening fill of redbud

and primrose sprouting by stone markers  
around the grapevines.

It's not just the little foxes that spoil the vine.  
They congregate and silk-tie a cluster of leaves,  
each one of the larvae, a leaf-folder, rolls itself

in a chlorophyll carpet that it hides in, then eats  
leaving only a skeleton of veins—a net to cushion  
its fall to the ground where it pupates,

then springs wings from its imprisonment.  
Even its name, *Desmia funeralis*, speaks promises  
of death.

No grapes grow here anymore, only the stone  
hard bones of Max, my Border collie, are  
buried here. But this *mariposa de la muerte*

a butterfly of death, flits to a brighter light. It has  
taken the spirit of my beloved dog to his own kind  
of Elysian Fields.

# Frankincense and Myrrh

*John C. Mannone*

are carefully laid out  
before him, and gold  
glows fill the hallway—  
    a Hunter's moon  
lays down his sword, sheds  
his light and slips into purple  
shadows of nimbus clouds.

Orion steps over the hills  
of Jerusalem and stars bow  
down singing a language  
    of angels. And kings  
with their entourage kneel  
before the child. He is still  
without cries of complaint.

Starlight from his star pierces  
the holy night; there's a chill  
pulsing in their hearts.

# Engulfed

*John C. Mannone*

I am thinking of you and the last time we kissed.

Windshield wipers set on slow in the gray drizzle.  
Rain-fog steaming up from the wet asphalt slick with  
smeared oil. A tired John Deer tractor hauling a round of  
hay, hulks in misty shadows in the middle of the bridge,  
it's red taillights burned-out. My horn blares a B-flat-G  
annoyance, as if that could slow down and stop my  
hundred-forty horses. I swerve verging on the median;  
brakes lock, tires spit gravel before the guardrail mangles  
on impact flipping the boxy van. It careens down the  
steep embankment, tumbling in a slow dance with death.  
The cold creek, deep with remorse, swallows my vintage  
Chevy van. Water gushes in. Soon it will smother me. No  
strength in my legs to kick out the windshield pressing  
hard against the murky green. Topside lights dimming like  
a watery moon. Even my fleeting thoughts are trapped,  
emptied of everything, except of you. You, smiling, waving  
me goodbye; the scent of your hair still impressed in my  
nostrils, the taste of you on my lips even after all these  
years. My heart beats for desperate air, longing for breath,  
your breath.

Baby, I'm coming home.

# Annotation

*Lawrence Cottrell*

She went as she'd come, bygone girl of long since put  
away public habits...

antique at conception.

She seemed unhappy mostly, lonely, perhaps, on her wee  
patch of ideas,

But meticulous in her housekeeping, and planning her  
funeral,

And, o' yes, she kept us from starving when her man  
wouldn't...

Which, if you'd been her child, was something after all, as If  
Jesus had had flatulence, picked his nose some, kicked a  
dog once,

but saved man on Golgotha...

Well...

that may go too far...

Though, if love is the measure of things, there was in her  
then

an aside of glory...

Eloquence of heart amid the lesser texts of her penny  
dreadful story...

Found annotation on a dog-eared leaf of reminiscence,  
molt left from a scold transmuted

(for an hour)

unto grace —

# Drifts

*Lawrence Cottrell*

Walking through falling snow an hour before dawn, the  
Puzzle of why I am recedes; there seems no other aim  
than this,

or none I might love so,

This rendezvous of self with crystal islets of becoming,  
Happy ramble through mist and muss of gravid clouds,  
Beauty piling into drifts on bare bottomed dingles and  
rough foldings of the range.

Night, ere now mere truant day, puts away its silhouettes,  
softens into crewel and brocade...

Time beguiles this genius of incertitude, mills it fine  
between the pitch and sway of wind's caprice,  
That hath come four score (almost) to see, not just (it  
seems)

as fleeting frisson of a mind,

as crier of a once upon a time —

# Gandy Dancings

Lawrence Cottrell

...always the getting there not the *there*, the in-between of  
town and town;

need craved the hunt,

not quarry found.

I swore, to anyone who asked, that there were reasons for  
Those nights beside roads: goals chased, prey or prophecy  
tracked to ground,

But, really, sir, they were faux threshings of straw, feints  
by self-respect for public eyes...

snug interstices 'midst perches.

I felt, now-and-then, that I was exile by decree, brush  
Stroke of a souldrop on a pane, off key note of jack-tar  
shanty,

not good for much save gandy dancings...

An itinerant refrain in (oh) a Georgia rain, ten miles  
north of Brunswick,

on my way to Savannah...

In the half-dawn drear of one day more without a name.

# Snow

*Lawrence Cottrell*

Snow fell night through, and dawn finds land vested,  
panted, primped.  
Swathed in holy transience, gaunt lines grow dull, become  
fat flexions of being..  
Ere shoes scuff symmetries, or frays the alabaster cloth to  
hard expungings of a thaw.

Alike the planet and its sons, their gypsy flights from each  
abiding..  
So the universe itself, which, perfect pitch of naught,  
ripened 'to prosodies suckling light..  
Lyric notes of doves and coloraturas, the baffling birth of  
song..  
Vibrant voices of the apomictic shudder, of an ante-  
moment's dream

come hither hence

as passion's wine —

# Wanton

*Lawrence Cottrell*

Once this realm was home, where daisies told me secrets,  
    hope's flute caught tears of my weepings...  
Before Earth seemed cold, quicksilver scroll I wrote on;  
Ere Sheol emptied, kirks grew lorn, providence thinned  
    'to fate merely.  
O' then, self was minstrel of songs and spells, a middling  
    dicing for its greatness;  
I lay serene with wanton hours, was sought (it seemed) by  
    importunities of promise...  
Spoke well of by zephyrs in the willows, beloved of genial  
    transits by a sun,  
  
played jacks and Simon says and marbles  
  
    in the deepings —

# Limbs by Satan

*Kay T. Fields*

I miss my youthful legs, those flexible,  
fleet, strong, shapely limbs. They never  
aged, sagged, trembled, tired, grew clumsy,  
or, fell breaking like a downed thoroughbred,  
stumbling in the last furlong.

Deep in the debauchery of dreamless sleep,  
known as aging, my glorious gams were  
hijacked by grenade-shaped matrons with  
varicose veins and cellulite. These craven  
biddies left my feet clumsy with bone spurs.

My lovely limbs were replaced with fish-  
belly white, wattled, saggy objects that  
bore only a passing resemblance to those  
once graceful, coltish legs that carried me  
through careless decades with panache.

My knees now resemble a disgruntled  
Shar Pei with an off-kilter, lurching  
gait. No spring remains in today's  
steps. I left all of my legs flounce  
on yesterday's dance floor.

So gradual were the changes, but  
the revelation was instant, a shock.  
A silver lining remains today. My  
ankles are still thin, aristocratic,  
definitely, not those of a peasant.

# Now We're Cooking

Hannah Baker

I love to sit out on my front porch in the afternoons, rocking in my favorite rocking chair, looking down over my front yard onto the little town of Bradshaw. The mountain (or more technically, the hill) is what makes up my entire backyard. My house more or less sits on a small ledge near the bottom of the hill but high up enough that I loom over the small town in the valley below. It is merely a few hundred feet in distance; people walking on the sidewalks do not represent ants, surely not, but more likely shorter versions of themselves. I can see the elementary school from here and it is my favorite time of day. Recess. I love to listen to the children running and giggling- free from the confines of the classroom and their teachers' glares.

I can still see enough of their features and clothing to distinguish who is coming and going. I see Ms. Stiltner walking in the distance, rounding the corner past the A&P grocery store and heading my way. I take in laundry for people; those who have to wear formal attire mainly, to help my husband feed our five children. He works in the coal mines located a few towns (or two more mountains) over.

Ms. Stiltner is coming to pick up her three sacks of laundry while on her lunch break. She is the secretary at the electric company and always dresses to the nines. She thinks if she didn't take people's payment for their electricity bill the whole state of West Virginia would go dark. She wears little lace gloves every day of the week, whether she is working or merely shopping for groceries. I always have at least ten pairs that need to be bleached, steamed and ironed to perfection... all by hand. You cannot feed lace gloves through a wringer washing machine or you will end up with tattered strings. She is one of my most hoity toity and difficult customers. She once went on tirelessly for what felt like hours about how I couldn't completely remove a red nail polish stain from one of her precious gloves. I tried everything I could think of to remove it, lye soap, bleach, turpentine and even

some of my husband's whiskey. I only managed to fade it to a sickly pink color that my oldest boy said was the same color as a chicken's ass. What made me want to pull my hair out most was why in the world did she even paint her nails blood red when she always kept her hands covered with her gloves?

She is heading up the 37 steps leading from the street to my front porch. She is fanning her face with her hat when she steps on my porch, her face red and flushed.

"Good Lord, Willa, it feels like you get further and further up this mountain every time I climb those steps," she greets me in a breathless huff.

"You should try hiking up them with a child clinging to each hip," I answer with a tired smile.

"I can see how you keep so small after birthing all those babies," she answers dryly. "If you didn't do such a good job at pressing my petticoat I would look for someone else. Those steps are gonna be the death of me, yet."

"Well, come on in and I'll get your bundles for you," I answer while holding the door for her.

I secretly wish that she would find someone else to tend her laundry, especially in the summertime. Even with all my windows open and the crossbreeze coming down from the mountain, I sweat buckets while steaming and pressing all that lace. However, I do enjoy taking her money. She hands me \$3.00 and looks around for one of my brood to help her carry her load back down the steps. No one comes running to help, from either outside or inside, because she is the only customer I have that won't tip a nickel for the help.

"Could you holler for one of the youngins to come help me?" she asks as she picks up one--- and only one of the three laundry bags. I sigh and make a quick mental note of who is home, and then I remember Jackie is still stewing in his room from our exchange earlier. I asked him to help me move the chairs so I could clean under the table and he

told me he was too busy to do “women’s work”. His smart mouth got him in some hot water so I figured I might as well make him help her since he was already mad.

“Jackie, come help Ms. Stiltner down the steps!” I yell through our paper thin walls.

He comes storming out of his room with a look of fire in his eyes knowing full well this is a form of punishment. He is much smarter this second time around, though, and keeps his mouth shut. There may be hope for him yet. I don’t expect much, though, because he is too much like his father.

The next morning, I start filling my washing machine with boiling hot water to bleach and steam my next load of whites. It takes many trips carrying the boiling pots from my stove to the machine outside in order to fill the tub. On my third trip out to the porch, Mr. Whittaker, the elementary school principal, stepped on my porch. I greeted him with a startled “Hello.”

“Hello, Willa, I didn’t mean to scare you,” he said. “I see you’re busy so I won’t keep you long but I am in quite a pickle and wanted to talk to you about it.”

I offer him the rocking chair beside mine and he sits down without missing a beat.

“As I am sure you have heard, the school is going to start extending their days. Instead of dismissing at 12:30, we are going to start going until 3:00. There are many wrinkles we are trying to iron out regarding this but the main one being, we are going to have some very hungry children. Not all of them have enough at home to bring extra to school, you see,” he says as he gives me a side eye glance. “I know you work and take in laundry and I thought maybe if you wanted to change things a bit, and since your house is so close to the school, maybe you would like to start cooking the meals for the children?” he asks with a pleading look on his face. “You will be paid, of course, and we will provide all of the ingredients. You will earn more for your family than you are doing laundry.”

I think about it for a long second....no more hot boiling bleach water that burns and eats away at the skin on my raw hands....no more back breaking heavy pots to tote back and forth from my stove to my front porch....no more Ms. Stiltner.

“Well,” I say hesitantly, “I guess I could give it a try.”

“Wonderful!” he exclaims while jumping from the rocking chair. “I will bring everything over in a few weeks. We would like to start serving them around noon. Of course, I will have several of the students help me carry everything to and from the school. All you have to do is cook it up!” he slaps his hands together as if it’s just that easy peasy.

A few days later, around 8:00 a.m, I got a knock on my door. I opened it to Mr. Whittaker and eight or so students standing there with their arms (and legs) loaded down. I stepped back to let them in and they walked single file to my kitchen countertop. They unloaded everything they were holding and -lawl- I have never seen so many vegetables in my whole Lord loving life. Potatoes rolled off my counter onto the floor. Mr. Whittaker brought up the rear, laying two roasts wrapped in butcher paper on the counter.

“I thought we would start things off with a beef stew,” he says as he scooped the fallen potatoes off the floor.

I clutch my hand to my stomach, trying to catch my breath, and trying to not start crying in front of all these little children standing in my kitchen. I just kept thinking over and over, *‘what in the world have I gotten myself into?’*

“A beef stew sounds nice,” I replied. That should be very filling and healthy for the kids. Now, not to be rude, but I guess you better be on your way and let me get started,” I said as I motioned them towards the door.

“We will be back around 11:30 to pick it all up!” Mr. Whittaker exclaimed as the door closed behind him.

I set about peeling potatoes, boiling the carrots and green beans, and slicing up the beef, all the while cursing Ms. Stiltner in my head ‘til a fly wouldn’t light on her. Little did I know that today was the first day of the rest of my life. I would cook from home for the next two years until the school built their cafeteria that was all mine to oversee and run for the next 28 years. I retired as the first school (and head) cook of “Bradshaw Elementary”, Bradshaw, West Virginia.

This true story is dedicated to my great-grandmother, Helen Hughes, the first school cook in her small Appalachian town of West Virginia.

# Gravity and a Breeze

*R.L. Pete Wyatt*

A single falling leaf catches my eye,  
drifting hurriedly, swirling as it lands.

That lone leaf exchanged a familiar limb  
for hard ground. Only for gravity  
and a breeze

This fallen leaf is a pale washed yellow  
indistinguishable from all the other fallen  
leaves, lying on the ground. They are all  
destined to make detritus. While the breeze  
remains, gravity is of no consequence.

Billions of leaves wave in the breeze  
waiting for gravity's inevitable pull.

Some leaves fall in a stream that rushes  
close to a steep bank. They move farther  
from the mother tree unaffected.

Not by gravity or a breeze

A male red-eyed Towhee scratches in  
those dry leaves. He searches diligently  
for juicy roly-polies hidden underneath.  
Chipmunks stuff their cheeks with maple  
samaras in preparation for winter's sleep.

Dark clouds laden with rain boil above  
a near barren canopy. Persistent clinging  
leaves succumb to pounding rain.  
I ask myself, "What causes rain to fall?  
Gravity, I do believe."

# Suicide Watch

## *a one act monologue*

Natalie Kimbell

Willow is 30 and has been married to her husband who is ten years her senior.

At rise: Willow holding the receiver from a wall phone with an extra-long phone cord from the 70's. The cord is stretched to full length as she tries to look out a window. She is tense and very alert.

Willow

(talking on the phone)

Momma, Clay's got his father's old rifle. He says he is going to kill himself.

(beat)

That's not funny Momma. I did not hand him ammunition.

(beat)

Momma he's right out in the front of the house in the driveway. He has that rifle. He is ... He is opening the car door. He is closing the car door. He's putting the butt of the stock -- against the side of the Pontiac--He is trying to hold the gun in place with his head on the barrel.

(beat)

No Momma I can't just let him.

(beat)

You don't get money for suicide Momma.

(beat)

Oh shit!

(She runs back to the phone on the wall.)

Sorry Momma, but he saw me looking at him. Now he is going to think I'm talking about him.

(beat)

Well, I know I am talking about him.

(beat)

Well, I care enough that I don't want him dead in the front yard. I just want to take the kids and leave.

(beat)

No momma I didn't ask to take the coupons.

(beat)

I realize there is probably 3,000 dollars in coupons there.

(beat)

Momma I know I put a lot of time in cutting those coupons.

(beat)

I know Momma. I sat right in front of him every Sunday cutting them out and organizing them. They are all in the yellow file box in alphabetical order, except the ones that don't expire and they are... Momma, Clay is about to kill himself and I don't care about the coupons.

(beat)

Momma, he is not shooting himself because of the dime. You know I went right back in that store and showed them on the receipt when Clay told me he had been shorted a dime.

Well, he was disappointed. He let me go in the grocery store and expected me to do a good job and when I didn't pay attention to the change, well it upset him... but not enough to kill himself. Oh Momma.

(beat)

I can't let the kids see that. They are taking a nap. How do I explain all this to a 4 year old? Thank God Macy is a year old.

(beat)

No Momma, I have to call the police.

(beat)

How do you know he is not going to do it?

(beat)

You didn't see his face when I told him I wanted to leave him. That I was seeing another man. He told me to go, Momma. He said he wished I had died on the operating table when my gall bladder was removed after Macy was born. He told me that I had eaten his food, lived in his house and had worn his name. He called me ungrateful. He had his kids and he didn't need me.

(beat)

I'm not leaving without the kids. I love Ryan, Momma, but

not enough to leave my kids.

(beat)

No, Momma not even for a minute. I might wear a scarlet A but I'll not abandon my kids.

(beat)

A scarlet letter. It's from a book. It's about this woman, Hester Prynne. She has an affair so they make her wear a red letter A on her dress.

(beat)

The A is for adulteress.

(beat)

No momma, I know you have never seen that.

(beat)

No momma men didn't have to do that.

(beat)

No it's not a fair world Momma. If you taught me anything you have taught me that.

(beat)

Momma let that go. The church has no proof of Clay's love for pornography. Yes, Momma I know the verse.

(beat)

I don't have to prove to you I know it!

(beat- irritated but compliant)

"But I say on to you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

(beat)

That's for him and God, Momma

(beat)

I know Momma. I know you are glad I'm leaving. I know you would have paid the devil himself to come and get me out of here, Momma. Who knows maybe Ryan is Satan himself, but he is the only heaven I have known on earth. I know that you think Jesus doesn't expect us to live a miserable life. But Jesus holds us accountable for our choices. I'm just not ...

(beat)

Momma it's not the time to talk about all that. I know Clay has made choices too.

(gunshot)

(panicked)

Momma, the gun just went off.

(runs stretching the cord of the phone to its maximum length straining to look out the window)

(beat)

(relieved)

No momma, he is still standing.

(beat)

Oh, the neighbors are going to be pissed. One of their cement lions at the entrance of their driveway doesn't have a head anymore.

(beat)

Oh shit! Momma, he is headed for the house!

(Hangs up the phone.)

# Strip Me Naked

*After Rhea Camron*

*Natalie Kimbell*

Strip me naked and you will find a generation from potted meat, poke salad, hot lard poverty. The saw mill where my great-grandfather lost his fingers and gained a high board Company Bed for his trouble. See the depths of chiseled coal mines or the distress of birthing babies not expected to live—like my three-pound momma so tiny she a shoe box bed. See my grandmother racked with tuberculosis clinging to iron lung air. Strip me naked. See great-parents as teens crossing from Naples to Ellis Island. See my blood on Normandy's beaches with Great Uncle Tommy Robbio, Strip me naked and you will find an outcast downcast rising dragging depression, dyslexia, and deficiencies assumed to weaken my sinews when struggle made them strong. My DNA runs thru law breakers, policemen, drug dealers, homemakers, secretaries, mechanics, teachers, counselors, military officers. Strip me naked and you'll see my lovers, my fractures, my dreams. You'll see words coursing in veins, documenting, protesting, celebrating, healing the past with the present, the living with the dead with such richness, you will wish to wear this skin.

But it's mine.

# Kin Cursing

Natalie Kimbell

Third cousin Doris sits leg-crossed,  
scalding eyes interrupted only by smoke.  
two gnarled fingers clenched in a victory sign,  
a hand swirling gin in cut crystal

She draws on unfiltered Camels, flips her hand back like hair,  
right elbow close to her ribs, forearm straight.  
Flicks ambers in a glass emerald ashtray, without a glance,  
grinds the butt down, so she can light another. (down. She lights another.)

All high cheek bones, gaunt body, thin lips,  
she cocks her contempt with a tilt of her chin,  
raises hell high with *Fuck This*, and *God Damn That*,  
singes the air already hot from her spew of kin cursing.

Momma said Cousin Doris left the mountains, worked for NASA ,  
married well, birthed two children. They left her as soon as they could.  
She returned, reigning like a monarch over our mountains,  
flaunting success and education against our poverty.

In the early morning hours, drunk, Doris would call Momma  
reminisce of their adolescent companionship  
until her two in the morning rants were gin-filled  
crying jags or the venomous belittling of my mother.

Momma coddled her, tried to make sense through the gin,  
took the abuse of Doris's early morning tirades  
until one evening momma stopped  
and took the phone off the cradle.

# Why Did We Wish?

*Natalie Kimbell*

Today, dress in memory,  
glide into seventeen's retrospect.  
Dab liberal baby blue eyeshadow  
hug well-formed hips in soft denim  
flaunt long mahogany hair, whip  
it like a great dark wave out the family's  
emerald Caprice Classic. So crisp a vision,  
long after arthritis riddles and hair thins gray  
long after mirrors reflect bones cocooned  
withering in mottled skin.

At life's six PM  
distant childhood tastes better- oranges at Christmas  
biscuits slathered in bacon gravy  
wood-stove baked cornbread  
turns the present meal taste like silt.  
Age recalls the stiff spring of a line-dried dress  
which summons the awkward fresh kiss—  
the speed of a lover's pulse who now only beats  
on eternity's mounded hills.

Why did we wish for the fountain of age  
as if we had countless dawns to squander—  
endless petals to pull from a daisy's center?  
How like a backwards butterfly  
we flutter our finest first,  
and end encased in a crepe epidermis.

# Sheer Memory

*Natalie Kimbell*

Wind stirred white curtains  
snapping translucent sheers  
like sunbaked sheets, Momma hung  
when I was five or maybe six

snapping translucent sheers  
dodging clean cotton in neat rows  
when I was five or maybe six  
billowing material, snapping dry

dodging clean cotton in neat rows  
smelling linen pinched on lines  
billowing material, snapped dry  
full sails rippling September clouds

smelling linen pinched on the line  
wind stirred white curtains  
full sails rippling September clouds  
like sunbaked sheets, Momma hung

# Lullaby

*Sherry Poff*

At rest around a fading fire, four women  
watch the ember-glow, our lips still  
chocolate-and-marshmallow sweet.  
A falling twig flames into the darkness,  
illuminates each peaceful gaze. From the marsh  
across the road, a chorus of frogs calms the night.  
The sleeping baby sighs at her mother's breast,  
and for a moment, we all are infants  
reposing on the bosom of the year.

# Sophia

*Sherry Poff*

*Her ways are ways of pleasantness  
and all her paths are peace.*

Proverbs 3:17

Spirit of the green-blue air,  
traveler of the wind, riding on nets  
of mist above the swollen stream,  
she sees and knows rivers  
of understanding, channels  
sacred thoughts.

She wends a path through  
beech and ancient oak, rustling  
leaves in her quiet passage.  
She is the glittering holy  
light in the unquiet  
darkness.

An underlying hum, calm  
as the warm evening breeze,  
thrills the ears, beckons  
my searching spirit, as ever,  
to find the way of knowing  
beyond sight  
or sound.

# Subbing in Sunday School in the Time of Migration

Sherry Poff

For whom shall we pray?

*My family in Venezuela, says bright-eyed Gabriella.*

*They have no electricity, and my uncle's new baby—  
he has a fever.*

Little Madaline pipes up, stunning in her soft black sweater:

*My people coming from Honduras. They are coming here,  
but they are dying on the road.*

*My mom is from Honduras, announces Kevin, a little man  
in suit and tie. My dad's from Mexico.*

*We live here now.*

In visions I see the travelers, hungry and haunted,  
tattered clothes on their bowed backs,  
each bearing a heavy cross.

So I write the list on the marker board,  
write it in blood alongside the teacher's prayer  
for safety on vacation.

# At the Salon, Southern Appalachia

Rosemary Royston

All women and I unload--  
tell L of my pending hysterectomy,  
of hoping there's nothing serious.  
She stops, eyes half-shut, comb  
and scissors frozen, mid-air:

*In Jesus' name I pray  
you have no cancer*

I'm comforted by my hairdresser/quasi-  
priestess who has blessed me for the better,  
even when she tells me she once had a client  
who knows someone who knew someone  
whose son worked for Obama and it was the son's job  
to build coffins large enough to put an entire family into,  
*you know, with the pandemic and all.*

I remain silent because there is nothing to convince  
her otherwise, brown eyes on fire  
under raised brows. But we both laugh  
when D, one chair over, shows us her new  
tattoo -- a twisty summer vine winding from torso  
to arm, covering a former Chinese symbol  
she thought stood for PEACE, but, instead,  
read EGGROLL.

# Metaphor

*after Claudia Emerson  
Rosemary Royston*

It was the ineptitude that jolted  
me, the blithe strut of the suits

through the carpeted halls,  
their patronizing tones

and know-it-all replies bouncing  
off walls. In one office, golf clubs

rest against a desk. Tomorrow,  
I'll raise one, swing,

shatter the glass and laugh  
as shards rain down.

# Old South Highland Avenue

*Rosemary Royston*

The house is concrete, painted white,  
forty-five minutes from New York City.  
My grandparents built it with their own hands  
three bedrooms, one bath, 900 square feet.

Just a bus ride away from the Big Apple,  
my mother and uncle outgrew  
that three bedroom, one bath home  
where windows turned to ice, inside.

Mother and uncle left Highland Ave, years after  
their grandparents fled Russia and Poland.  
Sometimes the windows turned to ice.  
I spent summers there, visited Ellis Island,

where immigrants from Russia and Poland  
arrived, then built a home with calloused hands,  
tended a garden, dried clothes on a line.  
Their house is 900 square feet, squat, and solid.

# The Poet Interviews the Painter

*Rosemary Royston*

What is your ideal setting  
when creating?

How important (or is it important  
at all) for the viewer  
to know the narrative or impetus  
of a painting?  
Is a fragment enough?

What color  
is happiest alone?

How do you know  
when you have finished  
a painting?

At what age did you realize  
the narratives we've been given  
are colored  
part fairytale, part Lynch?

What is the color of regret?  
What is the color of not giving a fuck?  
Are they complementary?

Describe how color tastes  
when you see the one you love.

When it comes to the craft of painting,  
how much is intuition?  
How much is training?  
How much emotion  
can a painting hold?

Would you describe your eyes  
as blue, lapis, or cerulean?

If you lived in a room that contained many shades  
of the same color, what color would that be?  
Or, is every shade its own color?

Do people describe you as colorful?

If you are a color  
and I am a color  
what color are we  
when we are together?

Can you kiss a color, make love to it?

Finally, is it odd that when I touch  
the surface of a canvas that I feel  
the color surge  
through my fingertips?

# Magick in Southern Appalachia

Rosemary Royston

## Introduction

Several years ago I found myself at City Lights Bookstore in Sylva, NC for Byron Ballard's book launch, *Staubs and Ditchwater: A Friendly and Useful Introduction to Hillfolks' Hoodoo*. Always curious about superstitions, folklore, and magic, I had driven up from my home in Blairsville, Georgia to hear Byron speak. I had no idea that this reading would lead me on my own research process and creation of a poetry manuscript.

First, I found myself in a room of mainly women. These women ranged from devout Southern Baptists to Native Americans to practicing Wiccans. Byron (also known as Asheville's local Witch) seemed to know several in the audience, and I was astounded to learn that in this very diverse group of belief systems, everyone who knew anything about Appalachian Magick or Hillfolks' Hoodoo, as Byron called it, agreed that the best way to stop unnatural bleeding was to recite a particular Bible verse (and we will get to that verse later).

As the daughter of a United Methodist minister, I was surprised to have never heard of any such thing. It piqued my curiosity and made me want to know more. So not only did I leave with a copy of Byron's book, I also left with many questions that I began to address within my own Southern Appalachian community.

For those of you not familiar with northeast Georgia, the beginning of the Appalachian Trail starts at Springer Mountain, in Fannin County, and if you start there you'll hike through Union County on your way North. I've been blessed to live in north Georgia my entire life, with the last two decades specifically in Union County, which is only a hop skip and jump away from Brasstown, NC and Ducktown, TN. I can be in two other states in 20 minutes, and many of my Appalachian friends are located in Western North Carolina where I've been active in the NCWN-Netwest for many years, traveling to conferences, along with various stints at ASA when it's close enough

to drive to. I share this to say that while I'm not a native of Southern Appalachia, it has been my chosen home for the last two decades and where my children have been born and raised and where my husband and I have earned our living. It's home.

When I first starting mulling over all the things I didn't know about the area I've grown to call home (as a PK I had no home base), I yearned to know more so I gathered stories, read several books, and spoke with an expert or two about what I'd found when it comes to magick in Southern Appalachia. Folk magick is obviously a broad subject matter, and in contemporary Appalachia, it includes Granny Women, Water Witching, and Storytellers. However, with this presentation, I'm focusing on three areas: folk magick in its early iterations (prior to the establishment of medical and educational institutions in the region), folk/faith healing, and superstitions and oral traditions found in Southern Appalachia which, in my case, spans from eastern KY, western NC, and northeast GA based on my location and the subjects I spoke to.

## 1) Folk Magick vs Folk Medicine – a delineation

The term folk magick can conjure multiple examples, so I want to be specific in how I have defined it. In his text, *Folk Medicine in Southern Appalachia*, published by UNC Press, Cavender uses the term "folk medicine" as one that "refers to vernacular knowledge about the cause, prevention, and treatment of illness used by a particular social group" (32). Cavender's definition is very loose in that it encompasses any knowledge or action taken by a specific group of people to treat an illness, whether it is scientific or not. An example is the act of "passing" to cure colic. In one of the stories collected by Cavender, he shares how a set of parents passed their child back and forth, nine times, around the leg of the kitchen table, to cure their child's colic (116). However, in Edain McCoy's text, *Mountain Magick, Folk Wisdom from the Heart of Appalachia*,

Llewellyn Press, she defines folk medicine as the “actions taken to effect the cure [that] are designed to have a direct, medicinal impact on the illness” (42). For McCoy, drinking chamomile tea to help one fall asleep would be folk medicine, yet she would categorize “passing” to cure colic as folk magick, just as hanging herbs around one’s neck to deter an illness would be folk magick as opposed to folk medicine. However, for my purposes and to meet a more broad definition that combines both Cavender and McCoy’s, folk magick includes the oral traditions and actions passed down within a region on how to cure a illness (whether there is any legitimate medicinal value or not) in addition to the use of herbs and roots or other items that were *believed to* have medicinal properties (some of which have been scientifically proven to have medicinal properties). As we all know, Appalachia is “one of the most botanically diverse regions in the world: with 2,500 plant species of which 1,100 have “medicinal properties” (Cavender 59), and folk magick evolved from the cultures of the Cherokee in Southern Appalachia and the Scots-Irish settlers who moved into the area, creating a unique mix of traditions. Some of the more common folk magick elements I discovered in both Cavendar’s text and many of the *Foxfire* texts included turpentine, brown paper in vinegar, moonshine, sourwood honey, and poultices, just to name a few. Turpentine was a common ingredient in different healing potions, whether one sprinkled a few drops in a bowl water and placed it under the bed of someone who had the flu to lower a fever, or it was mixed with lard and placed on the scalp to remove head lice (Cavender). For a headache, applying brown paper with vinegar was cited often as a way to bring relief. And for a cold, an onion poultice (whether added to milk or eating a raw onion) was suggested, along with the hot toddy (specifically with whiskey and sourwood honey – one I personally use) were touted as curing remedies. The folk magick options are long, and some make logical sense, while others leave one in disbelief. I found one small book by Richmond & Walkup, *Appalachian Folklore: Omens, Signs, and Superstitions*, Create Space, which is a collection of Appalachian Folklore that has a section on the many (an odd) uses of herbs, some of which were rather surprising or amusing.

I mention the various publishers of the texts to highlight that there is quite a range in the sources I’ve used up to this point. Cavender’s book is the most academic, coming

from UNC, Chapel Hill, followed by Foxfire, published by Doubleday. McCoy’s book was published by Llewellyn Publications, known for its dedication to New Age subject matter, and Richmond & Walkup’s book is most likely self-published and a collection of things passed down, not unlike the stories I gathered from talking or corresponding with individuals who grew up or lived in Appalachia. A sample of many of the more interesting or, one could say, amusing, use of herbs pulled from their book is in the following list poem.

### **Primer for a Southern Appalachian Healer**

*Collected from Richmond & Walkup’s Appalachian Folklore*

Belladonna treats the bite of a rabid dog,  
boneset deters an unwanted suitor.

Clove and marigold deflect gossip,  
celandine ends an argument.

Cowslip relieves migraines, vertigo,  
steers away uninvited guests.

Fennel wards off mosquitos and enemies,  
fenugreek attracts money.

Toss crushed lobelia into the air to calm a storm  
use St. Joseph’s Wort to ensure fidelity.

Solomon’s Seal keeps the ghosts away,  
rue repels fleas, and pesky werewolves.

### **2) Folk Healing**

Of all the research I did, the folk healing was the area that I was most intrigued by and passionate about, specifically the area that can be categorized even further as faith healing. Remember how the folks in the room at City Lights all agreed that to stop unnatural bleeding, the cure was to recite a Bible verse? Well, that verse is Ezekiel 16:6. Who knew this? How and why? And in the role of researcher, how could I ethically go about uncovering these secret traditions? This question troubled me, as I wanted to honor the fact that these faith healers learned their skills through loved ones and years of passing down knowledge that was only shared with a chosen few. I didn’t

want to be the nosy interloper. A friend of mine is a native of Southern Appalachia and an expert in its history and told me he could “draw fire,” meaning he could talk out the pain of a burn. I could have easily asked how, but I did not, as I felt this would be too personal to ask. So, for the three faith healing traditions I’m sharing, it should be known that I came upon them in both written text and from those who openly shared them, without me having to explicitly ask. I have no doubt there are additional scriptures used in faith healings, but the most common ones I’ve found center around the following: blood-stopping, drawing fire, and curing thrush.

**Blood-stopping** -- When reciting Ezekiel 16:6 to stop the flow of unnatural blood (and note this is for *unnatural* bleeding – not the loss of blood from natural causes, such as a woman’s monthly cycle), the scripture has to be recited three times, perfectly. In fact, for scriptures used in folk healings, the commonality I found was that each one had to be memorized by the healer, recited perfectly (or it would fail), and repeated no fewer than three times. Of course, three reminds one of the Trinity in Christianity, and it is also a powerful number in magickal practices. Per Cavender, some of the sources he spoke to stated that the pronoun in the Ezekiel should be replaced by the person’s name so that the “charm” would work. Amazingly, blood-stoppers could also work from a distance if they had the name and location of the person being treated, and farm animals, a very valuable commodity to life, were also treated with this verse (Cavender 126).

**Curing Thrush** -- When it comes to thrush, one could write an entire paper on the many, many ways in Southern Appalachia in which to cure thrush or the “thrash” as it was also referred to. First, though, what’s thrush? It’s a yeast infection that causes sores and blisters in a child or baby’s mouth, making it painful for the child to nurse or eat. If it’s the “yaller” thrush, it can allegedly kill the child (Wigginton 356). Apparently thrush was a common ailment, as there are a multitude of ways to cure it. In the *Foxfire* text, one individual interviewed shared that he could cure thrush by simply standing behind the child who had it and engaging in a secret action (which was not shared) and the thrush would be cured immediately (356). Others who had the ability to cure thrush stated that they simply would blow into the baby’s face, and cure the child

(359). It is also written that those who were “the seventh son or th’ seventh daughter can cure thrash and draw fire too” (Wigginton 359). I’ll be sharing a Biblical way to cure thrush, but I want to share a story from a colleague of mine who worked at the same college where I work. I’ll call her S--. She had recently had a baby and her child could not get rid of the thrush – nothing that the pediatrician suggested was working, and the baby was losing weight due to not nursing. She worked in the financial aid office and was very analytical, so it was a jump for her to let go of her rational side and take her baby to an individual off of Mulky Gap Road. This elderly gentleman had never seen his biological father and he took her baby into another room, whispered in his ear, and returned him. Within a day, the baby’s thrush disappeared, and both S—and I were believers. Maybe it was the power of suggestion, maybe it was coincidence. Maybe it doesn’t matter, because it worked, so all was well. It was at this point in my research that I began to question the difference (if there is one) between prayer and magickal intent. For the faith healer, the two are intertwined – a belief in a higher power or calling on God through scripture to cause a cure. In magick, calling on a higher power or source also has the same end – a cure or a desire met. So when it comes to magick that is not based on Biblical verses, the intent (when for positive purposes) is for the good, so the delineation between the two is slim.

**Drawing Fire** or “talking the fire out” – As I mentioned earlier, a friend has the ability to draw fire. While I did not ask him how he learned to do this, both Cavender’s text and the *Foxfire* texts share the process on how this is done, and it involves both the quoting of scripture and an action. As opposed to simply reciting the scriptures I discovered, I’m going to share the poem that succinctly encompasses my research for faith healing in regard to thrush, unnatural bleeding, and drawing fire:

### **Faith Healing**

To cure thrush, blow into the baby’s mouth,  
three times, saying, *I do this in the name  
of the Father (blow),  
the Son (blow),  
and the Holy Ghost (blow).*

To stop unnatural bleeding, whisper  
(perfectly) Ezekiel 16:6 three times,  
*Live! Yes, I said to you  
while you were in your blood.*

To draw fire, move your hand  
above and across the burn. Repeat,  
three times, *There came an angel  
from the east bringing fire and frost.  
In frost, out fire. In the name  
of the Father, the Son,  
and the Holy Ghost.*

While the faith healer uses the Christian Trinity, Edain McCoy suggests to the reader that they may feel more comfortable using Maiden, Mother, Crone, obviously referring to what we can call the Divine Feminine. Here, again, is an example that the means may vary in how the outcome is evoked, but the desired end (healing) is the same.

### 3) Superstitions and Oral Traditions

I know that each of us in this room has at least one if not several superstitions that have been passed down to us through our heritage, chosen environment, or family. What I found fascinating as I began to gather these is that many of the superstitions or the images within them cross cultural lines. For example, birds are common omens not only in Southern Appalachian superstitions (blackbirds, crows, and owls), but also in other cultures, such as Italian, where birds (again, crows or owls) or the feathers of such in the house mean something bad is about to occur (Fava). Personally, I come from a maternal line of Russian immigrants, and prior to having my first child I refused to learn the sex of my child or decorate the room until the very last minute. When doing some genealogy research, I learned that a common Russian superstition is for expectant Russian mothers **not** to share the sex of her child or have a baby shower or purchase anything for their babies prior to the child being born, lest it cause bad luck (Martel). In regard to expectant mothers in Appalachia, I learned that Granny Women often encouraged expectant moms not to keep anything with a knot in the home, as it may cause the placental cord to strangle the baby (McCoy 157). Likewise, there are many herbal treatments used to bring on labor (rue) and produce milk (fenugreek) that are

still used today (Mother's Milk tea is at your local grocery store).

Another tradition I found fascinating is in regard to getting rid of haints (aka ghosts). To banish an active haint, at sundown you lure the ghost to you with the invitation to eat a raw potato. Then, at dawn, you bury the potato, which will forever ground your ghost (McCoy 34). In general, to keep ghosts away one can hang chimes on the front door, spin counter-clockwise three times prior to entering the house, or plant rue near the front door (McCoy). I don't know about you, but I think I may invest in some rue since it can bring on labor, repel fleas and werewolves, and keep ghosts away!

Along with the superstitions are also ways to break any negative spells or omens, also known as magickal substitution. For example, remember the birds I mentioned? Well, if a blackbird flies into your home or perches on your windowsill, to break the omen of certain death, you must catch and kill the bird, burn it, and bury the ashes at the edge of the cemetery (McCoy 26). Similarly, if a white dog gazes on you in the setting sun you are surely going to die. To break this spell you must drink a tea brewed with the dog's drool (McCoy 29).

I'd like to begin to wrap up my presentation with a final poem of Appalachian superstitions that were shared with me by those living in Southern Appalachia. Much like a call for papers, I did a "call for superstitions" with members of my various Appalachian communities, and this is a collection of some of the superstitions I received:

### Appalachian Superstitions

A menstruating woman should never  
make kraut  
be near cucumbers  
be near mash  
or attempt canning.

A menstruating woman should  
study with a Granny Woman,  
her powers abundant.

A woman who buys dreams  
must not purchase  
the nightmares of children.

A man who has never seen his father  
can cure thrush  
by blowing into an infant's mouth.

For faster growing hair, have it cut  
by a pregnant woman,  
or during the full moon.

Cows should be kept  
in odd numbers  
or the herd will grow ill.

Keep pigs around for luck  
but do not pull their tails.

Hares out at night:  
servants of the devil.  
Hares out in day: food.

Harassing a cat is the same as  
harassing the local witch.  
Don't.

Spiders are servants of God.  
To wake to a newly spun web:  
Exceptionally good luck.

I've only skirted the surface of an incredibly broad subject

matter: magick in Southern Appalachia, which has its roots in herbal remedies evolving from the Cherokee along with traditions of the Scots-Irish settlers. What piqued my interest the most are those who fall into the category of faith healers, and I use the present tense as these practices continue to be passed down and there's a specific method as how and to whom the abilities are passed to – if these traditions are not followed, the ability to heal or cast the spell is broken. I have no doubt there are many traditions that remain secret, and to gather them all would take a significant amount of time and research. However, what I've learned from the research and creation of poems is this: using a Bible verse to help find a cure to a pain or illness is no different than casting a spell to help oneself find good health, peace, or a new job, as both are about setting an intention with help from a higher or mysterious place or power. I'm a fan of bucking tradition, while simultaneously embracing what I find works for me. I think this is why I find magick in Southern Appalachia so interesting – there's no one way to practice it, yet it evolves from a long line of those who've come before us and behind each spell is an intent to bring something positive (and, I'm referring to positive magick, not magick to bring harm). I encourage you all to bring a little magick into your own life – look at your own family traditions or family tree – see what's there and how you can incorporate some of the mystery into your life for the better.

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# Puzzle

*Megan Dotson*

First, they say "She's simply  
doing it for attention.  
If she wanted to breathe,  
she could."  
Then they say,  
"Oh, she's just anxious,  
it's only anxiety."  
Next, "It's simply just asthma."  
Now they say  
"We need to run this test",  
"Try this med",  
"This surgery might help".  
These same words  
have been uttered  
over and over for months.  
They fix one thing,  
only to find another.  
They tell me I am a puzzle.  
If I am a puzzle,  
look at the picture on the box  
and put me back together.

# BiPAP and Apple Juice

*Megan Dotson*

Somehow, it's still scary.  
Even though she's lived through it,  
multiple times, she still gets scared  
when she can't breathe.  
But this time, she hunts for life  
in the sterile, white halls of death.  
Trapped in a prison of pity smiles  
held captive by IV lines and cannulas.  
She tries to drift away  
through her clouded mind,  
her thoughts made hazy by morphine.

The hum of the machine  
breathing for her,  
reminds her of the songs  
her mother hums while driving.  
The way the nurses laugh at her jokes  
reminds her of the way her friends  
find humor in everything.  
The kind looks the doctor shares,  
comforts her in the same way  
that one look from her grandmother can.  
The gentle way her mother holds her hand  
and watches her when she's asleep,  
reminds her of the Sunday afternoons  
they spent together.

Though she longs  
for the sanctuary of her room,  
she sees the monsters surrounding her  
are simply shadows.  
She finds a sense of gentle peace  
in the depths of what  
also brings her the most pain.  
As she drifts into a sleep  
produced by the meds,

she feels herself slipping away.

Dreams of her friends laughter  
and afternoons with her grandmother  
startle her into consciousness.

She wakes to her mother's hand  
clasping her own,  
her mothers eyes  
reflecting the pain  
in her own.

Her mother passes her  
a cup of apple juice, and  
hums a song  
in tune to the BiPAP machine.

# Ode to Kingsport, A City I Bled Through

*Harley Mercadal*

Running my fingertips over the brick walkways,  
I realize this isn't the place I grew up; not really.  
Wallace's is still there, and the russet library is, too;  
but everything, even me, looks tired, well-thumbed.

Carter-Trent Funeral Home sits neatly downtown,  
a place I didn't pay much mind to beforehand, but  
now my father's ashes reside wedged in the floor-tile  
cracks where he burned, mingling with strangers.

The swinging-bridge over Holston River creaks  
through my dreams, my father's ashes calling me.  
Ancestors of the birds we killed with stale white bread  
swoop, peck, take their due chips off my fleshy block.

*Oh, Kingsport*—my dead father's trailer mocks its  
vaulted position from atop Rich Drive's hillside.  
I sometimes drive by just to listen to the wind and  
wonder if the soil remembers the taste of blood.

# Gothic Modernism in Mildred Haun's "Melungeon-Colored"

Harley Mercadal

Gothic literature did well in its peak of popularity and continues to terrify and inspire readers and writers alike well after the fearful novelty of monsters and haunts wore off and nearly perished as people became immune to that particular brand of fear. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* represent the epitome of this monstrous side in the Gothic canon, which no longer frightens its audience to the degree it once did. Virginia Woolf reflected on this shift, where the classic monstrous Gothic no longer inspired fear amongst its readers: "The skull-headed lady, the vampire gentleman, the whole troop of monks and monsters who once froze and terrified us now gibber in some dark cupboard of the servants' hall. In our day we flatter ourselves the effect is produced by subtler means. It is at the ghosts within us that we shudder, and not at the decaying bodies of barons or the subterranean activities of ghouls" ("Gothic Romance" 133).

Literature later moved into an age of Modernity—where a focus on the internal workings of the mind, emotion, and mental deliberation often trumped the overall Romanticized aspects of human life. However, Gothic characteristics of earlier literature returned in the Modernism Movement as a technique to amp up the personal horrors and anxieties that living in Modernity often brings. Ezra Pound, considered one of the most influential founders of American Modernism, famously named one of his books after a phrase he often said, *Make It New* (1934). This book, combined with Sigmund Freud's ground-breaking work on both the mind and dreams, had Modernist writers taking the idea of making something new to heart by combining elements of multiple genres in their texts. For example, Mildred Haun's short story "Melungeon-Colored" employs techniques where Gothic elements (fearful weather, blood curses, and prophecy) and characters meet Modern senses of internalization.

Haun then creates what Taryn Norman identifies as a "Gothic Modernism," which is "a strain of Modernism that makes use of the well-established language and conventions of the Gothic terms to express recognizably Modernist concerns about the nature of subjectivity, temporality, language, and knowledge" to make her work new (2).

On January 6th, 1911, Mildred Haun was born in Hamblen County, Tennessee, to James and Margaret Haun. Much of Mildred Haun's early life took place in Cocke County, where her family lived in the appropriately named Haun Hollow in the Hoot Owl District (Gower x). Haun learned folklore and mountain ballads from her large family and neighbors, which greatly influenced her writings (Higgs and Manning 236). While Mildred Haun did learn many ballads from her neighbors, she was not an idle listener. Haun and her mother "sang the ballads and a lot of other songs" during Saturday night gatherings in the community, where "neighbors came in to hear music, sing songs, and tell tales" (Gower x).

Mildred Haun was also raised in an environment thickly enriched with old proverbs, folklore, and superstition, as mountain lives are wont to do. Haun grew up knowing that "[a] crow's egg don't hatch an eagle," "[o]ne sorrow never comes but what two more follow it," and "[b]ad rumor flies as fast as a hornet" (qtd. in Gower x). These proverbs show up often in her stories. Haun was also taught to look to nature, read what she saw, and discern any signs of the future that "nature discloses to the wary and discerning eye" (Gower x). Natural signs also make frequent appearances in Haun's writing; the characters usually read these signs as some sort of omen for the future, and those omens are generally bad ones. Some examples of looking to nature that Haun writes about are

"[i]f a man sees two snakes fighting, he will win the next fight he gets into" or "[i]f, the night before the first morning in May, a girl catches a snail and puts it under a plate, it will write in silver letters the initials of her future husband" (qtd. in Gower xi).

Additionally, as part of the superstitions Mildred Haun grew up with, she was also very familiar with supernatural occurrences. The supernatural, especially witches and witchcraft, were closely intertwined with the mountains' surrounding nature. Haun learned from one of her grandmothers that "hogs still get bewitched, and the only thing that will cure them is to slice up a silver dollar and put it in their slop" and that "[w]hen a witch dies, her cow gives bloody milk out of three tits for three days" (qtd. in Gower xi). Possibly one of the most interesting Haun learned from her grandmother is about how a witch gains her power:

Any woman can have this power transferred to her if she will go to a witch and ask to be taught the witch's prayer. She must learn this, go to a spring, turn her back to it, lean over backwards as far as possible, and repeat the prayer to the devil and all evil spirits nine times. (qtd. in Gower xi)

While these examples show Haun's multi-layered and informed upbringing, they are also essential to note because they inform a reader's understanding of how and why Haun wrote such haunted, dark, and fundamentally Gothic stories. Darkness was simply an everyday part of life for her, so those very dark and Gothic-style tropes would inform her writing.

Mildred Haun's life was also profoundly Modernist, not only because of when she was born and raised. Haun was a bit of an individualist and was an odd person out in her "nearly independent Appalachian" community, considering that both her neighbors and farming family have looked after themselves and largely succeeded without formal or further education (Gower xii). Haun took much more to books and learning than she did the farming life of her family and neighbors, and as she got a little older, she began to "hit on the notion" to become a granny-woman or midwife (Gower xii). However, to become a proper midwife, Haun needed a more formal education, so she went to high school and took

preparatory medicine courses there. Later, Haun graduated high school with classes in Latin and Biology under her belt, and she applied for a university degree. Eventually, Haun dropped the idea of becoming a midwife and instead pursued writing and literature. After receiving two degrees from Vanderbilt University, Mildred Haun published a collection of short stories in 1940, *The Hawk's Done Gone*, a collection noted in several anthologies of Southern and Appalachian Literature such as *Voices from the Hills*, as a significant and impactful work of the Appalachian region, dialect, ballads, and folklore.

One such impactful and complex story from *The Hawk's Done Gone* collection is "Melungeon-Colored," a dark tale of secrets, murder, prophecies, and bad weather. The narrator, Mary Dorthula White, is unnamed in this particular story; however, she is named in the introduction to the collection by Mildred Haun, and she is listed as the primary narrator for many of the first-person narrated stories. Much like the classic Gothic novel *Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole, "Melungeon-Colored" begins with a Gothic-style prophecy of sorts after one of the main characters, the young Cordia, runs off and marries Mos Arwood. The narrator reveals:

Of course, Cordia didn't know but what me and Ad were her real pa and ma. I give Effena[, Cordia's mother and the narrator's daughter,] a death-bed oath that I would never tell. You know, if you tell something a dying person asks you not to tell[,] you will be haunted by that person the rest of your life. Everybody you tell will be haunted too. (Haun 237)

Effena, Cordia's mother, is presumably white, while Cordia's unnamed father is later revealed to be a Melungeon, a mixed-race man. The narrator is thus held by an oath that she will never reveal Cordia's true parentage to anyone, but especially not to Cordia herself. Effena dies soon after the promise is made, hence the "death-bed oath" the narrator mentions (Haun 237). The narrator raises Cordia as her child; while it is not explicitly said, it is implied that Cordia has white or light skin like her supposed parents.

This section of the story acts as both the revealing of a secret as well as a Gothic prophecy, predicting the narrator's difficult choice between telling Cordia the truth of her mixed-race parentage and the narrator

being haunted for the rest of her life or the decision to let Cordia's future baby come and deal with the situation then. Cordia's real father, readers shortly learn after this prophecy, is a man identified as "Melungeon," a name for a person of mixed races, most commonly of Caucasian, Hispanic or Native American, and African-American descent. In previous stories in *The Hawk's Done Gone*, Melungeons are respected and are treated as somewhat mysteriously attractive. The Appalachians in this collection believe that Melungeon people "are an old race of folks, and how they were started somewhere on a ship. They had some kind of trouble on the ship and ended up here" (Haun 81). However, the common knowledge of these mixed-race peoples changed within the story's society when it became rumored that Melungeons had "Negro blood in them." Racist ideology resurfaced, and therefore, "some folks were getting so they held it against a body for being a Melungeon" (Haun 238). Effena, Cordia's mother, probably requested that the narrator never tell Cordia the truth because she might have faced racism if anyone knew. While Cordia is presented in the story as light-skinned enough to pass as a white woman, she can still pass down "Melungeon" features to her children, such as darker skin color. In addition, the narrator exhibits her medical knowledge of genetics when she says, "I knowed if Cordia ever had any boy youngons they would be Melungeon-colored and her man might not understand" (Haun 239). Presumably, a "Melungeon-colored" child would greatly upset a white father due to the aforementioned hostile nature toward Melungeons in this story.

Rather than focus on the individuality that a mixed-race character who does not know it could bring as other Gothic novels do, Mildred Haun chooses in the quote mentioned above to focus on the Gothic aspects of family secrets, fear, strange storms, which reflect emotional turmoil, and death. Haun simultaneously gives the readers a look into the narrator, Mary Dorthula White's stream-of-consciousness from the beginning of "Melungeon-Colored," which has become a favorite technique of authors in Modernism. The narrator warns Cordia "to come right to [the narrator] and let [her] know at the first sign" of pregnancy, intending to give Cordia a Pennyroyal tea, even though the narrator claims, "I never have give anybody a thing to knock a youngon" (Haun 239). The Pennyroyal tea will cause Cordia to have an abortion, so the mixed-race nature of her heritage will remain a secret; due to the

forethought of these actions, a plan for violence is set into motion.

However, the narrator begins to see more signs of a prophecy that Cordia is pregnant, and the truth of her mixed-race ethnicity will unearth. Omens, portents, and visions are often-used tropes in Gothic fiction (Harris 1). The narrator leans heavily on her superstitions as she tells us, "[e]verything I saw made me think of a baby being born, of a ma trying to save a youngon" (Haun 240). A second prophecy comes into the narrator's thoughts as she muses, "then I told myself again that any ma that loved her youngon wouldn't let harm come to it" (Haun 241). After Cordia announces that she is indeed pregnant, the prophecy deepens as the narrator thinks in fear, "I begun saying to myself that I wished Cordia would die before it was born" (Haun 243). While Cordia passes as a white woman, the narrator fears the skin color of Cordia's child will prove dark. This assumption comes from the narrator's experiences as a Granny-woman; in her experience, male babies typically had darker skin, and female babies had fairer complexions. However, the narrator also remembers that Mos "had a Melungeon boy . . . staying over there" at Cordia and Mos' home, which the narrator "seed that [the Melungeon boy] would make things worse" if or when the baby is born with dark skin (Haun 243). The narrator has another Gothic-style prophecy the day Cordia goes into labor: "I had a feeling it would have to happen that night, that night it did happen" (Haun 243). Instead of referring directly to the birth, the narrator chooses to call the birth "it," a sign that the narrator was full of dread and fear about the outcome of said birth. The narrator recalls similar ominous luck signs throughout the day: dreams of green snakes, death bells tolling in her ears, and the inability to sleep the night before (Haun 243).

The gloom and foreboding continue later as Haun uses a great Gothic-style storm to reflect the narrator's internal emotional battery the night Cordia goes into labor. The narrator comments, "[i]t was the worst storm I ever saw," and [t]here wasn't any air—not enough for a body to breathe. I thought I was going to smother" (Haun 243). This description of the figuratively suffocating storm with the narrator trapped inside the house foreshadows Cordia's baby's actual suffocation in a coffin when Mos buries it alive. Robert Harris calls this trope of the Gothic-style storm "the metonymy of gloom and horror" because the storm is

a metaphor for the narrator's complicated emotional state (2).

Cordia's husband, Mos, comes to fetch the narrator because, in classic Gothic-Romantic fashion, Cordia goes into labor as the aforementioned great storm comes to change the world as the characters know it. Mos and the narrator fight the storm's pounding rain and brisk wind, a flooded river, lightning strikes, and endless mud to try and get to Cordia and help her give birth safely. However, when the two characters arrive back at Cordia's home, the labor is over. The narrator throws back the quilt to cut the umbilical cord, and as she sees the baby, she speaks the words which doom Cordia to her premature death: "Its skin! A Melungeon! I knowed it" (Haun 247). Mos sees the darker skin of the baby and is enraged by the apparent infidelity between his wife and the Melungeon boy they had staying at the house. Mos kills Cordia with a stick of firewood rather than face society's shame; thus, he creates another familial secret--this time violently--to add to the story's Gothic sensibilities.

Mos' actions show both the violence-driven Gothic reaction toward an object of fear and the Modernist anxieties about life or living with a soiled reputation. The narrator's actions of blurting out Cordia's unknown secret and being too shocked to act exhibit two more tropes of Gothic fiction: high, even overwrought emotion and women in distress (Harris 1). Mos looms over the narrator and makes her fear that he will kill her next if she does not help him both build the coffin and carry it up the hill to be buried (Haun 248-249), another trope of Gothic fiction that shows a woman being threatened by a powerful, impulsive, or tyrannical male figure (Harris 1-2). The narrator and Mos build a coffin for Cordia, working through the night, then "break[ing] her knees to get her legs to go down" (Haun 249). Mos, disgusted by the hungry, still-screaming, and not-white baby, "just picked it up and put it on in" the coffin with Cordia before he and the narrator nail the lid to the coffin shut (Haun 249).

While Mos digs the grave for his murdered wife and suffocating child, the supernatural elements creep in again when a cat begins clawing at the door, and the cat sounds "like a woman's screaming" outside (Haun 249). Mos and the narrator eventually start to haul the coffin up the hill behind the house, where Mos dug the

abovementioned grave. Finally, the cat follows the pair, jumps up onto the coffin, and meows in warning of the horrible deed Mos and the narrator have committed. This technique, too, is Gothic, as the cat represents Cordia's spirit in a supernatural element as a type of warning or begging to save the child in an echo of Edgar Allan Poe's similarly guilt-ridden tale "The Black Cat." The narrator reflects darkly that she "could hear the baby smothering" the entire time inside the coffin (Haun 249).

The ending of this tale merges the Gothic sensibility of a violent prophecy coming to an end with Cordia's and the baby's death, where the secret of Cordia's mixed-race blood no longer matters, to the Modernist technique of showing the narrator's emptiness. The narrator numbly tunes out her granddaughter's funeral seven months later and thinks through her emotional justification for her actions. Similarly, Mos, Cordia's former husband and killer, comes to the funeral with "his new woman," and the narrator notes that Mos "hadn't waited till the dirt settled on Cordia's grave" before he married again (Haun 250). The idea of Mos, a husband supposedly grieving, bringing his new wife to the funeral of his old wife, Cordia, would be offensive and frankly taboo to people even today. The narrator ends the tale with "[d]arkness, fire and pain. They were what I had been through. But God said he understood," and thus, she absolves herself of all guilt, noting, "I felt peaceful as a kitten" (Haun 251). The narrator, perhaps selfishly, sees the violent end of Cordia and the baby as a better fate than betraying the deathbed promise made to her daughter, Effena. Since the secret is kept, the narrator feels no one is coming back to haunt her, despite her part in the violent acts committed against Cordia and her baby. The narrator effectively sheds her guilt when she believes God understands and forgives her participation in the violence that ended Cordia's life.

In conclusion, Mildred Haun's "Melungeon-Colored" is a multi-faceted story representing Gothic Modernism. The story contains Gothic manifestations of familial sin, fear, and anxieties of the supernatural. The text also shares numerous facets of Modernism--such as the social and societal anxieties of race, focus on internalizing emotion, and real-life monsters manifesting within the text. Several characteristics of the classic Gothic tropes also appear in this text, including prophecies, familial sins/blood curses, and supernatural elements such as

ghosts and weather, which reflect the character's internal struggles. The Gothic elements, such as the tempest-style storm before the murder of Cordia Arwood, are deliberate in showing intense emotion and anxiety in a time of Modernity. This text shows its Modernist timeliness while bringing in classic Gothic literature tropes to deepen the text's complexity and showcase modern concerns, fears, and horrors. This idea of Modernist texts being both timely and complex reflects Octavio Paz's view that "Modernity [like the Gothic] . . . is always [concerned with] the other. The modern is characterized not only by novelty but by otherness" (14). Haun created a text of Gothic Modernism, which Taryn Norman identifies as "a strain of Modernism that makes use of the well-established language and conventions of the Gothic terms to express recognizably Modernist concerns about the nature of subjectivity, temporality, language, and knowledge" to make her work complex and new as Modernist audiences demanded (2). Even though more than a century separates classic Gothic fiction from the Modernist period, Gothic tools were helpful to Modernist writers to express living anxieties.

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# Mangos in February

*Tyler C. Jonas*

My heart pounds  
tight in my chest  
as I watch you sink  
lower into the ground.  
So much time.  
So much effort.  
It all led up to this moment.  
Where I watch the wet Earth  
overtake you into itself.  
Where will you go from here?  
Will you keep growing, or is this the end?  
Is it fair to ask such questions so soon?  
Planting seeds really shouldn't do this to me.  
Yet I always wonder where they'll go  
when I plant my mangos in February.

# Words Dipped in Molasses

*Tyler C. Jonas*

Your voice greets my tired face  
As if nothing has changed  
Like hardly a day has passed  
Your words, sweeter than honey  
They stick to my heart like molasses to crackers

And just like that  
I know you're safe  
You were right  
And I was wrong  
Because he had the mercy  
To show you to me one last time

# Lana

*Tyler C. Jonas*

The butterflies upon your grave  
Have disappeared today  
In the dead of night  
The pair took flight  
To watch our family grow

They know how you'll smile at the idea  
Of grandchildren you never got to meet  
Of how little Samuel is all grown up  
How Misty and Stephanie still fight like sisters do

They wait for the happy tears you'll shed  
When they tell you poor Stevie is getting better  
And your husband is getting on just fine  
Still telling stories that cause eyes to roll

Most of all, though  
The butterflies upon your grave will say  
"They all miss you. They all love you."  
Then fly back down to Earth  
To take their spot upon your grave  
Happily knowing that we will never forget you

# Heaven-Sent Sky

*Parker O. Guffey*

where god made furrows in the fjord and  
diligently planted sunflowers along splitting concrete;

the scenic vista where heaven and snow-covered  
peaks met and embraced each other at dawn;

Atop the abandoned rooftop by my house, where  
i taste vanilla and sugar in the misty fog;

in a bed of lily of the valley flowers and  
thin birch saplings;

i can't help but think as i stand here,  
between heaven-sent sky and cracking earth;

how tied i am to broken roads and growing roots;  
how my fingers will never grace that heaven-sent sky;

It makes me want to die.

# Bowmantown, Tennessee

*William Rieppe Moore*

The light of the dawn rose with the sun  
quieter than dewfall or the ice

thawin' in the straw. Either way,  
the sound of water in slowglide

is louder than the sunrise, closer  
to our ground, nearer than a touch.

If the dust could praise, it might  
just say, *Roddle ol a day*.

When diabetis flares my gout,  
a swing goes in my legs like a

drunk that dances on a plank between  
barrel heads and puts a kind o' spring

in my step to know why Mama said  
I was just like Aunt Eileen—

and me a boy no less—her hair all in  
a bun where the passin' light glared

as a light for the land enough  
to make listeners of us.

# Can Lot, Tennessee

*William Rieppe Moore*

The winter solstice was wide open  
when Saturn and Jupiter's specks

were ordered. They call it, *The Star  
of Bethlehem*, but it was just a

twinned light, where Asian kings  
met in the middle darkness there,

equidistant among the two planets;  
the far reaches of the panchromatic.

I can say anything I want to, do  
anything, and even want the same.

But what I want for Christmas, if still  
you can get it, is a crosscut saw

and a man to go with it. I won't  
wait till day two of Christmastide

to bust up the logs behind the house;  
this woodstove's got a fatman's mouth.

For the nights get cold to the bone,  
the days notwithstanding.

# Conasauga, Tennessee

*William Rieppe Moore*

The pole beans are profligate—  
the son squanderin' his life

in greenvines that climb  
its sister corn while cushaws

bring the burl of foliage  
bristlier than the arms of

the unchosen son, arms that  
spurred the younger one to dress

up in felted wool, and that  
in summer, too, which just

goes to show, sometimes grace  
seems like it must prevail, for

the younger was forgiven like  
a man's shadow might be that's

stitched to beans which have reached  
the height of their spendthrift life

to repent with a jaundiced descent  
up through a well of hills.

# Family

*Ray Zimmerman*

One grandma died young.

At age 12, mama became her nurse. She helped the lady of the house to the porch so she could sew in the sun. Her father called her "our little nurse."

Each morning she packed her daddy's lunch, an unasked question on her lips the day he dropped a pistol into the lunch box.

The miners were on strike. He walked the picket line wary of company goons. "Don't let anyone in the house. Those company men are tricky."

He once said that a man walked up to him in the mine, conversed for a few minutes, and faded away into the wall.

Another grandma succumbed to madness when her husband abandoned her with all those kids. The orphanage kindly welcomed papa. Two maiden aunts took him in so he could go to high school.

Now I have gone and done it. I have dropped my guard and wonder how much I should let you see through my disguise. Perhaps I will let in just a little more light.

We may have been poor, but we owned land. The garden fed us all summer. Mason jars of beans, tomatoes, and corn fed us most of the winter, supplemented with rabbit and pheasant from the old man's game pouch. Trips to the store were occasional for grits, coffee, sugar, and bacon. Mama's hens provided eggs until the zoning commission said they had to go.

Some nights, I slept in my tent. Daytime, I read in its shade, my companion a hound dog, barely grown from a pup. I named her Babe after Paul Bunyan's blue ox.

I read every story I could about that legend of a man. Paul Bunyan's frying pan was so big two lumberjacks skated across its surface with slabs of bacon strapped to their feet. They greased the pan for the dozens of eggs he cooked and ate for breakfast each morning. When the blue ox Babe stopped for a drink, the Round River ran dry.

Before I left fundamentalism behind, they dunked me in the water:

Three times!

Once for the father!

Once for the son!

Once for the Holy Ghost!

I emerged primarily unchanged.

## Bios

**JOHN C. MANNONE'S** poetry and prose appear in *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Bold + Italic*, *Poetry South*, and *Fictive Dreams*. He was awarded a Jean Ritchie Fellowship (2017) in Appalachian literature, and served as the celebrity judge for the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (2018). His poetry collections are *Disabled Monsters* (Linnet's Wings Press, 2015), *Flux Lines: The Intersection of Science, Love, and Poetry* (Linnet's Wings Press, 2021), *Sacred Flute* (Iris Press, 2022), and *Song of the Mountains* (Middle Creek Publishing, 2023). He edits poetry for *Abyss & Apex*. A retired physics professor, John lives in Knoxville, Tennessee.

**LAWRENCE COTTRELL** lived in West Virginia, mostly, preferring to dwell among good people, in a place where change is an unloved orphan. He owns a BA from West Virginia State University and attended several graduate schools, leaving each finally to walk mist flirted hollows, prowl wind-blasted ridges, to be where valleys can be spanned by two arms and a broom handle, and noons aren't quite sure of themselves. His poems have appeared in *The Lyric*, *Appalachian Heritage*, *Good Foot* and *Grab-a-Nickel*, among others. He's in the celebrated anthology *Wild Sweet Notes: Fifty Years of West Virginia Poetry 1950-1999*. Two poetry collections, *Odd Fussings* and *Hallelujahs From Oblivion's Ridgepole* have been published by Dos Madres Press. He blooms presently at a bend of Elk River's meander.

**KAY T. FIELDS** is a former writing group participant with Mary Bozeman Hodges and admire her work and dedication to her students. She recently published a memoir titled, *Godsmacked: A memoir of Mania, Mayhem and Mischief*. She lives in Dandridge with her spouse and Yorkie, Victoria where reading and writing occupy most of her time.

**HANNAH BAKER** is a senior at West Ridge High School located in Blountville, Tennessee. She currently resides in the East Tennessee city of Bristol. She will be graduating in May 2022 and has plans to attend Northeast State Community College in the fall of 2022 to further her education. She is interested in the medical field and would like to take the career path of Hospital Administration. Hannah's hobbies include swimming, hiking and anything

to do with outside and nature.

**R. L. PETE WYATT** was born and raised in the Blue Grass community near the village of Concord, Knox County, Tennessee. At the age of 18 he joined the U. S. Air Force, served in Texas, Mississippi, Tokyo, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, and Las Vegas before returning to East Tennessee. He has an Associate of Science degree in biology from Roane State Community College, a Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry, Wildlife & Fisheries Science from the Institute of Agriculture at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and almost a Master of Science Degree in Biology from East Tennessee State University. He worked for the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency for over 37 years. He was a Boating Safety Officer during the 1982 World's Fair, wildlife officer/ (game warden) in Unicoi County, nongame and endangered species wildlife biologist in the Nashville Basin and East Tennessee. His last job with TWRA before he retired on April Fool's Day 2014, was the Regional Wildlife Manager, (Senior Management) supervising all Wildlife Management Areas, and wildlife personnel in twenty-one East Tennessee counties. He spends his leisure time during warm weather between two cabins: one off the grid on top of Unaka Mountain at the Ephraim Place 4400' in elevation overlooking the Nolichucky River Gorge, and the second is a 200-year-old log cabin at 4400' in elevation at the base of Roan Mountain that sits along Toll Creek.

He spends his winters in torpor alongside Lost Creek in New Market, Tennessee. He writes in and about Appalachia. His current project is a two-volume set of humorous short stories about his time as a game warden. When not on an adventure with Madam X, he listens to Blue Grass music and whispers to his American Leopard Curs.

**NATALIE KIMBELL** lives in Sequatchie County, Tennessee. She is a mother of two, and a grandmother of four. She works as a teacher of English, creative theater, and creative writing at her high school alma mater. Her poetry is published in *The 2019 Chattanooga Writers' Guild Anthology*, and *The 2020 Garfield Lake Review*, *The 2020 Chattanooga Writers' Guild Anthology*, the 2021 *Appalachian Writers Anthology*, *Dorothy Allison Version* and *The American*

*Diversity Report*. Her work also appears in the 2021/22 Women of Appalachia Project's *Women Speak* anthology, *Beautiful: In the Eye of the Beholder*, and *Abyss and Apex* an online magazine.

**SHERRY POFF** grew up in the hills of southern West Virginia and now writes in and around Chattanooga, Tennessee. She holds an MA in Writing and Rhetoric from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and is a member of the Chattanooga Writers' Guild. Sherry's work has appeared recently or is forthcoming in *Stone Poetry Journal*, *Heart of Flesh*, *Speckled Trout Review*, and *The Chattanooga Pulse*.

**ROSEMARY ROYSTON**, author of *Second Sight* (2021, Kelsay Press) and *Splitting the Soil* (Finishing Line Press, 2014), resides in the northeast Georgia mountains with her family. Her writing has been published in journals such as *POEM*, *Split Rock Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Poetry South*, *Appalachian Review*, and *\*82 Review*. Her photography has been published in *A Rose in the World*, *Bloodroot*, and *New Southerner*. She is an Assistant Professor of English at Young Harris College.

**MEGAN DOTSON** is a full-time student from Tennessee. She plays golf for her school's team and has a deep-rooted passion for literature. She frequently habits local bookstores and coffee shops, reading stories or coming up with her own. She loves music and has a year-old Goldendoodle puppy named Kelly.

**HARLEY MERCADAL** is currently a first-year Ph.D. student in English at Middle Tennessee State University where she is researching the relationship between Ecocriticism, the Gothic, and Appalachian literature. She's published four poems in *The Mockingbird* and an academic essay in *The*

*Mildred Haun Review*. Outside of academics, she enjoys reading, collecting books, and spending time with her husband and their two dogs.

**TYLER C. JONAS** is a student based in Northeastern Tennessee, where he was born and raised. He is currently studying biology, and does much of his writing in his spare time, being influenced by the nature, landscapes, and culture of Appalachia to create his short stories and poetry.

**PARKER O. GUFFEY** (they/them) is a poet and artist currently residing in the mountains of northeast Tennessee after living in Texas and Ohio for the majority of their childhood. They are working to pursue an education in business and creative writing and were published in the *Appelley Publishing* poetry contest in 2019.

**WILLIAM RIEPPE MOORE** is from Richland County, South Carolina and moved to Unicoi County, Tennessee in 2012 with his wife, Cherith, where they practice homesteading and animal husbandry. He also enjoys climbing, backpacking, and swimming in the Nolichucky River, experiences that provide the material context of his poems. In May of 2021, he received his MA in English from East Tennessee State University, and in 2019 he began teaching high schoolers. He writes with his field guides and ballad books open, and his primary goal, when he is writing a poem, is to finish the poem. His work has appeared in *James Dickey Review*, *Ligeia*, *Still: The Journal*, *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*, *Vita Brevis*, and *Tiny Seed Literary Journal*. His work is forthcoming in *American Diversity Report* as well as *Voices*.

**RAY ZIMMERMAN** lives in Chattanooga, Tennessee and has published nonfiction and poetry in several journals.



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