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THE USES OF APPALACHIAN CULTURE AND ORAL TRADITION
IN THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE TO ADOLESCENTS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1979

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Frank Zidonis
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For all my kin: two sets of grandparents, who were Appalachian but didn't know it; my father and mother; Phillip, Pam, Mark, and Rosemary, but especially for David, who never doubted this dissertation would be written.
VITA

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INTRODUCTION

The thesis of this writing is a simple one—that teachers of adolescents at the high school and junior high school level need to know more about the oral tradition of their students and to incorporate the content of those oral traditions in English classes as an adjunct and mediation to written literature. This is especially true in schools which have significant numbers of students from cultures from outside the mainstream of American life.

In recent years there has been an increased interest in folklore courses at the pre-college level as English departments have sought to vary their course offerings often by adopting a series of mini-courses. In many cases, however, the treatment of folklore has been superficial, either a folktales-around-the-world approach or one which emphasizes the quaintness of a folk group. There has been some interest in American Indian, Chicano, and Black culture and folklore, but little attention has been given to the folk group of particular significance to teachers in Ohio and other states bordering on the Appalachian region, the southern mountaineer. Eliot Wigginton's Foxfire concept is the notable exception. To be sure, the writings of Wigginton's students contain much to interest the folklorist and Wigginton's determination to give his students the opportunity to write from their own cultural experience is admirable; still the Foxfire emphasis is on composition and not on the analysis or inter-
pretation of folkloric material. Now the back-to-basics mentality which grips so many school systems threatens to erode whatever modest gains folklore has made as a legitimate subject for study.

The oral traditions of a people are, however, basic—even more basic than the literacy we prize so much. Those cultural values learned in folk groups determine not only how one views the world but how he views himself. Through the oral tradition one learns the homely skills of living, the art of getting on with one's fellows, the taboos of his society, and the rudiments of poetry and fiction. After arguing that the oral tradition should be taught along with written literature, René Welleck and Austin Warren make this observation about its primacy.

There is, first of all, the huge oral "literature." There are poems or stories which have never been fixed in writing and still continue to exist. Thus the lines in black ink are merely a method of recording a poem which must be conceived as existing elsewhere. If we destroy the writing or even all the copies of a printed book we still may not destroy the poem, as it may be preserved in the oral tradition....

Surveying the literature on the uses of folklore, one discovers a range of approaches, archetypal and mythic, Freudian and Jungian. Folklorists have explored some of the possibilities of using genres of folklore as a bridge to written literature. None of this writing, however, addresses itself specifically to the use of Appalachian folklore in the English classroom.

When teachers begin to investigate the oral traditions of a folk group they need to know something of that group's history and character.

Those who wish to know more about Appalachian culture may find the search for reliable sources confusing, for, though much has been written about the region, the literature may be biased, superficial, condescending, or politicized. A study of mountain culture is further complicated by the changes that are taking place in mountain culture and in the lives of those Appalachians who have migrated to cities outside the region. Still, though Appalachian culture like all others is dynamic, certain "old verities" remain: the importance of kinship and religious faith and attachment to place, all of which are rooted in the history of the people.

In addition to having a sense of the values important to mountain people, teachers need to know what folklore sources are available in print and something of the value of these sources. Again, collections abound, some more true to the voice of the folk than others.

Finally teachers need a structure for incorporating folklore into the English curriculum. The progression suggested here is from the smallest, most familiar, and simplest element, folk speech, to those increasingly more complex, proverbs, family folklore, legends, and tales of wonder. Admittedly this scheme omits major folklore genres, especially folksongs and ballads. The lyrics of ballads, however, have long been accepted as part of the canon of Anglo-American poetry, and their use is well documented in anthologies.

Both students and teachers can gain a kind of spiritual literacy from the combined study of folklore and literature, the most important aspect of which may be a new appreciation of the cultural pluralism of our country. Jim Wayne Miller, an Appalachian poet and educator, has written, "I am suggesting that our schools not only respect cultural di-
versity but actually turn it to advantage in educational approach; that cultural diversity should be acknowledged not out of altruism but because it is good teaching strategy to do so."  

In his address "The American Scholar" delivered in 1837, Emerson urged his fellow scholars as well as American artists and institutions to turn from their preoccupation with literature and art which was elevated, distant, and foreign and to attend rather to the riches truly American. Enough, says he, of "the great, the remote, the romantic": "I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low." So might we as teachers of children from culturally diverse backgrounds attend to the oral traditions of the cultures from which they come. The incorporation of Appalachian folklore in an English classroom provides a means of merging the near and familiar with those forms of written literature often treated as part of an elitist culture. The charge most often made against schools both in Appalachia itself and outside the region is that they seem to the student to concern themselves with subjects that are irrelevant; that is, they do not make a connection between the world where the student actually lives and the world that is created in the classroom; nor do schools point out those universal human values common to both mainstream and minority cultures.

Further the analysis and study of folklore enables the teacher to "'walk one mile in the moccasins' of his students...instead of cutting off his charges' cultural feet" as Thomas A. Green has suggested is often

done when all students are treated as if they were, or should be, products of the mainstream culture. Once more Jim Wayne Miller has stated the case for deeper appreciation of Appalachian culture in the classroom most persuasively.

Even while the ultimate aim may be to transcend regional limitations, the frontal approach, transcending by denying, denigrating, eradicating, or simply ignoring, is not the right approach. People do not casually and perversely come to have a particular value orientation.... Even if one denies the culture, it is still there. The best approach is to acknowledge its existence, to bring it under conscious scrutiny as much as possible. This is illuminating and liberating the individual. 4


4 Miller, p. 17.
Chapter 1

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:
AN EXPLORATION OF THE VALUES OF THE ORAL TRADITION AND ITS USE IN LITERATURE CLASSES

When one attempts to find a coherent body of literature on the values of folklore for adolescents and the uses of folklore in the English classroom, one discovers the writing scattered in varied fields, psychology, anthropology, folklore, literary criticism, and education. In general it may be said that much of the literature concerns the following subjects: 1) the psychological values of fairy tales for young children, 2) reports from reading conferences encouraging the use of folk tales as a means of developing cross-cultural understanding, 3) myth as a critical approach to literature, 4) class units based on folklore and myth, and 5) writing by folklorists on the use of specific folklore genres as approaches to imaginative literature. The literature on using the folklore of a specific regional or ethnic group is limited to Black, American Indian, and, to a lesser degree, Chicano material. This survey did not discover any source that addressed itself to using the folkloric resources of Appalachian students in English classes.
Max Lüthi's collection of essays *Once Upon a Time: On the Nature of Fairy Tales* cannot be classified simply as a psychological interpretation of fairy tales, but his ideas are so clearly the precursors of the later studies of Bruno Bettelheim and Andre Favat that they should be mentioned here. In his work Lüthi develops a number of approaches to the tales, but for this writing perhaps two ideas are most important. Lüthi insists that fairy tales are a polished and integrated artistic form. The structure and the motifs in fairy tales have made them the inspiration for much written literature. In addition Lüthi refutes the notion that fairy tales appeal only to young children. Though older children and adolescents may lose their interest in the wonder tales for a time, as they become older their interest often returns. More importantly for this study, Lüthi sees in many of the fairy tales, like "Rapunzel", a representation of the maturation of the heroine or hero from childishness, weakness, and dependence to real personhood. Those ideas of Lüthi most pertinent to the adolescent and the fairy tale will be discussed more fully in Chapter 5. For the present it is sufficient to say that Lüthi's work first published in German in 1962 is the scholarly forerunner of the later writing of Bettelheim and Favat.

*The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* by Bruno Bettelheim, a child psychologist best known for his work with severely disturbed children, while not a distinctly original work does provide a readable introduction to the psychoanalytic approach to fairy tales.
tales. The Uses of Enchantment, which has been much reviewed and widely read, is a work teachers will find easily accessible. More important than that, Bettelheim's book has awakened a popular audience to the idea that fairy tales should be taken seriously because they satisfy profound psychological needs in their readers. Bettelheim's experience with children has convinced him that their most urgent need is to find meaning in their lives. "If we hope to live not from moment to moment but in true consciousness of our existence," he asserts, "then our greatest need and most difficult achievement is to find real meaning in our lives."

In attaining such meaning and in reaching a sense of self, the transmission of a cultural inheritance is second only to the effect of parents.

Fairy tales are a source of hope for children, tracing the path all must follow from childhood and dependency to maturity. The tales, Bettelheim notes, frequently begin with a figure who is small and weak but who eventually triumphs over his difficulties, a situation which reflects the impotence a child feels in a world of adult giants. That the hero or heroine of the fairy tale finally succeeds gives the child hope that he too will overcome his immaturity and find his real identity.

Additionally fairy tales acknowledge the dark side of human life from which adults often feel children should be shielded. Children themselves, on the other hand, realize that neither they nor those they love are completely good. The tales tell children that evil exists in the world but that wicked characters, who are unequivocally evil, will be

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punished like the witch who is consumed in her own oven or the stepmother who is made to dance in red-hot shoes. Thus the child's sense of justice is satisfied and his sense of right and wrong reinforced.

Bettelheim's approach to fairy tales is heavily Freudian in both terminology and interpretation, and his arguments in their defense is largely psychoanalytical; thus he can be charged as proponents of Freudian interpretations often are with cutting the tales from their roots and using them as models on which to practice symbol hunting. However, he does not simply reduce his interpretations to exercises in Freudian symbolism but emphasizes the magic qualities of age-old tales which have instructed countless generations of children in the pain and joy of growing up. Further, Bettelheim suggests that there are implications for both parents and teachers in the satisfaction that children find in these tales. The texts used by schools for beginning readers may teach the skills of reading, but they are a thin gruel for a child's imagination. Their contents are unnourishing to his spirit, for they add no meaning to his life. "They cheat the child of what he ought to gain from the experience of literature: access to deeper meaning, and that which is meaningful to him at his stage of development."  

In the entire canon of what is termed children's literature he concludes "nothing can be as enriching and satisfying to child and adult alike as the folk fairy tale." 3

In his study Child and Tale: The Origins of Interest F. Andre Favat, observing that the age at which a child is most intensely interested in fairy tales is between the ages of six and eight, explores the reasons

2Bettelheim, p. 4.
3Bettelheim, p. 5.
for this interest. He hypothesizes that the attraction of the stories, beginning at five and diminishing at ten, is related to the child's psychological development. First, using Proppian analysis, he examines the tales of the Grimms, Perrault, and Hans Christian Anderson and concludes that though they differ "there is an unmistakable sense that the stories in these collections are all of one kind...although the relationships that exist between the various actions of the characters in the stories of Perrault and the Grimms are different from those in Anderson, the actions themselves as well as the types of character, are the same in all three collections." 4 The stories, chosen on the basis of their popularity, Favat terms the "literary reservoir."

Favat then establishes a "psychological reservoir" based on the early work of Jean Piaget. He concludes that the characteristics of the fairy tales parallel the development of the child from age six to eight: "Just as magic and animism suffuse the world of the fairy tale, so do they suffuse the world of the child; just as a morality of constraint prevails in the fairy tale, so does it prevail in the moral world of the child; just as the fairy tale world and the hero become one in achieving his ends, so do children believe their world is one with them." 5

In brief, Favat finds "that precise correspondences between the child and tale do indeed exist," 6 and after considering and refuting

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5 Favat, p. 38.
6 Favat, p. 38.
anthropological, Freudian, and Jungian explanations for children's intense interest in fairy tales, concludes that the stories appeal because they mirror the world as the child conceives it at this stage of his development.

There are parallels to be drawn between The Uses of Enchantment and Child and Tale. Both Bettelehim and Favat believe that fairy tales have deep psychological significance for children at a certain stage of their lives. Both suggest that the stories impose a kind of order on the confusing world of reality. As children grow more mature and come to accept the real world, they need the comfort and escape of fairy tales less and eventually reject them in favor of literature that reflects reality rather than fantasy. Like Bettelheim, Favat thinks that "there is a resurgence of interest around the age of 18 to 20 that seems to continue throughout adult life." 7 Finally, though it may seem that both authors are concerned only with young children, in essence both are insisting that there are profound truths in these tales which are now relegated to the province of children's literature though they once belonged to all ages.

This quotation from the Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson seems to sum it up:

The recollection of such reading as had delighted him [Johnson] in his infancy, made him always persist in that it was the only reading that could please an infant... 'Babies do not want (said he) to hear about babies; they like to be told of giants and castles, of somewhat which can stretch and stimulate their little minds'. 8

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7 Favat, p. 56.
In addition to the psychological values implicit in fairy tales, which may come too close to psychotherapy for teachers to be comfortable with them, educators have been interested in the relationship between children's books and the oral tradition and in the use of folktales as reading resources.

First folk tales seem to appeal to young readers by their very nature. The plots are simple, fast-moving, and unornamented by lengthy description; they usually come to a satisfying conclusion. The characters are flat and clearly completely good or evil. There is a formulaic pattern in folk tales that enables the child to anticipate what the unfolding of the plot will be. Folk tales, set in the world of fantasy, encourage the child to exercise his imagination, to imagine an enchanted world where animals talk and magic glass slippers fit. One must be able to imagine before he can create. Thus, scientists and inventors, for example, must be able to imagine what they have not experienced before they can create new structures.

In speaking of the debt that children's literature owes the folk genres, Virginia Haviland points out that the themes, motifs, and characters in children's literature are derived directly from folk sources so that it is difficult to conceive how books for children could have been written or illustrated without them. 9 Haviland's interest is largely in

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folk and fairy tales in print and in how they can be made more easily accessible to young readers. Though she recognizes the richness of the folk tradition, her preference is clearly for a literary retelling based on oral sources.

Like Haviland, Ruth Carlson favors an increased use of folk tales in the classroom though she speaks to a broader subject, the value in reading folk tales gathered from around the world, including fairy tales, legends and fables, for enhancing cross-cultural understanding at both the elementary and high school level. In the opening paper delivered at the International Reading Conference (1970) Carlson suggests a variety of ways folk tales foster cultural understanding. Creation myths may reveal, for instance, the culture of primitive man attempting to explain in a non-scientific way the mysteries of the universe and man's place in it. By comparing the many versions of one folk tale, like the Cinderella story with its many variants, students can observe the commonality of themes and motifs. Closely related is the concept that when students compare variant forms of tales they begin to grasp the idea of cultural diffusion and the historical and cultural reasons for changes in tales. In addition the tales tell students how life is actually lived in other countries; they offer a glimpse of unfamiliar dialects and language use. But perhaps most importantly, the tales enable readers to experience vicariously life in another time and place and to explore the world of fantasy. Finally, Carlson believes that folk tales can enhance world understanding through their ability to convey moral values which are universal. She concludes that by actively involving the reader with folk tale texts from around the world, "It is hoped that all children will intuitively grasp
the better qualities of the human spirit and that through the use of imaginative folkloric literature man's reach can exceed his grasp.\textsuperscript{10}

In addition to a discussion of the values of folktales throughout students' school experience, Carlson includes suggestions, largely student-centered, for classroom activities. The series of papers following Carlson's introduction discusses the characteristics of national folktales gathered worldwide. Aside from American Indian and Afro-American folk literature, there is no discussion of other ethnic subgroups in the United States.

The Uses of Myth

The study of myth has traditionally been a part of the teaching of literature at the junior high school and secondary school level, either in a limited way to explain the classical allusions common in imaginative literature or in a larger study of the myths themselves, the assumption being that a knowledge of mythology underlies and illumines much of western literature. For the most part little attention has been given to the fact that the patterns which occur in myth also appear in other folklore genres particularly in folk tales and legends. The mythic approaches, then, are frequently applicable to the other genres as well.

Among the diverse mythic approaches to literature, only the work of Northrup Frye will be discussed in this writing because Frye himself has proposed his criticism as the basis for curricula in English classes.

\textsuperscript{10}Ruth Kearney Carlson, compiler, \textit{Folklore and Folktales Around the World}, Perspectives in Reading No. 15 (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1970), p. 17.
In The Educated Imagination Northrup Frye sets out to put the mythic theory of literature into pedagogical practice. For Frye myth becomes the foundation upon which the study of all literature can be based. He observes that the study and teaching of literature has been fragmentary, lacking the kind of systematic theory underlying science and mathematics. Believing that in the history of civilization myth precedes and later permeates literature, Frye proposes myth as the organizing principle in literary education. First in importance in Frye's scheme is the knowledge of the Bible as myth. Because it contains the most complete form of Frye's monomyth, the search for identity, it should be "taught so early and so thoroughly that it sinks straight to the bottom of the mind, where everything that comes along later can settle on it." Since the Bible as literature encompasses all of human experience from the Creation story in Genesis to the Last Judgement in the New Testament, it is the foundation for understanding western literature. Next, students need a knowledge of classical mythology, which sets forth more clearly than the Bible the myth of the hero and the cycle of his birth, triumph, death, and rebirth.

Frye's theory that myth can be used to give a coherent structure to literature has become the basis for a series of anthologies for grades 7-12 entitled Literature: Uses of Imagination and for a book for elementary teachers, Child as Critic. "We should teach literature, but in such a way that the primary facts emerge first, then the primary experiences

are properly emphasized, so that whatever the student goes on to next will be continuous with what he has already experienced. That implies teaching the structure, so that the content can be seen to have some reason in the structure for existing Frye asserts in "On Teaching Literature", the essay that accompanies Literature: Uses and Imagination. The hero cycle provides the literary structure and the four genres the progression Frye sees as a scheme for organizing the teaching of literature. In the teacher's manual for Circle of Stories, the first anthology in the series, Hope Arnott Lee writes that "Circle of Stories...is meant to be an instructional tool. It is constructed around a systematic study of an art form. The systematic study is literary theory, or criticism. The art form is literature." The "circle of stories" introduces "the four fundamental types of imaginative literature" based on the natural cycle of the seasons and the corresponding phases in the hero's life: comedy (spring), the account of the hero's triumph and marriage; romance (summer), the narrative of the hero's adventures in an ideal world; tragedy (winter), the story of the hero's destruction and eventual rebirth; and irony (autumn), a depiction of the complex and difficult world of reality. Frye believes that romance and comedy are accessible to even the youngest readers; tragedy and irony, more difficult forms, are better understood by older students.

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Both Frye's essays and the teacher's manuals emphasize that understanding these genres provides a coherent design for relating one work of literature to another, for searching out similar themes in literature, and for creating a holistic universe of literature. In short, it "simplifies the facts of literary experience" by supplying a broad context within which literary works are related, a much more integrated approach than is possible using other forms of criticism.

Frye insists that this is not a schematicism to be imposed on the student, but a principle to give form to teaching. Students should be led to perceive the patterns through small group work and careful discussion. As Sloan points out in *Child and Critic*, "An informed teacher is there to plan and structure presentations, to ask the right questions, to inspire, and to guide every creative effort." As students read more widely and learn to recognize the recursive patterns in literature, they will also learn to define and apply the genres of comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony.

Even before the publication of *Literature: Uses of Imagination* the Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English (1966) had explored the uses of myth in the classroom. Generally the participants rejected one single approach to the teaching or interpretation of myth. Albert L. Lavin seems to reflect the sense of the entire group by stating: "No one school of criticism offers us a single theory sufficient to account for the multiple levels of meaning in a literary work built from the

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The conference proceedings suggest a variety of ways in which myth may be used in the classroom. The psychoanalytic value of myth is cited though this is probably not within the province of the classroom teacher. The strength of myth in teaching cross-cultural appreciation, in designing interdisciplinary studies, and as an approach to history is evaluated.

But it is Northrup Frye's archetypal criticism and its pedagogical applications which elicit the greatest response from the seminar. While agreeing the myth is important both as a form of literature itself and as a means of understanding other literature, the group rejects both Frye's monomythic approach and curriculum design. Generally the seminar favors a diversity of approaches to myth which would emphasize differences from culture to culture asserting that Frye's scheme does not account for differing meanings of the same symbol from one culture to another. Paul A. Olson summarizes by saying "theories such as Frye's stand on very shaky psychological and anthropological grounds and...they constitute a potentially disastrous oversimplification of the business of literary education." Further Olson observes that "the significant act in education requires a recognition that the student's understanding of literature--given the best that we know from cognitive studies, particularly from Piaget--does not...follow the curricular hero-journey from myth to romance to comedy to tragedy to irony in a single linear succession."17

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17 Olson, The Uses of Myth, p. 12.
In fact, Frye's construct requires a high degree of abstract reasoning, a cognitive skill that comes relatively late in a student's maturation.

The strongest criticism of Frye's theory is that it is reductive, that is, it examines only one aspect of myth and disregards other possible interpretations. William W. Robson asserts that mythic criticism becomes a kind of myth itself in oversimplifying the complexities of mythical literature. To choose one view without knowing "the whole system of thought" of a Freud or Sartre or Frye is merely to pluck ideas out of context and apply them illogically. He concludes that myths themselves are of "priceless value" to "children's reading at all ages" but to assign the stories primacy in the teaching of literature and to pursue only one method of interpretation is dubious practice. Other seminar members suggest that Frye's approach robs the myth of its poetry and uniqueness and diminishes the work for the reader. Barbara Hardy agrees that emphasis on the "mythy" approach "seems likely to lead the student away from the essential features of a work of literature, its individuality and particularity, into a dry preoccupation with typicality.... to reduce literary experience to a dry schematicism." In fairness it must be said in evaluating Frye's design that he is the one contemporary literary critic who has been interested in the educational uses of criticism and who has suggested a means for putting his theory into practice. He sees clearly what most teachers of literature have at least sensed, that the study of literature has been piecemeal

18 William Wallace Robson, in Olson, p. 35.
19 Barbara Hardy, in Olson, p. 38.
rather than integrated. His principles might be especially helpful to teachers, as Sloan has suggested in informing their teaching. The danger of Frye's mythic approach lies in the seductiveness of its apparent simplicity. Surrounded by the disorder of thematic, genre, and period forms of organization, how tempting it is to believe that Frye's design can bring order to the diversity of literature.

There are also serious objections to Frye's concepts and to his use of material from the point of view of one who is concerned with the oral tradition. First there is the problem of defining myth. Frye defines the term variously as "a simple primitive effort of the imagination to identify the human with the nonhuman world" and as a concept which "unites ritual and symbol, giving action to thought and meaning to action." Both definitions are troublesome to folklorists who generally define myth as a sacred narrative handed down in the oral tradition which explains something about the beginnings of the world or about gods and their actions. Then Frye does not seem to distinguish between the popular and the folk tradition or between the various genres of folklore. If one examines the reading in Literature: Uses of Imagination, one sees a kind of levelling process at work where Old Testament stories, American Indian legends, and Beatles lyrics all become the stuff of the mythic circle of stories. The emphasis is on the similarity of the selections, not upon the differences between them. Finally, Frye assumes an ideal reader, one mature and sophisticated enough to be capable of discerning

20 Frye, The Educated Imagination, p. 110.
21 Frye, On Teaching Literature, p. 31.
similarities and differences in widely diverse material. Since there is little attempt to indicate what the folk sources of the legends, ballads, and tales are, they are in effect cut off from their cultural roots. Nor is there any encouragement for students to respond by bringing their knowledge of the folk tradition to their reading. In the end, there is something of elitism in Frye's attitude toward both literature and its readers.

**Literature Units for Myth and Folklore**

The movement to a larger number of elective and mini-courses in secondary schools has led teachers to develop units in folklore and myth for their classes. Aside from *Literature: Uses and Imagination*, however, only limited text material is available from publishing companies. *Scholastic* has published a unit in folklore for grades 6 and 7 and a unit in myth for grades 7, 8, and 9. Both units were used in "an informal field test" in the Houston Public Schools with a school population from diverse cultural and social backgrounds spanning ages 12 to 18 and grades 7 to 12 and gained an enthusiastic response from students. The materials in the units "suggest a three-phase, flexible arrangement of tasks moving from class to small group to individual student." The emphasis on oral reading was especially appealing to students at all levels. 22

The *Scholastic Literature Unit: Myth* is a student-centered approach which combines mythic material from a broad cross section of ages and

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cultures. In the Teaching Guide Lawana Trout defines myth as histories that reveal how early man explained the mysteries of birth and death, good and evil, as the attempts of pre-scientific man to explain the forces of nature and the universe, and as sacred stories that tell of man's relationships to his gods. Trout emphasizes that myths are not simply stories told to entertain but narratives connected with ritual which have an awesome and magic power to put man in touch with the forces underlying the universe. She points out that there are universal elements in myth: the earth as giver and sustainer of life, the parallels between the seasonal cycles and man's life, the theme of suffering and sacrifice, and the figure of the mythic hero. 

One of the major goals of Myth is to create a mythic learning environment (1) where students come to understand myth in the context of the culture that creates it, "not as petrified, isolated stories" but as "a reflection of history brought to life," (2) where students can experience myth orally as well as in written form with opportunities for telling myths, chanting, and creating rituals, and (3) where students through a multi-cultural approach can comprehend the universality of myth-making. For this reason the unit includes not only the Greek and Roman myths traditionally taught in English classes but Norse, American Indian, Eskimo, and African myths as well. Ultimately students are led to examine the myths of our own time and to speculate about man's future.

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Though some critics might feel that Trout's approach to myth diminishes the scholarly mystique that has surrounded the teaching of mythology, certainly approaching myth-making as a universal human process makes the stories more accessible to students. Furthermore the unit stands on firm scholarly and pedagogical ground. Through an imaginative variety of classroom activities and a student log, this unit attempts to make students active participants in the creation of myth—not simply passive readers.

The Scholastic Unit: Folklore is also strongly student-centered, using the students' knowledge of the folklore of children and adolescents as an introduction to a wide range of folk material including not only verbal folklore but also folk music, belief, and crafts. The focus of the unit is language development rather than literature. The students become the source and the authority for their own lore. Trout says, "Piaget, James Moffett, Geoffrey Summerfield and others emphasize that if teachers neglect this child-adolescent lore in English classes, they do so at their own peril. It is the most natural source for student writing, reading, talking, and acting-out."25 This unit encourages students to collect, analyze, and read material from the folk tradition and to use folk patterns as a basis for developing language skills. Trout states the goals of the unit are to give students self confidence in their use of language, to reveal to students that their teen-age lore is part of a folk culture, to provide insight into the functions of language

and folklore, to awaken an appreciation for the folk experience, and to show similarities in folk cultures, creating more accepting attitudes. As Trout herself suggests, this unit can provide only a limited introduction to the extensive area of folk life. Though it is designed for grades 6 and 7 and is easy reading, the flexibility and variety of the unit along with the wealth of suggestions for student activities indicate an approach focused on student response and individual studies that could be used at other grade levels successfully.

**Folklorists and the Study of Literature**

Paul Olson, speaking for his colleagues at the Dartmouth Seminar observed: "Few of us know any serious anthropological or sociological or 'folkloristic'...studies concerned with the myth-making process, which are more recent than Frazier and Weston. And we certainly do not know the stories by which our students live." Still from the beginning of folklore as a scholarly pursuit in this country, literary scholars like Francis Child to cite one example, have explored areas of folklore.

Tristram Potter Coffin has jokingly described "folklore as a bastard field that anthropology begot upon English," and since the inception of serious folklore scholarship, a sometimes uncomfortable détente has existed between the two disciplines which formed the American Folklore Society in 1888. In fact, it may be useful to think of folklore

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26 Olson, p. 14.

studies as taking three directions, not unrelated since each draws from the same great body of the oral tradition. First, there are those folklorists whose major interest is in collecting and classifying directly from the oral tradition. Meticulously recording the folk performance, such collectors prize the authenticity of the folk item. For such scholars, literature as a source of folklore is a secondary and probably second-rate one, to be viewed with some suspicion. The anthropologist-folklorist regards the folklore of a group as an artifact of its culture. The narratives, customs, and superstitions reflect and reinforce the values and beliefs of the folk and enable him to see the culture from the inside. The literary scholar-folklorist, of course, is concerned with the insight that a knowledge of folklore can bring to a literary text. That interest may take the specific direction of identifying folklore items in a text and determining their function in works of literature, the more general approach of tracing similar themes and patterns in folk and written literature, or the use of folklore genres as a mediating step to written literature.

The study of folklore and literature are not discrete pursuits although scholars in both fields have often ignored the insights each could offer the other. With some exceptions, both the folklore collector and the student of literature have neglected the constant interchange going on between the oral and the written tradition, though the evidence of this transaction is ancient in our literary heritage. *Beowulf* contains both folk and literary elements. Francis Utley, a medievalist and folklore scholar, has discovered oral analogues for twenty-one of Chaucer's twenty-eight *Canterbury Tales*. To identify and analyze the items
of folklore in Shakespeare would occupy several scholarly lifetimes. In American literature both the folklornist and the literary scholar have common ground for study in the traditional canon of literature from Cotton Mather to Washington Irving to Mark Twain to William Faulkner. John T. Flanagan has commented that "critics, unaware of the enormous amount of folk material in American literature, ignored both [its] substance and effect." The work of Constance Rourke, Daniel Hoffman, Gene Bluestein, and others eventually called attention to the debt early writers owed the folk tradition though even then the relationship was not fully appreciated, and as Flanagan observed "we are seldom ready to admit that writers closer to us in time...are equally indebted."28

Further this interchange between the folk and written tradition is by no means one way. Narratives, poems, and proverbs are read and then handed on by word of mouth. Quotations from the Bible and from Shakespeare have become the folk sayings of the people so that the person using them cannot be sure which source is which. Stories, originally read, are handed on orally so that Marie Campbell, collecting folklore in Kentucky, "found non-literate or semi-literate storytellers narrating episodes from Homer" though the print sources had long since been forgotten.29 In discussing the complex relationship between folklore and written literature in a literate society, Mody Boatright speaks of a con-
stant and dynamic interchange between the two. Literacy accelerates changes in the oral tradition but "the processes which create folklore do not cease when a society becomes literate....Each is continually borrowing from the other as the processes of adaptation and creation continue." And so there are folktales, like "The Vanishing Hitchhiker," which have circulated in the oral tradition, frozen in print in newspaper features and short stories and stories which have been read, re-told to take on new life as oral tales.

The role of the folklorist in identifying an item of folklore in a literary work and determining its function within the context of the work addresses itself to detail within the work. The process of identifying an item of folklore accurately is not so difficult as the uninitiated might suppose, for folklorists have compiled extensive indexes. Interpreting the folklore item and determining how it functions in a literary text is a far more complex problem, demanding a knowledge of the culture from which it comes and the intent of the author who uses it. As Alan Dundes has pointed out "The problem is that for many folklorists identification has become an end in itself instead of a means to the end of interpretation. Identification is only the beginning, only the first step." The result of mere identification is long lists of proverbs, motifs, or whatever from a given work which do nothing to enhance the

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understanding of the text. In this regard, Utley states that folklorists
and literary scholars have too long been separated by their specialized
training in their own areas. Folklorists are repelled by the niceties of
contemporary criticism; the literary scholar by the somewhat scientific
methods of classification of the folklorist. 32

In attempting to analyze the folklore items in literature, the scho­
lar needs to remember that different sets of values are at work in the
performance of a folk narrator and a writer. For the folk performer the
traditional performance, that is, relating the ballad, story, or riddle
exactly as it has been learned, is a measure of excellence. The writer
strives to construct a new structure on an old pattern giving it his in­
dividual stamp. One cannot be sure that folklore embedded in literary
works is recorded directly from the oral tradition. The chances are that
the author has changed it to suit his artistic purposes. Wordsworth in
a letter to Sir Walter Scott, who had written him proffering some "reli­
able information" about the Norton family in Wordsworth's poem The White
Doe, wrote:

So far from being serviceable to my Poem, they [Scott's sug­
gestions] would stand in the way of it.... Therefore I shall
say in this case, a plague on your industrious Antiquarian­
ism that has put my fine story to confusion. 33

As folklorists and literary scholars combine their efforts, the truth
begins to emerge that, as Davidson has said "folklore is an integral part

32 Francis Lee Utley, "The Study of Folk Literature: Its Scope and
33 H. R. Ellis Davidson, "Folklore and Literature," Folklore, 86
(Summer 1975), 73.
of literature, not an intrusive element in it, something which may affect the language, structure, and themes of outstanding works in both poetry and prose." 34

The correspondences in structure among oral and literary genres has led some scholars to suggest that folklore forms may be useful in providing what Utley calls "a bridge to written literature." Since proverbs, riddles, rimes, songs, and other forms of folklore circulate freely in the oral tradition, one may assume that they are part of the cultural inheritance of most students. By making use of the characteristics of these genres, which students have in their heads, the study of literature can move from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from the analysis of simpler forms in the oral tradition to more complex literary patterns. Valez H. Wilson, for example, believing that the oral tradition is very much alive among Black Americans, argues that "the rich store of oral tradition when approached from the point of view of the student's experience can be an effective springboard for discussion, reading, and writing in the classroom." 35 Students respond positively to the use of their folk traditions; some know it first hand and recognize it, using it to validate social, moral, and political beliefs; some relate it to themes in literature; others just like it. "Perhaps some storytellers are sitting in our classroom every day," Wilson warns, "and we overlook good teaching material when we do not use what the students bring to the classroom: their exper-

34 Davidson, pp. 91-92.
ience and knowledge of the oral tradition." 36

Gerald Haslam also notes the richness of the oral tradition among Black Americans and suggests that while it should not supplant the study of written literature, it should certainly be used to supplement it. The correspondences between items in the folk tradition, especially proverbs and riddles and poetry have led scholars to suggest that they be used as an approach to understanding the poetic devices of assonance, alliteration, consonance, parallelism, and rime. Haslam notes that rinning games are common in Black culture and that the "dozens" might be useful were they not thought obscene. 37

In "Poetry and Folklore: Some Points of Affinity" S. J. Sackett states that "because most students are acquainted with some folklore the use of these poetic devices is familiar to them, and the teacher of literature can use this familiarity to lead his students to a better and firmer understanding of poetry." 38 Sackett's work is intriguing because he begins by analyzing the poetic elements in seventy-eight proverbs selected because they appeared most commonly in lists collected from his students. In addition to the parallels that exist in poetry and in proverbs and riddles, Sackett points out that the oral tradition also provides a way of approaching the more abstract concepts of simile, metaphor,

36 Wilson, p. 8.

37 Gerald Haslam, "American Oral Tradition: Our Forgotten Heritage," English Journal, 60 (September 1971), 709-723. It is very curious that the only time Haslam uses the term folklore is on the final page of his article. And then it is an epithet!

ambiguity, and indirection. In fact, it is these qualities that have enabled proverbs, riddles, and jokes to live in the folk tradition, many of them for hundreds of years. Unfortunately the characteristics that make a piece of verbal folklore memorable are the very techniques that students regard as unnecessary embellishment or "flowery language" when used by a poet. If students can be shown that the same devices appear in poetry and in the folk tradition, then perhaps they can be convinced "that poetry is a natural and normal human activity and that to read it, study it, and even like it is not reprehensible." In short, poetry is an ancient form of imaginative expression inherent in man, not an artificial thing existing only in dry anthologies to annoy and puzzle students.

There are further correspondences in the structure of genres in the folk tradition and those in literature to be explored by students and teachers. Wilson notes the similarity between the order of the jazz funeral and the elegy as a literary form, beginning with the invocation, the lament, praise of the dead, and finally rejoicing. And Francis Utley in his essay "Oral Genres as a Bridge to Written Literature" demonstrates the use of the ballad form as a means of teaching tragedy. "The Wife of Usher's Well," for instance, contains the elements of tragedy: a noble heroine in the mother, her hubris in defying God, tragic irony, and inevitability of outcome, the same elements, in fact, one encounters in the great Greek tragedies or in Shakespeare. Emphasizing the "classroom relevance" of folklore genres, Utley says, "The great simplicities which

are so hard to control in the sprawling drama are easily contained in the folk ballad. One need not belabor the point: any classroom where the ballad is juxtaposed to tragedy will find the simple form a highly efficient prelude and paradigm for the form of greater complexity." 40

The ultimate goal in using folklore in literature classes is not that students should learn an integrated system of knowledge, not that they acquire specific critical tools, but that, as a result of reading literature and responding to their reading, they discover something about what it means to live in a complex and pluralistic society. Folklore provides insight into the values and beliefs of the culture where it exists, whether that culture is one's own or a quite different one. Verbal folklore as a direct and unselfconscious expression of cultural group can be studied just as the material artifacts of an ancient culture are examined for truth they may reveal. However, folklore is a living thing; it changes to match the changes in the culture that produces it. Those items which no longer serve a useful purpose drop out of circulation, those that speak to a vital need remain. Alan Dundes, a folklore scholar and anthropologist, calling folklore "a mirror of culture," has said "The various forms of folklore...can provide a vital resource for a teacher who seriously wishes to (1) understand his students better and (2) teach those students more effectively about the human condition. For folklore is autobiographical ethnography [italics in the original]-- that is, it is a people's own description of themselves." 41

41 Alan Dundes, "Folklore as a Mirror Of Culture," Elementary English, 46 (April 1969), 471.
And as Wilson, speaking of the Black experience in America, observes that there is an equivalency between the experiences of a people and their folklore. "This body of literature is inherently expository. It explains the present condition as a result of the past, and it establishes a definite relationship between the actions and reactions of the black man's ancestors to the conflict of their lives." 42

"The only justification for the study of folklore can be," Daniel Hoffman has said, "that the expression of attitudes toward human experience which characterize the culture of folk societies provides us with traditional shared symbols, important--at least--to the understanding of the cultures from which they derive." 43 If we as teachers believe that entering into a literary work enables the reader to experience vicariously a life he might not otherwise have known, then the folklore of a group can reveal and illumine the most deeply held values of a culture. Dundes states that much of what we know of cultural groups we learn from social scientists, teachers, and others who make their observations from their outside perspective, but folklore is a way of experiencing a culture "from the inside out instead of from the outside in."

We are all destined by our individual cultural inheritances to view the world with a kind of tunnel vision, an ethnocentrism which leads us to the conviction that our social and moral values and customs are superior to those of others. And we use those standards as a way of judging

42 Wilson, p. 7.
others. Folklore offers a kind of spiritual literacy that contributes to a deeper understanding of literature and of the students in our classrooms and enables us to both understand and transcend the culture of our nurture.
Chapter II

THE DIMENSIONS OF APPALACHIAN CULTURE

In Absalom, Absalom! William Faulkner dramatizes the difficulty of explaining a culture. Quentin Compson, a Harvard freshman far from his native Mississippi, tries to answer his Canadian roommate's questions:

"Tell about the south. What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all." He said, "You can't understand it. You would have to be born there." "Would I then?" Quentin did not answer. "Do you understand it?" "I don't know, Quentin said. "Yes, of course I understand it." They breathed in the darkness. After a moment Quentin said: "I don't know."

Like Quentin, the writer who sets out to capture in a net of words the elements of a culture which make it distinctive, finds the impossibility of the task almost overwhelming. For a culture is the totality of a people's institutions, customs, beliefs, and ways of behaving which individual members of a group take part in and re-enact in varying degrees from day to day. One thing is certain: to understand any group and its values one must set aside easy stereotypes and preconceptions and examine afresh the history and traditions of the people. This is particularly true of a group like the mountain people of southern Appalachia around whom so many stereotypes have grown. In looking beyond
the stereotypes, however, it is well to remember that there are good
reasons for them to exist. There are real differences in the world views
of cultural groups which cause them to adopt and continue certain pat­
terns of behavior and attitudes. Obscured behind a screen of images that
range from William Byrd's "lubberlanders" to the feuding families of
John Fox. Jr., from Toynbee's barbarians to Hee Haw's gleeful hillbillies,
lies the real character of Appalachia, inseparable, at least until recent­ly, from the land a people have lived on and the common history they have
experienced.

The Appalachian Region

The term Appalachia is a relatively new one for an old land. At
the beginning of this century John C. Campbell attempted the first geo­
 graphical definition of the region calling it the Southern Highlands,
an area including the Blue Ridge Mountains on the east, the Appalachian
Valley, and finally the Appalachian Plateau on the west. The region
designated by Campbell, stretching from the Mason-Dixon Line on the north
to the northern counties of South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama on the
south and from the western counties of Virginia and North Carolina to
the western slopes of the mountains in Kentucky and Tennessee, has re­
mained much the same since his time.1 True, the area was somewhat reduced

1John C. Campbell, The Southern Highlander and His Homeland (New
York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1921), p. 12. Another classic study of
the Appalachian region is Horace Kephart's Our Southern Highlanders (New
York: Macmillan, 1913). Those interested in other early writing will
want to read William Goodell Frost, "Our Contemporary Ancestors", Atlantic,
March 1899, a precursor of Jack Weller's Yesterday's People; and Anne
A common theme running through all these works is the erosion of Appala­
chian culture and its eventual demise.
in the Ford survey (1962) and expanded again under the Appalachian Region Commission (1970) though the impetus to include large portions of Pennsylvania, southern New York, and northeastern Mississippi came more from the willingness of the governors of those states to join in the commission than from the geography of the areas. As William Goodell Frost observed in 1899, "Appalachia is made up of the backyards of nine states. With the exception of West Virginia, no single state is primarily concerned with Appalachia." To sketch the geographical borders of Appalachia does not begin to describe the wildness, the remoteness, and the beauty of the rough mountain ridges that extend from the Blue Ridge west, with their forests and variety of plant and animal life; nor does it explain the hold these mountains--scarred though they may be with strip mines, their streams yellowed with industrial wastes--have on the people who have lived among them. Those hills were old, five million years old, when the first white man saw them, and they remain ever changing and changeless still. So as Campbell said, "Let us come to the Highlands--a land of promise, a land of romance, a land about which, perhaps more things are known that are not true than any other part of our country."  

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5 Campbell, p. xxi.
The Settlement of Appalachia

By 1700, when the first waves of German and Scotch-Irish immigrants filtered through the northern east coast ports, most of the land along the Tidewater had been occupied, but the western parts of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina were unclaimed. The colonial governors, however, encouraged their settlement as a buffer against Indian attacks. Between 1700 and 1770 thousands of immigrants poured from the north into what is now Appalachia west of the Blue Ridge, particularly into the Valley of Virginia; and another wave of immigrants, largely Highland Scots, landed at southern ports moving into North Carolina and thence to Kentucky and Tennessee. Campbell, citing the Scotch-Irish Society of America, notes that between 1720 and the Revolution immigrants came at the rate of 12,000 a year, more than half a million before 1776. In the years between 1714 and 1720 fifty-four boatloads of Scotch-Irish landed in the port of Boston alone.

Both the German and Scotch-Irish were, for the most part, Protestant religious dissidents. Of the two, the story of the Lowland Scots from Ulster is far more complicated and pertinent since it refutes the notion that Appalachian culture is an Anglo-Saxon relic. The people who became known as Scotch-Irish were originally Lowland or Border Scots. In 1601 the English crown encouraged the Lowland Scots to take up land in northern Ireland where it was hoped their settlement would have a

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6 Campbell, p. 23 (note).
stabilizing influence on the volatile southern Irish Catholics. The Scots who took part in the Plantation of Ulster went with every intention of staying on the land and making it their own, and, indeed they flourished until the reign of James II when they fell from favor for political and religious reasons. Thus, the Scotch-Irish (as they were now called) who fled to America were the products of a society twice transplanted. In leaving Scotland and later northern Ireland, those who were poor and who had not gained prominence gambled that their lot would be improved; those who were firmly established did not leave. These immigrants brought with them an intense Presbyterianism and dedication to education, however narrow, that would perpetuate that faith. In addition, Leyburn says that Scotch-Irish, as a group, were characterized by a spirit of independence, a hatred of subservience, touchiness--fierceness in defending property and rights--dourness, the ability to endure great misfortune, and a strong belief in the primacy of kinship as identity--all traits that still resonate in the Appalachian culture today.

Because the Presbyterian church had always insisted on an educated ministry, impossible on the frontier, the Scotch-Irish along with German Lutherans and other immigrant groups began to forge their own brand of Calvinistic faith. In the Valley of Virginia before the Revolution they

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9 Leyburn, pp. 62-79.
joined with Baptist sects in the face of severe persecution from a colonial government that supported the Anglican Church. It was not without reason that Thomas Jefferson, whose Monticello was built on the very edge of the frontier, took pride in being the author of the statute of Virginia for religious freedom.

By 1800 the routes of migration west had bypassed the mountain ridges and the rivers that led into the valleys of Appalachia and instead took the Cumberland Road, first marked out by the British General Braddock, across Pennsylvania to Wheeling and down the Ohio River to more open, easier lands in Ohio and Indiana. Some families continued to move into the mountains along the southern route, the Wilderness Road, but by 1850 the series of migrations into Appalachia, already greatly reduced, had ended.\(^\text{10}\)

As a result of double isolation, from the rest of the country and from each other, and common geography and experience, the mountaineers became "a somewhat homogenous people--who in eastern Kentucky have more in common with their kind in northern Georgia than they have with their fellow Kentuckians in the Bluegrass Region, or who in western North Carolina share more points of view with their neighbors across the state line in Tennessee than they share with their fellow North Carolinians."\(^\text{11}\)

The massive migrations of the eighteenth century refute the long-cherished idea that today's Appalachians are the Anglo-Saxon descendants

\(^\text{10}\)Campbell, p. 53.

of the dregs and misfits from the colonial Tidewater though some of them did come from that area. In fact, a case can be made that the homogeneity of Appalachia is basically Scotch-Irish or Celtic. After his ballad-gathering forays into the mountains, Cecil Sharpe observed that "the Anglo-Celt has managed pretty well to absorb them [other nationality groups], to take them into his own orbit without himself being appreciably infected by them." It is precisely the point O. Norman Simpkins made over half a century later saying that it is characteristic of Celtic culture that it "absorbs strangers and makes Celts out of them." The Anglo-Saxons, Simpkins continues, were generally town dwellers who went out to work on their lands and returned to villages at night; the Celtic pattern was to live on the land, leading to isolated farms. The Anglo-Saxons were crop growers; the Celts, animal breeders and raisers. In urban settings today "a good sign of a Celtic home is a bunch of cats and dogs and if they can't have anything else, a parakeet or a canary." The Celtic base of Appalachian culture, a rural farm economy, subsistence living, and isolation--physical, social, and cultural--are the four reasons Simpkins believes that Appalachians are the way they are today. However, it is too easy to assume that mountain people have always been isolated and out of the mainstream of American life. Until the period of industrialization that followed the Civil War, the mountain farmer was not much different from his fellows elsewhere, no more isolated or

12 As quoted in Campbell, p. 70.
14 Simpkins, p. 32.
poverty-stricken. Cratis Williams says "The Southern Mountaineer appears not to have set himself apart from the borderer or frontiersman until after the Civil War."\textsuperscript{15} It was shortly after this that his "quaintness" became a favorite subject for southern local color writers, John Fox, Jr. and Mary Noailles Murfree among them. Today those who live in the mountains may not think of themselves as "hill-billies"—a term first used to refer to the poor whites of the sandhills of Mississippi and Alabama—or as mountaineers—a word not in their vocabulary—but simply as people.\textsuperscript{16} That they are somehow different from others does not occur to them until they come face to face with a group with different cultural backgrounds and values.

Before one begins to examine the literature on the characteristics of Appalachian culture—and it is plentiful, for the region seems to be rediscovered over and over again—it is important to recognize that many studies have tended to over generalize and oversimplify the complexity of Appalachian life. In addition, some of the writing has followed the biases of the researcher. Jack Weller's \textit{Yesterday's People} has suffered from all these changes as has Harry Caudill's \textit{Night Comes to the Cumberlands}. Further, many Appalachian scholars feel that both works present an unnecessarily gloomy picture of mountain life. Certainly one failing of researchers has been to treat Appalachian culture as a monolith without regard for social distinctions. There is, in fact, great diversity among mountain people: some are rich, some poverty-stricken; some are

\textsuperscript{15}Williams, p. 493.
\textsuperscript{16}Williams, p. 495.
city dwellers, others live in remote ridges and hollers; some are white and Protestant, but others are Black or Catholic and the descendants of recent southern European immigrants who came to work in the coal fields. Another oversimplification has arisen from the tendency to treat Appalachian culture as static when, in fact, though some elements have been remarkably resistant to change, overall the culture is changing and dynamic as is the culture of other groups.

Campbell noted in his work early in this century that there were three social divisions in the mountains: the urban dwellers, who are much like members of this group elsewhere; prosperous farmers, who own enough land to support their families; and marginal farmers who live on poor land in relatively inaccessible areas, some of them as migrants or squatters. It is this last group that has been held up as the prototype of the mountaineer. Williams observed the same differences in social status and commented that none of these groups think of themselves as mountaineers and all of them resent the exaggeration of mountain life that has become common in fiction and in many sociological studies. In his study of a mountain community which he calls "Shiloh" John Stephenson found at least four distinct social classes which he classifies as "family types" depending on the employment of the wage earner in the family. He concluded that the less affluent the families, the more closely their values approximated those of the Appalachian folk culture and that the totality of the culture was far more complex than had been previously

17 Campbell, pp. 81-89.
18 Williams, p. 506.
The problem of identifying a single Appalachian culture is further complicated since mountain people are by no means completely isolated from or ignorant of the mainstream culture surrounding them. Helen Lewis points out that Appalachians practice both mainstream culture and their own subculture at the same time. In addition she notes:

There are several Appalachian subcultures which present distinctive group identities and behavior patterns including dialect, aesthetic styles, bodies of folklore, religious beliefs and practices, political allegiances, family structure, and food and clothing preferences...with intergroup commonalities and some sharing with the mainstream culture. It might be best to view the Appalachian as bicultural.

That is, he lives in two worlds, one of them an underground mountain culture encouraged by family, church, and community; the other conforming to the majority culture. The poor and isolated are probably aware of the values of mainstream culture but reject them or "when necessary...passively enact the behavior of mainstream culture in settings of formalized group contact: at the welfare office, in court, and at school. In such cases the Appalachian is [both] bicultural and bidialectical." If he regards the effect of the larger culture as an attack on his way of life, he may reject it all together. What emerges, then, is a complex picture of the Appalachian playing two roles, the overt one of the mainstream culture when he must, and the covert one dictated by his traditional beliefs and values.

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20 Helen Lewis, "Fatalism or the Coal Industry?" in Ergood and Kuhre, p. 224.
21 Lewis, p. 224
In addition to the complexity of mountain culture already cited, there are other indications that it is changing. The isolation of the mountain region has been broken, and there has been a shift from a subsistence agrarian economy to an industrial and commercial one. The society of rural Appalachia is being integrated into the larger culture, but the various elements are being integrated at different rates. No longer is it able to function as it did in the past as a semi-autonomous social system.\(^{22}\) The thesis of the Ford survey was that the culture of the Appalachian region is in transition and that its people are trying to achieve a balance between the cultural values they have clung to in the past and those of contemporary life. Of the four values analyzed in the Ford study, individualism and self-reliance appeared to be most eroded; that is, people seemed more willing to participate in group programs. The values of fatalism and traditionalism were somewhat eroded, though a fatalistic outlook was still a strong trait, especially among the poor, one they were slow to abandon. Finally, Ford concluded that fundamentalist religious values had been altered somewhat by diminishing isolation and easier access to education, but "they remain impressively strong."\(^{23}\)

To summarize, then, although the values of Appalachian culture are difficult to analyze because the culture itself is more complex than is commonly supposed and although there have been some changes and dimin-


ution in those values, the pattern of values and the intensity with which they are held can be thought of as distinctive to mountain culture.

Any attempt to categorize the characteristics of Appalachian people must rest first on the understanding that such grouping is arbitrary and the values themselves are a complicated fabric, all underlying and reinforcing each other. Perhaps the single cultural trait which subsumes all others is traditionalism, the conviction that past usage and practice dictate present attitudes and behavior, apparent in every area of life. In their study of the Beech Creek Community in 1970, Brown, Schwarzweller, and Mangalam concluded that "traditionalism...served as the standard of standards, the legitimizing principle integrating various elements of the culture and social structure and thereby tending to protect the integrity of this system, maintaining stability and warding off the system-disturbing influence of modernization."24 As Harry Caudill observed, "Having no one else to learn from, they [the mountain people] learned from their forebears, repeating the techniques and perpetuating the aspirations of the frontier past. They evolved a traditionalism that ruled out everything unsanctioned by time."25 This tendency to cling to the old ways of doing things is apparent in many aspects of mountain life from religious practice to speech patterns, from attitudes toward family to folk cures. It is traditionalism that explains why ballads, stories, and crafts like basket making and quilting have been preserved for generations. And it

25 Harry M. Caudill, in Higgs and Manning, p. 523.
also explains why many Appalachians regard innovation with suspicion.

It may be useful to think of the characteristic values of mountain people as having two dimensions: one is seen in the face that they turn toward the world; the other is an often hidden inner core of values.

The Outward Countenance of Appalachian Culture

Appalachians are often thought by those outside the culture to be guarded, reserved, unspontaneous, even dour. This impression is a combination of traits, the most important of which is perhaps the traditional value placed on independence, self-reliance, individualism and pride. Because most Appalachians were small farmers living on their often-isolated farms, the self-sufficiency of the family was essential to its survival. In addition, the early settlers in the mountains came as political and religious dissidents; the disregard of, and sometimes open rebellion against, authority they brought with them was reinforced by the tendency of legislatures in the states where they settled to ignore their mountain constituents. More and more, the mountaineers came to settle their differences among themselves without appeal to a central authority. They became as Caudill says "crankily individualistic," a people for whom seeking help outside a close group of kin or neighbors was not only difficult but distasteful. The premium placed on self-sufficiency and independence still makes cooperation on a large scale and accepting outside help difficult; it is more important to appear self-reliant than to gain help from strangers. This quality of "independence raised to the fourth power" which Campbell regarded as the dominant trait of mountain people, though somewhat weakened by decreasing iso-
lation and by the demoralizing effect of poverty, encourages the mountaineer to be the independent, self-determined person who appears aloof and restrained to the outsider.

Another facet of the Appalachian character, puzzling to observers and a correlate of his independence and pride, is the stoicism with which he regards his lot. A fatalistic view, growing out of religious conviction, causes mountain people to react to tragedy and good fortune unemotionally. It may look like dourness or humorlessness, but it is a characteristic response ingrained by the culture. Mountain children are taught early to sit quietly when among adults and that to look another person in the eye, particularly an adult, is insolent; even adults do not traditionally face each other directly when they talk. Outside the culture these actions are interpreted as at least indifference, probably as sullenness or withdrawal. Further, the mountain culture does not teach its members a conversation ritual, so the Appalachian is not good at small talk or at initiating or breaking off a conversation: "it takes him a long time to get started and it takes him forever to cut it off and break away and get away from it." He doesn't "know how to say goodbye and do it."28

But as surely as the mountaineer desires independence, respect, and privacy for himself, so is he willing to grant it to others. He is at base an egalitarian, believing himself to be as good as anybody else,

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26 Campbell, p. 91.
27 Simpkins, P. 42.
28 Simpkins, p. 43.
but no better. To put on airs or to get above one's raising is to invite censure. The mountain dictum is he who puts himself forward, gets put down. Thus a competent fiddler, preacher, or craftsman will preface his performance by speaking of his inadequacy and then give a commendable performance. Appalachian see others as persons, not as objects or as roles. Their person-orientation makes getting along with others without friction one of their main goals. They will go to almost any length to avoid a confrontation, even if that means agreeing when, in fact, they do not. Thus, what an outsider regards as a commitment to do some work or to join in a cooperative effort is for the mountaineer simply an attempt not to affront the acquaintance. Once Appalachians overcome their initial distrust of strangers, their hospitality is legendary even when their circumstances are meager. Rena Gazaway in her study of Duddie's Branch, Kentucky, describes the tenderness with which she was treated by her friends in the holler. "We's aimin' on takin' care 'a her jist 's if'n we'd birthed her," they tell the doctor at the hospital where they have reluctantly taken her. Isolation causes despair, Gazaway says, but it "is also selflessness and ingenuity and devotion."  

It sometimes seems to those in the larger culture that the Appalachian attitude toward work is not suitably serious. Because of their history of living close to the land, many Appalachians have developed

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inner clocks more attuned to the natural rhythms of the seasons than to bells and time clocks. Campbell's early observation of the Appalachian is to an extent true today: "His habit has been to do what he wants, where he wants, and only as long as he wants to do it. Time is of no importance. Tomorrow will do as well as today." Gazaway speaks of the "temporal" isolation of the hollow folk noting they have little concept of time as something to be measured. And Simpkins speaks of what he calls the characteristic Appalachian "toot" work pattern; that is, they will work hard for a period of time, and then do something else to regain the equilibrium of their lives. It is not that a job is not important, but simply that there are other concerns which can be equally or more important at a given time. The attitude toward life is more easygoing than in the larger culture. "An Appalachian can sit on his porch and rock all day," Simpkins says, "without getting an ulcer over it."  

Finally, the face the Appalachian turns toward the outer world is not without humor though it may seem austere to the observer. One aspect of mountain humor is embodied in practical jokes and pranks rooted in the rural background of the people like the shivarees that until recently were the fate of nearly all newly married couples and tic-tacs played on windows to frighten those inside. In a sense the verbal humor has some of the characteristics of the tall tale tradition, being deliv-

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31 Campbell, p. 121.
32 Gazaway, p. 137.
33 Simpkins, p. 40.
ered with a poker face. The tone is wry, understated, and self-depreciating; it pokes fun at those who get above themselves. Loyal Jones says humor in Appalachian culture "is tied up with our concept of man and the human condition. We see humor in man's pretensions to power and perfection and his inevitable failure." It is an attitude of mind that has had a sustaining power in desperate times and is reflected in jokes, proverbs, and particularly in the sayings of the folk.

The Inner Core of Appalachia Values

Beneath the exterior that the Appalachian shows the world there lies a core of inner values that are often only guessed at but which are at the heart of his character, the touchstones of his identity: a love of place, firm kinship ties, and religious faith.

It is difficult for those who live in a culture where moving frequently and for long distances is common, to understand how fiercely devoted Appalachians are to one particular hillside farm or holler, however worthless it may be. Robert Coles in Migrants, Sharecroppers and Mountaineers writes "To mountaineers the land is almost anything and everything: a neighbor, a friend, a part of the family, handed down and talked about and loved, loved dearly--loved and treasured and obeyed." Mount ain children, he believes, learn to know and love the land around their homes intimately as parents give children over to the land "almost symbol-

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34 Jones, p. 514.

ically and ritualistically." In a real way confronting and mastering the land parallels the child's growth and development. He learns skills and concepts there that will shape his life. "The tasks and struggles that confront all children take on a particular and characteristic quality that has to do with learning about one's roots, one's territory, as a central fact, perhaps the central fact of existence." 

When one begins to understand this devotion to place, it becomes easier to see why, even though they leave their land, Appalachians are loathe to sell it and dream of returning some day. John Stephenson tells of a mountain farmer who, when approached by a Florida man wishing to buy an acre of his farm, set a ridiculously high price on it. The prospective buyer remonstrated that the price was a bit high for him, whereupon the farmer replied, "It's sposed to be. I don't know you and you don't know me and I'd have to know who you are and what you want and what you was going to use this land for before I'd think about selling you any of it." Needless to say, in his heart the farmer had not the slightest intention of parting with a scrap of his soil.

Speaking for his fellow Appalachians, especially those who have moved from their homes, Loyal Jones says

We never forget our native places and we go back as often as possible. A lot of us think of going back for good, perhaps to Nolichucky, Big Sandy, Kanawha, or Oconoluftee, or to Drip Rock, Hanging Dog, Shooting Creek, Decoy, Stinking

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36 Coles, p. 203.
37 Coles, p. 208.
38 Stephenson, p. 209.
Creek, Sweetwater, or Sandy Mush. Our place is always close to our minds. 39

So much is the Appalachians' personal history and identity bound up in one special bit of land that someone has said the truest test of determining how acculturated the migrant has become is to ask where he plans to be buried. If he says he won't be buried in this old flat place and has a cemetery lot on a hill at home, the bond of place has not been severed.

The second inner core of Appalachian values, and often an even stronger one, is the value placed on kinship. The definition of family is broad for mountain people including not only the nuclear family but a wide-ranging net of kinfolk related by blood ties and by marriage. It seems likely that the pattern of kinship was characteristic of the Lowland Scots long before they became the Scotch-Irish in this country. Community for the Border Scot was defined as kinship. One belonged to a group because he was born into it, not because he chose to belong. One's kin were a group who shared the same history and values and thus felt comfortable together. Among the Lowland Scots in 1600 social status was determined by birth, men and women had separate and clearly defined sex roles, family ties were permanent with no divorce, and the family organization was patriarchial. 40 When the early settlers moved into remote mountain regions, this kinship concept was still functional, and, in fact, the effect of living on the frontier was to intensify dependence on the extended family as a self-sufficient unit. Further, the isolation of

39 Jones, pp. 512-513.
40 Leyburn, pp. 63-64.
hill settlements led to complex patterns of intermarriage and kin relationships.

Even today the primacy of kinship and the Appalachian's dependence upon his clan remains powerful. In his study of a mountain community, Hicks observed

The importance of kinship in Little Laurel Valley is inescapable. It is the central organizing principle of social life. Jobs are acquired through kinsmen, one visits most frequently with kin, and ties of kinship form the central topic of local gossip.... Perhaps a more telling feature than this intense interest in kin relationship is the tendency in this valley, as in other areas of southern Appalachia, to judge a person's character and behavior by reference to his kin ties. What a person is depends only partly on his actions; to a large extent, he is looked upon as a representative, typical or not, of his family. 41

Hicks concludes that the network of kinship is a more powerful influence than the patriarchial family usually thought typical of Appalachian culture. Loyalty to kin on both sides of a married couple's family is a guiding principle of behavior, and the importance of equality of treatment of inlaws calls for great delicacy in handling relationships. Kin can rightfully expect economic and social support when they turn to family for help.

Robert Coles, having studied poor black and white families in the rural south, remarks that he did not discover the "real sense of family" and what it can mean to a child until he went to western North Carolina. There he found children very conscious of who they are and what their kinship is. As a result, the over-riding concept of family is more im-

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41 George Hicks, "Kinship and Sex Roles," in Ergood and Kuhre, p. 211.
important than the individuality of its members. This emphasis on family membership learned very early leads to a person who is intensely family-centered, who "wants to please his family and who is most truly himself within his family circle."42

Although the Appalachian family is changing like other aspects of the culture, certain characteristics remain distinctive: the family structure is still somewhat patriarchal, families are large by current standards, and distinctions exist between the roles of men and women. Traditionally it has been the role of the father to be the leader of the family, the wage earner, and the member who meets the outside world; the woman stays at home as mother and homemaker. 43 Historically the place of women in the family was a measure of social status among early settlers; only in poorer families did women do field work. "How efficiently and successfully a wife and mother accomplished her task was, justly or unjustly, considered a mark of status," for much of the welfare of the family depended upon the energy and ingenuity of women in spinning, weaving, preserving food, and caring for domestic animals. 44

Some students of Appalachian culture, notably Simpkins, have asserted that equality of the sexes is characteristic of the culture and cite equal division of inheritances regardless of sex rather than primogeniture and freedom to choose a mate as evidence. It all depends, of course, on how one chooses to define the term; however, most of the literature

42 Coles, p. 504.
43 Jones, pp. 510-511.
44 Leyburn, p. 263.
on Appalachia suggests what Campbell observed in the early part of the century, that a woman's "place is in the home and in the home relations of men and woman are Pauline."\textsuperscript{45} Men are clearly considered the superiors of women; thus, even recent studies of mountain people indicate that the family continues to be "clearly patriarchial regardless of economic level."\textsuperscript{46} Such a statement is perhaps a bit too strong, but certainly men are favored from childhood in the mountain family. Gazaway tells of showing newspaper pictures of twenty-four famous people to a hollow man. He could not identify any of them but he commented, "Glad t' see they's on'ly five warmen. Men's bounden t' be wu' th th' most."\textsuperscript{47}

Traditionally sexes have been segregated in church, in political and community gatherings, and more importantly, in the daily round of life. Certain subjects like politics and sex are usually not discussed in mixed company though they are favorite topics of conversation for all-male groups. The barriers between the sexes seem to continue even after marriage when the couple often returns to the home of one set of parents to resume the same ties as before. Companionship is found among the same relatives and friends; little is changed suggesting that husbands and wives pursue separate social lives and do not create new associations as would a couple in mainstream culture.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{45} Campbell, p. 124.
\textsuperscript{46} Harvey L. Gochros, "Sex and Marriage in Rural Appalachia," in Riddel, p. 77.
\textsuperscript{47} Gazaway, p. 133.
\textsuperscript{48} Gochros, p. 79.
For one outside the culture it is easy to accept the image of the woman in Appalachian culture as submissive, retiring, and much put upon and to conclude that her lot is bleaker than it probably is. What one sees on the surface does not suggest the real role of the woman in the Appalachian family. She has her sources of power. First, she is largely responsible for the rearing of the children, at least until her sons reach the age of nine or ten when they begin to enter the male world, and for the management of her household. More importantly, it is she who sets the moral tone for the family deciding what behavior is acceptable in her home. In these roles she is generally unchallenged. She is generally the church-goer in her family, who sees to it that her children attend, too. As she grows older, her status rises in her family and in the community. It seems unlikely that the strong women who are major figures in much of Appalachian fiction are without counterparts in reality or that the innumerable gospel songs about home and mother do not reflect a genuine folk attitude. One begins to suspect that the woman in Appalachian culture has been a strong, but traditionally silent, partner who has had a powerful effect in shaping the Appalachian family.

A number of recent studies of the Appalachian family have pointed to the negative effects of strong family and kinship ties, particularly the crippling result they have on members in making them overly dependent on kin relationships and thus unprepared or unwilling to venture outside these ties. However, while the family may be less patriarchial

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49 For a negative analysis of the Appalachian family and culture see David Looff, Appalachia's Children; Richard A. Ball, "A Poverty Case: The Analgesic Subculture of Southern Appalachia," in Riddle, pp. 239-254; and Weller, Yesterday's People.
because the roles of women and children are changing and less tightly
knit because of mobility and migration, it still serves a number of im-
portant functions for its members. Schwarzweller credits the strong Appa-
lachian family structure coupled with fundamentalist religious faith with
preventing complete chaos as the area became more and more economically
depressed in the 1950's and 60's. Further, though the family may restrict
an individual member's interaction to kinship groups, it still provides
meaningful relationships and standards for personal behavior as well as
a means for enforcing norms of conduct. And, more important, when the
kinship group faces a threat, especially an economic one, from the out-
side, its solidarity increases. Consequently, the kinship group becomes
a sanctuary in a changing world and a means for relieving anxiety.
Without doubt the family will continue to change, but it also seems like-
ly that it will also go on providing economic aid, social stability, and
identity for family members who migrate and for those who remain at home.

The final element in the inner core of Appalachian values, and per-
haps the one most resistant to change, is a deep religious faith which
sustains and is inseparable from other elements of the culture. The his-
tory of the early Appalachian settlers as religious dissidents has been
suggested, but it is pertinent to note again the effect that the isolation
of the mountain region had on religious practice. Cut off from denomina-
tional roots, a kind of folk religion began to develop characterized by
fundamentalism and a great variety of almost autonomous small sects.

50 Harry K. Schwarzweller, "Social Change and the Individual," in
Photiadis and Schwarzweller, p. 57.
Cratis Williams has said that "the most significant single trait to mark all mountain communities is the essential non-conformist quality of their religious views." Some students of the history of religion in the mountains believe it has remained relatively unchanged since the Great Revival of the early nineteenth century. The struggle to live in a subsistence culture where life was often grim "did not allow for an optimistic social gospel" and shaped a religion that functioned to sustain its people and to make life seem worth living. Thus was cast the traditional blend of fundamentalism, fatalism, and dissent which characterizes Appalachian faith and permeates nearly every other aspect of life.

Loyal Jones warns that in examining the religious convictions of a people caution and sensitivity are required:

The religion of mountain people is even more complex than other parts of their lives. All people are complicated, and when you get into the gossamer strands of religious beliefs, values, assumptions, and attitudes, you never stop learning. There is no way ever to know [sic] it all. It is important to remember this, because one needs profound humility even to begin a study of such matters.

And Robert Coles has asserted that in his experience "there is nothing about the life of rural people that is less understood by their city-bred sympathizers and advocates than the nature of so-called fundamentalist religious faith." It is a system of belief that is at once simple, profound, and lasting.

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52 Williams, p. 499.
53 Jones, p. 508.
55 Coles, p. 518.
It would be natural to assume that because Appalachians are religious they are also church members. That is not necessarily true. Many mountain people are deeply religious but do not belong to a particular church. That a person may have abiding religious convictions and practice them without formalizing them in a church setting, just as he is able to quote the Bible more or less accurately without being able to read it, may be a measure of the degree to which religion has become internalized as a folk religion. Campbell wrote in 1921, "In no part of our country will one find a more deep and sincere interest in matters of religion than in the Southern Highlands. The 'infidel' is so rare that the term is anathema." Even those who have been admittedly wicked believed in a god and knew what was necessary for salvation, which they planned to achieve some day.\(^56\) In a survey made in the Southern Appalachian Mountain Region during the summers of 1958-59 Weatherford and Brewer found "fewer people in the mountains belong to churches than in any comparable areas east of the Mississippi River"; they concluded that Appalachians may be "more religious and less church related than any other group in the country."\(^57\) In a recent study Photiadis and Maurer found that intense religious belief was not linked with church participation "because a number of strong believers--some living in isolated rural communities--are not even church members."\(^58\) All of this suggests that re-

\(^{56}\) Campbell, p. 176.

\(^{57}\) Weatherford and Brewer, p. 161.

Religious belief is an intrinsic element in the lives of mountain people, one which colors and forms their attitudes toward the larger world.

There is a danger in overemphasizing the importance of religious belief outside an institutional setting, for, in fact, churches have been and continue to be a potent force in Appalachian communities. Traditionally, mountain people have been predominantly Protestant. Campbell noted that Baptist denominations, "if the term be allowed, the 'native' church of the Highlands," were most prevalent, followed by Calvinistic Methodists. Over a quarter of a century later Weatherford and Brewer found that two out of five mountain churches were Southern Baptist and that number was growing rapidly; one out of five was Methodist. Other church membership was distributed among a variety of mainline and sectarian churches. They concluded that church membership in the mountains is like a cross section of the whole country 'except for a larger concentration of fundamentalist Protestant sects.' Interestingly enough it is membership in these sectarian churches that has increased rapidly over the past twenty years.

The tendency has been for many writers to oversimplify and generalize the nature and role of the sectarian churches which appeal particularly to the rural poor. Actually there are many sects, different from each other, which are more familiar to mountain people than denominational churches. Though the churches may seem alike in their emotionalism and fundamentalism, they vary in organization, practice, and tenets.

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59 Campbell, p. 174.
60 Weatherford and Brewer, p. 73.
For example there are several sects of Baptists: the Calvinist or Primitive, Regular or United Baptists, and the Armenian or Freewill Missionary Baptists, who may be associated with the Southern Baptist Convention. In addition, there are Pentecostal and Holiness churches and various sects of the Christian Church.61

In what ways can these churches, some of which practice foot-washing and snake handling as sacraments, some having Sunday school and a missionary outreach which other groups vehemently oppose, some believing in glossalalia and the laying on of hands, be said to resemble each other? Remarkably enough at least to one outside the culture they share common ground. First, these churches are small and generally autonomous, that is, the congregation may not be related to a larger denominational body. The building may not even be known by a conventional sort of name but by its location, Frazier's Bottom Church, or by a person, Brother Ed Bailey's Church. The congregation may be made up entirely of a family or kinship group. The minister is most likely a layman, in some cases a woman, not ordained but called by the spirit to preach, who supports himself in another occupation. The formalities of an order of worship, liturgy, robed choirs, and so on common in major denominations are generally rejected, the service taking a free form consisting of much singing, giving testimony and spontaneous prayers, and preaching.

Beneath the worship lie certain beliefs that are at the core of mountain religion. The basis is, of course, the literal interpretation of the Bible as God's word and belief in the King James Version as the

divinely inspired translation. Weatherford and Brewer say, "The Bible is a Holy Book, the centerpiece of faith for mountain people. It is often discussed, little known, and much revered. Yet the 'gospel according to mountaineers' is a vital if varied tradition. It has entered the folk culture largely without the benefit of the clergy." As Robert Coles has said, "I am talking about a people who hear the Bible and memorize its words much more than they read it." As a result people may know more about the Bible than about their own church since it is a lively part of the oral tradition. Appalachians love to argue about Biblical interpretation, and each person is his own interpreter.

The second belief that mountain churches share, one which grows out of a literal interpretation of the Bible, is their view of man as a fallen creature, but one who is capable of salvation and the reward of life after death. Baptism, usually when a member is old enough to understand its ritual meaning and generally by immersion, becomes the most important sacrament in the church. Thus, one is freed from the bondage of sin and death and from the power of Satan, a vigorous figure among some sects. Even one who is saved may "backslide," but he is able to repent and begin a new life. The emphasis on a heavenly home leads in some sects to a renunciation of this world and its materialistic values.

Finally, the relationship of the mountaineer to God is a face-to-face one; he believes in a personal God who takes an interest in man's affairs and intervenes in their lives. It is not given to man to know

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62 Weatherford and Brewer, p. 93.
63 Coles, p. 597.
God's plan for his life, but there is a divine providence beneath both tragedy and good fortune. The Appalachian, "forced from early times... to face almost without help the grim certainty of suffering and death,... has come to assume toward them the only attitude that makes life endurable under the circumstances--a belief that they are ordained and therefore to be borne with what display of stoicism one may command." Fatalism and resignation, then, are one side of the belief that God ordains man's life; belief in faith healing, revelations, and divine guidance in the life of the individual, the other, more optimistic side.

What functions does this intensely personal, almost possessive, attitude toward God and religion have in the life of the rural poor Appalachian? That religion has been the element of Appalachian life most resistant to change and that membership in sectarian churches is growing rather than diminishing suggests it serves a vital need. Obviously one function the church serves is a social one, providing a community of like-minded believers. Going to church gives the member a chance to dress up, to visit with friends and neighbors, and to join with them in a communal experience. For individual members, the church supplies a sense of identity and of individual worth. In a way the service validates the churchgoer's experience, assures him that his life is not meaningless, and enables him to feel some dignity as a child of God. Faith that whatever happens in human life is foreordained further sustains people for whom life otherwise would seem a cruel chaos. Robert Coles says "People constantly hard pressed, unable to do much more than live

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64 Campbell, p. 204.
from minute to minute and day to day, can for a few minutes of at least one day sit down and ponder things and find in life a little structure, a little shape." The rural poor see a parallel between the suffering they know in this world and Christ's suffering, humiliation, and death. Believing God to be righteous, they conclude that one must pass through the sorrows of this world to reach a better life hereafter. The greatest comfort that these churches ultimately offer their members is a kind of catharsis, the opportunity to express emotion openly and to merge one's feelings unselfconsciously with those of others. The church, then, is not only a sanctuary from life but a sober kind of entertainment and recreation as well. "Joy" is the word writers have used to describe the sense of accomplishment members have in being part of these services, "the joy that comes with listening to music, with praying, with saying things—-for when things go unspoken too long moroseness and despair result." The lay minister reflects this attitude when he says, "Let's all have a good time in Jesus tonight" or "Let's rejoice by singing Hymn 102."

Speaking of what the rural Appalachian gains from his church experience Robert Coles has written: "They become new and different people .... They worship vigorously and sincerely and with a mixture of awe, bravado, passion, and restraint that leaves an outside observer feeling


66 Coles, p. 585.
skeptical, envious, and vaguely nostalgiac. I think they emerge much stronger for the experience and with as much perspective as others get from different forms of contemplation, submission and joint participation." 67

In summary, fundamentalist religion and the sectarian churches offer believers the intimacy of human contact, relief from the anxiety caused by not being able to control one's life or to conform to the values of larger society, and the reassurance that though one suffers from poverty and its ills in this life, he will be rewarded in Heaven. It seems that so long as the Appalachian feels powerless and alienated from the larger society he will turn to religion for solace and meaning in life even though that faith has been criticized for encouraging its people to resignation and apathy. And so long as the major denominations continue to depart from the traditional religious beliefs and practices of mountain people, sectarian churches will continue to gain strength.

Folklorists define folk groups in varied ways--some limited, others quite broad. Early European folklorists, concerned with preserving folklore survivals they believed were vanishing in face of increasing urbanization and industrialization turned to peasant groups as the bearers of the folk tradition. For these collectors the folk were those living in rural regions, close to the soil, the poor, the relatively uneducated. And it was among these folk that the oral tradition might be gathered in its most authentic form, uncontaminated by education or the effects of

67 Coles, p. 355.
contemporary life. The mountain people of southern Appalachia, at least into the first decades of this century, constituted a folk group in the classic sense. They were isolated geographically and culturally: they made their livelihood by subsistence farming; they were in comparison to the mass of Americans relatively poor and uneducated. There are, in fact, still mountain communities in the more remote regions of the Appalachians that might be characterized in just this way. If one chooses to apply a broader definition of the folk—for example, Alan Dundes has defined them as "any group whatsoever who share at least one common factor," then, of course, Appalachians again may be thought of as a folk group. In general, one is safe in saying that mountain people are a relatively homogeneous group who have experienced a common history and geography and who share a traditional culture and its values. Though the Appalachian way of life is changing and indeed has been declared moribund time after time, it still retains its flavor as a distinctive subculture.

The migration of people out of the mountains and the problems intrinsic in that movement are not a new phenomenon though the increasing numbers of migrants have attracted attention since the late 1950's. Indeed, Appalachians have been on the move since frontier times. There seem to have been from the beginning, in fact, some families who did not settle permanently on the land but were squatters moving from one piece of mountain land to another. By the middle of the nineteenth century, most of the tillable land was occupied. Large families and the custom of equal inheritance left little to be divided and subdivided among children; wild game and fish became so scarce that families could no longer augment their food supply by hunting and fishing. Both before and after the Civil War people began to move out of the mountains to find a more prosperous life in the west. Family histories from this period contain numerous examples of family members who went west to take up new lives in Oklahoma, Texas, and Minnesota. In this century the World Wars caused Appalachians to migrate to industrial areas out of the mountains though
between the wars during the Great Depression many returned once more to
the hills. In fact, the pattern of migration has been characterized by
a constant ebb and flow out of the Appalachian region and back again
which corresponds to the economic health, or lack of it, of the area.

In the thirty years after 1940, when the booming war industries
drew Appalachian migrants to cities like Baltimore, Detroit, and Chicago,
a great number migrated, as many as seven million of them. The period
from 1950 through the 1960's was a disastrous one for the coal industry,
and many families left central Appalachia to earn a living elsewhere.
One might think of this period as the high water mark of Appalachian mi-
gration, for in 1970 the tide began to turn and people began to return
to the hills, and "for the first time in decades, the Region received
more migrants than it exported."^1

Though migration has decreased, Ohio cities have historically at-
tracted and probably will continue to attract a significant number of
people from central Appalachia, particularly from southern West Virginia
and eastern Kentucky. The pattern of migration has remained remarkably
consistent through the years: Cincinnati and Dayton are entry cities for
Kentuckians; Columbus, Cleveland, and Akron for West Virginians. A study
made by the Columbus Public Schools in 1964 showed two colonies of mi-
grants, largely from Kentucky and West Virginia, living in areas just
south and north of the center of the city.2 A later report on urban Appa-

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1 John J. Gilligan, "The Invisible Appalachians: Columbus Conference
2 Exchanging Cultural Values--A study of Newcomers in Columbus, Ohio
Public Schools, Columbus (Ohio) Board of Education, June 1964, pp. 1-4.
lachians made in early 1978 indicates that the near north, west, and south sides of Columbus have Appalachian populations of 50 percent or more. Earlier the 1974 BENCHMARK Program projected a 29 percent Appalachian population for the Columbus metropolitan area. Although they are a sizeable group, Appalachians are an invisible minority in urban areas partly because they are apparently like the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant majority, partly because it is not in their cultural heritage to be joiners or political activists. John J. Gilligan noted that 3.3 million people moved out of Appalachia between 1950 and 1970, yet they have gone relatively unrecognized in the areas to which they moved and little has been done to help them either before or after they migrate.

Until recently few studies existed to cast any light on what happens to a mountain family suddenly transplanted in a city; however, stereotypes abound. The reason for the waves of migration is the same one that has motivated thousands of foreign immigrants to this country: the promise of finding stable employment and bettering their lives. And in this Appalachians have been successful. Dr. Larry Morgan of West Virginia University "found that family income jumped more than 40% over the level being earned before the move was made" and that approximately 1/3 to 1/4 of the jobs in the auto industry in the midwest are filled by Appalachians. The Appalachian migrant has come to form the backbone of the blue collar work force in Ohio, perhaps as much as 1/3 of it. There does not seem

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5Gilligan, p. 28.
to be evidence to support the notion that mountain people move to the urban areas of other states simply to get on welfare rolls.

What happens to Appalachian families when they come to an urban area depends to a great extent on the degree to which the members have already been assimilated into the larger culture. Those who are comparatively well educated and middle class do not migrate to the ports of entry, the Appalachian slums, of large cities, but to more comfortable suburbs. They are absorbed somewhat rapidly into the new environment. Others, perhaps closer to their cultural heritage and not so economically independent, migrate to Appalachian ghettoes, where they may remain either because they are not financially successful enough to move or because they feel at home there. A final group cannot adjust to urban life and return home, where they become a bridge between the Appalachian region and the city. Some go back for good; others shuttle back and forth. Though this group has learned about urban life, they are often more firmly attached to traditional ways and to their home community than they were before they left. 6

Studies fail to support the idea that a majority of Appalachian migrants are ill-educated and unemployable. "A survey...of the typical Appalachian migrant to Lexington and Cincinatti shows that during the period from 1965 to 1970 the typical migrant had approximately twelve years of education; was approximately twenty-six years of age; had slight-

ly more than two persons in the household and had a total family-earned income of about $4000 (in 1971 dollars) during the last year of residence in Eastern Kentucky. Thus the migrant was approximately two years younger, had four more years of education, and had $2,200 less family-earned income than the Eastern Kentucky population in the 1970 census. It is the younger, the better educated, and the ambitious, then, who migrate from Appalachia. James Branscome has pointed out that Appalachians are the migrant group most likely to better themselves financially when they move to the cities, but they are also the group "most apt to return often or permanently to their original homes" and the group for whom migration is most difficult.

The reasons for the problems Appalachians face in adjusting to urban life and for the stereotypes those outside the culture have of them lie in the pattern of cultural values discussed in the preceding chapter. Love of land, the importance of kinship, pride, independence, religious convictions, and natural reserve all combine to create cultural barriers. Branscome says

Rural people from central and southern Appalachia are a culturally distinct group who do not share the life goals and cultural aspirations of the dominant class in America or, for that matter, those of other cultural minorities. When this fact is not recognized by those who deal with them as migrants -- employers, educators, judges -- the process of learning to operate effectively...within a dominant culture is slowed.

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7As quoted in Gilligan, p. 28.
9Branscome, p. 73.
Kinship, for example, serves an important function in the pattern of migration of Appalachian families. Studies of migration have indicated for some time that there were consistent streams of migration from certain mountain regions to specific destinations outside the area. But only within the past decade has an attempt been made to discover why. The extended family seems to play the most important role in determining what the destination of the migrant will be and in locating his first job. That is, migrants tend to go where they already have family members established and these established kin provide a means of easier adaptation to a new setting. Brown, Mangalam, and Photiadis term this phenomenon the "stem family." The stem of the family is composed of those relatives, often grandparents, who remain at home; the branches are those children who reach into urban areas for employment. The image is apt, for it suggests that family roots are still in the mountain region. The stem family in the hills provides a "haven of safety" if the migrant suffers reverses in the city, a place to which he can return to regain strength financially and psychologically. The extended family in the city also provides a buffer for the new migrant. In a study of three mountain communities they call Beech Creek, Brown and others found a great majority of the migrants has close kinship ties with the place to which they migrated and those ties "have much to do with a Beech Creek migrant's destination, his way of landing a job and a place to live in the community, and his general social and personal adjustment...emphasizing the continuing influence of the extended family."10

10 James S. Brown, Harry Schwarzweller, and Joseph J. Mangalam,
Kinship ties, then, continue to be a powerful force when mountain people migrate; one might expect to find the same kind of complex family relationships enduring in Appalachian areas of the city as in the mountains. There are, of course, both positive and negative aspects of this strong familialism. The creation of the stem family provides a means of coping with the problems caused by lack of opportunity in the mountains by enabling the young to leave home and still maintain strong family ties. At the same time it is a survival strategy for the kinship group. The extended family softens the transition to urban life, but it also may deter the migrant from taking part in the larger society by limiting his contacts to family members, thus encouraging the growth of "little Appalachias" in cities. Loyalty to kin may bring the migrant into conflict with various social agencies, particularly the schools; and reliance on the extended family for help in times of financial or personal crisis makes the Appalachian unwilling to seek help from outside sources. This reluctance, coupled with a natural stoicism, has helped create the popular image of the mountaineer as apathetic and fatalistic.

Besides his kinfolk at home, the thing an Appalachian gets most homesick for is his mountains. Brown speaks of the "homestead concept" as a "configuration of elements blending land, neighborhood, parental

"Kentucky Migration and the Stem Family: An American Variation on a Theme by Le Play," Rural Sociology, 28 (March 1963), 68.

household, kinsfolk, and the like, a spot to go back to. Like countless immigrants before them, all Appalachians do not arrive in the city with the intention of staying; they plan to make enough money to get a stake which they can take back to establish themselves. Bill Surface writing of Appalachians in Chicago says they are the migrant group who experience the most difficulty in adjusting to urban life, far more than the southern Blacks. "For more than any other present-day ethnic group in America, the Appalachian seems to consider home to be where the heart is, and no matter where he might go the Appalachian nearly always leaves his heart behind in the hills." One has only to read the testimony of the people like that in "Letters to a Bluegrass D J" to discover that "No matter how many years they have lived in the north, no matter how strong their circumstantial ties, each compulsively separates his concept of 'at home' from where he may be living at the present time." In fact, thirty years of living away from the hills may have served to swathe home in a nostalgia that comes back in waves with a familiar tune. Space and freedom are what the migrant misses when he moves to town. Accustomed to having hills to climb, branches to wade and fish in, and the liberty to do so, mountain people, particularly men and boys, feel imprisoned in urban settings. There is little opportunity for those active, risk-

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12 Brown and others, p. 64.
taking pursuits that are a part of rural life. When transferred to an urban setting, they become loitering, vandalism, and delinquency.

Religion seems to be the element of mountain culture that has suffered most in the move to town though it is important to remember that religious belief among mountain people is not necessarily linked to church membership or attendance. A survey of junior high school students in Cincinnati schools indicates that they do not attend church regularly although many of them do go to church when they go home to the hills. This may be a more common pattern than has been supposed when one considers the example of an Akron woman who returns every weekend to preach in her rural Kanawha County (West Virginia) church. Both the Cincinnati survey and other studies indicate that there is still strong religious belief among Appalachians even without church participation. A comparison of Appalachian ghetto residents and rural Raleigh County (West Virginia) residents showed that those with the highest degree of belief had the least church relationship.\(^}\text{15}\) Formal mainline churches do not appeal to Appalachians, where they feel out of place, awkward, and inferior. Ellen J. Stekert in her study of Appalachian migrants in Detroit has pointed out that it is the denominational churches, Methodist, Catholic, and Lutheran, which are most likely to supply social services to the slum dweller, but they do not win his allegiance because their worship seems "stiff and formal." She comments that "the persistence of past religious attitudes, even in the absence of present religious behavior is charac-

teristic of the general tendency of the southern migrant to hold tenaciously to his beliefs even when circumstances favor a change in behavior." What seems to happen is that among Appalachian migrants religion becomes more internalized than it was before they came to the city. Those who become acculturated in the larger society may join denominational churches; others have no church where they feel at home. There is a real need for more store front sectarian churches in the Appalachian parts of our cities.

For an involved chain of historical and cultural reasons the attitude of Appalachian people toward education can only be described as ambivalent. On one hand, there is the kind of evidence presented in the Ford survey which indicates that parents have aspirations that their children will be better educated and thus have better lives than they themselves have experienced; on the other, one finds an open distrust of education, a suspicion that as children become more educated they are likely to be won away from their family and community values. To do more than suggest some of the reasons for this suspicion is much too involved to be discussed here. However, it rises from conflict between the cultural imperatives already discussed and the values schools espouse. Certainly some of the distrust of schools has resulted from the history of education in the Appalachian area. After the period of isolation before the Civil War, and the chaotic period which followed it, the region was

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greatly dependent for formal education on a group of settlement schools established in the mountains by various northern churches. The mission schools served a real purpose in reaching children in remote areas who would otherwise not have been educated, but they also resulted in the feeling that education was something imposed from outside the region and taught by missionaries who had a low regard for mountaineers and had come to save them from themselves. The final result was a distrust of teachers and education itself. Further, there is a strong belief in mountain culture that book learning is inferior, even antagonistic to, common sense; it goes beyond that really to a conviction that true knowledge is intuitive, to be learned by living close to nature or received as a divine gift. In addition to the distrust of education, the desire of mountain people not to appear better than their peer group or families, to be average, explains some of the negative feeling Appalachians have about the value of education.

The idea that education is an outside influence imposed upon the culture is still very much alive. It is interesting to compare two articles in this regard. One, "Country Roads: A Regional Approach to Education," addresses itself to the shortcomings of public schools within the Appalachian area; the other, "Urban Appalachian School Children: The Least Understood of All," discusses the school-related problems of migrant children in Cincinnati. Both essays contain the same thesis: the Appa-

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lachian child is usually white and Protestant, a native speaker of Eng-
lish—he should succeed in school. The reason he does not is that a con-
flict exists between his cultural values and those of the middle class
culture which the school embodies. The charge that schools ignore or
denigrate children who are culturally different is the same against both
Appalachian and urban educational systems.

The problems of Appalachian children should be of particular con-
cern to teachers in Ohio's city schools. Years ago Roscoe Giffin iden-
tified their situation:

They are part of an education system that is at the same time
more complex and richer in opportunity yet more demanding of
achievement and continued regular attendance than was their
lot either in a small one-room school or in one of the newer
consolidated schools. To complicate matters further they
are the pupils to teachers who are likely to be products of
urban, middle-class society.19

The conflict between the values of the larger culture and those of
mountain people, then, is at the core of many of the problems children
have in school. At base it amounts to profound difference in the way
the world is viewed by the two groups. Marion Pearsall contrasts the
Southern Appalachian "value orientation" with the upper middle class pro-
fessional as follows. The Appalachian is fatalistic, seeing man as pow-
erless to change nature or his destiny; he lives in the present following
"slow and natural rhythms." He is attached to "concrete places and par-
ticular things." He sees man's nature as essentially sinful and without
divine intervention unalterably evil. His concept of human relations is

19 As quoted in Wagner, Urban Appalachian Children, p. 1.
personal and rooted in kinship. By contrast, the professional believes that man can change nature. He looks to and plans for the future. He is oriented to everywhere and every thing, and feels quite comfortable moving about. He takes an optimistic view of man as a creature who can control and improve his life. He deals with others on an impersonal basis according to the roles they are playing. When one adds to these disparities the additional one of widely different educational experience, then one can understand that

It is extremely difficult for [the college graduate] even to try to imagine what would be left of their understanding of a complex world were they suddenly to erase from their memories every item they had acquired through formal education or reading. Yet this is precisely the state of many who drop out early from what are likely to be substandard schools. As a result, we the educated and they the relatively uneducated live in very different worlds between which communication is bound to be difficult. The fundamental problem is not so much the translation of language as the translation of culture and experience. 20

These barriers between the mainstream and Appalachian culture is of direct concern to educators in Ohio, for as Wagner has said, Appalachians "may be the second largest group of minority students attending midwestern schools."21 In the sections of Ohio cities like Over-the-Rhine in

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20 Marion Pearsall, "Communicating with the Educationally Deprived," Mountain Life and Work, vol. 52 no. 1, Spring 1966, 8. Though the title may seem unfortunate in the light of changing jargon, Pearsall's lucid and compassionate discussion of cultural differences should be required reading for every teacher of Appalachian students.

Cincinnati which have traditionally been ports of entry for Appalachians, they are the majority of the population. Thirty-five percent of children in all Cincinnati public schools are of Appalachian heritage.\footnote{Wagner, Urban Appalachian Children, p. 2.} In Columbus the center city has 22 schools where Appalachian children compose over 50 percent of the school population. In Franklin County, overall, one-fourth of the school children have Appalachian roots.\footnote{Peggy Calestro and Ann Hill, Appalachian Culture: A Guide for Students and Teachers (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Research Foundation, 1976), p. 62.} The chances are good that teachers in a metropolitan county in Ohio will have a number of Appalachian children in their classes.

Even so, mountain people form a largely invisible minority in the urban areas to which they move. There is, in fact, a real disregard for southern Appalachian culture even where there are many migrants—few restaurants and little entertainment special to that culture, though there are plenty of bars that play country music.\footnote{Surface, p. 219.} The schools are simply one of the many institutions in the larger society that fail the migrant. However, theirs is perhaps the most critical failure, for they are, next to the family, the most important factor in socializing young people.

Imagine for a moment that you are a newcomer to Ohio's urban schools. What are some of the difficulties you face?\footnote{This profile of Appalachian students is compiled from a number of sources: Wagner, Urban Appalachian Children, and Report of the School Study Project; Exchanging Cultural Values, Columbus Public Schools; Calestro and Hill, Appalachian Culture; and The Appalachian Migrant in Columbus, Ohio: A Study for the Junior League of Columbus, 1970 (MICROFISCHE ERIC ED 050 867).}
You have most likely come from rural West Virginia or eastern Kentucky, where you still have grandparents and other kin and where you have a deep attachment to your home; for this is probably the first move your family has ever made. Your parents have approximately an eighth grade education and no special skills; still they believe they can improve their family's life by moving to the city where they have heard there is work.

When you arrive in Columbus or Cincinnati or Akron, you may live for a time with aunts or uncles. At least, when your family finds a place to live in this port-of-entry neighborhood, you will be living among other migrant Appalachians. Your father finds work, often with the help of relatives, but it is probably at low wages, so he will move around from job to job for the next few years until he finds one that suits him. Your first impressions of life in the city are that it is crowded, noisy, and that things happen incredibly fast. People even talk fast, and don't seem to really see you when they do talk to you.

At school, for the first time, you realize you are different from many of the other students. Until this moment you had supposed everyone felt as you did about his family, his home, and his religion. And for the first time perhaps you are in school with Black students—you may never have seen a person of another race before. You discover that the values you have been taught, your clothes, and especially the way you talk, brand you as a hillbilly or a briar hopper, so you don't say much. You have been taught since babyhood to be sparing and circumspect in what you say to outsiders anyway.
When you lived at home in the hills, you knew who you were. Yours was an ascribed status: you were someone's boy or girl or grandchild; you came from the West Fork or Black Oak or Yellow Creek. All of that means nothing in your new school. Nothing in your experience has prepared you for these changes in your life.

Classes in school seem hard to you and the material, much of it having little connection with the world you know, is covered quickly. You begin to doubt your abilities. Your family moves often within the city, not always because they want to but because their apartment building is torn down, the landlord sells, or the Interstate is coming through. Sometimes because you are the oldest you have to stay at home to take care of younger brothers and sisters (you may have four or five of them) or to run errands for your mother. You may spend summers back home with your grandparents. Sometimes your family goes back to the hills because a relative is sick or has died and you may miss several days of school. Sometimes you and your dad just get homesick and decide to go home for the first day of hunting season. Your teachers and principals don't think these are very good reasons for being absent though you have always been taught that family loyalty comes before everything else.

You are not part of the extracurricular activities at school except perhaps for athletics because you are not a joiner. You feel yourself continually torn between what you value and the expectations the school has of you. You begin to feel worse about who you are in this school and begin to wonder why you are there.

As you approach the age when you can get a work permit and drop out, you think more and more about quitting school. In fact, you are
never very happy in school. When you face a situation in which you are ridiculed or bullied, your response is generally silence or withdrawal. Your teachers say you have a poor self image, that you lack aspirations. Occasionally they label you stubborn or sullen. Your parents say they want you to stay in school, but not with great conviction. After all, they have gotten along with less education than you have now, and besides they are not sure they approve of some of the things you are learning and reading about in school. They really don't go to school very often, for they feel alien and awkward there. Finally you decide on the ultimate withdrawal. You drop out of school and become one of the 50 to 70% of Appalachian migrant children who do not complete their public education. 26

Educators will probably blame your Appalachian "personality" for your school failure. However, Wagner asserts, "Unfortunately educators often place the blame with the student rather than with the institution when discussing how schools have failed to meet the needs of urban minorities."27 He adds that the basic problem is that schools simply ignore the cultural differences of Appalachian students. Jim Wayne Miller, a poet, educator, and Appalachian himself has written, "It is difficult for people anywhere to embrace enthusiastically twelve years of formal schooling based on values they don't fully share, reflecting a world they do not live in, a world difficult for them to connect with their own experience. Too often schools say to Appalachian children, 'If you stick

26 Wagner, Report, p. 11.
it out and change a few of your peculiar ways all of this can be of use to you some day.'” Former Governor John J. Gilligan has said that the tragedy in all this is that such children "are made to feel ashamed of a heritage of which they should be deeply proud," for very little of it is recognized by the school. Thomas Wagner warns that "If schools continue to ignore their responsibilities throughout the 1970's and into the 1980's, urban Appalachian children will continue to lost [sic] faith in themselves and respect for their heritage" to become the second and third generation of ghettoized urban Appalachians whose lives may be even more desperate than those of their parents.

When Appalachians move out of the mountains to cities outside their region, they bring with them the invisible baggage of their culture and its traditions. In their resistance to assimilation into a larger culture they join other groups of urban migrants who continue to disprove the melting pot theory. In fact, though they must abandon many of the characteristics of their material culture, the conflict of values they experience in urban life may cause them to cling more tenaciously than ever to the beliefs of their culture. Like other minority groups, many Appalachians are in constant touch with the folks back home through kin who visit and trips back to the hills. In this way, too, the culture is

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29 Gilligan, p. 30.
constantly reinforced. Like their relatives and friends who remain in
the mountains, urban Appalachians are a folk group which has shown a
sturdy resistance to change. Only when educators gain some insight into
the values of Appalachian culture and begin to understand the tenacity
with which they are held will migrant mountain children succeed as they
should in our public schools.
For almost a century enthusiastic amateur collectors and professional folklorists have gone into the mountains with notepads and tape recorders to gather the songs, stories, and beliefs of the Appalachian people making it the most intensely collected area of our country. Even so, large areas of interest to folklorists have remained largely untouched or only partially recorded. Until recently little effort has been made to record the context of the folkloric event along with the item itself or to analyze the function of the folklore in the culture where it exists.

Some of the earliest collectors who published collections of Appalachian folklore were fascinated by what seemed to them the anachronistic quality of mountain songs, stories, beliefs, and customs. Their collecting efforts, therefore, were motivated by a desire to preserve these remnants of a way of life before they vanished in the new era of industrialization and technology. William Goodell Frost's articles in the
last part of the nineteenth century perhaps best exemplify this attitude of the mountaineer as a "contemporary ancestor." When Cecil Sharp, a British collector, arrived on the scene in 1917, he was amazed and delighted to discover that the traditional ballads of Francis James Child were alive in the oral tradition of the mountains. Thus began the search for English and Scottish ballads that has persisted to the present time. In fact, of all genres of folklore the texts of Appalachian songs and ballads have been most fully recorded.

It was not until some time after Sharp's sally into the mountains that collectors discovered caches only of songs and ballads but of tales of European origin as well. When Isabel Gordon Carter published "Tales from the Southern Blue Ridge," a collection of wonder tales gathered from an informant who had earlier supplied Sharp with ballads, the vein of Märchen was uncovered. Since that time a number of collections of these tales of wonder and magic, often called "Jack Tales" for their protagonist, have been published. Richard Chase, for example, has compiled three volumes of the tales. Not a folklorist, Chase reconstructed composite versions of the stories from the variants of several narrators, his aim being to tell a good story. Marie Campbell, as a young teacher in a remote region of eastern Kentucky, recorded tales of the storytellers in that area, and later, after using them as the basis for her dissertation in folklore, published them as Tales from the Cloud Walking Country in 1958. The Campbell collection was actually begun in 1926

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and consisted of seventy-eight tales from six master storytellers. Interestingly enough, Campbell's informants remarked that the stories came "from across the ocean waters" and were traditional, having been carried to Kentucky "by our foreparents way back in time."\(^2\) Campbell's collection is appealing though, unfortunately, there is some reason to believe it may not have been based entirely on oral sources. William Lightfoot, a specialist in Appalachian folklore at Ohio State University, suggests that some of the tales approximate closely British versions in print. Another folklorist, Leonard Roberts, has also made fine collections of Appalachian stories for more than a quarter of a century. Both *South from Hell-fer-Sartin* (1955) and *Sang Branch Settlers* (1974) contain other forms of folk narrative--legends, anecdotes, and jokes--in addition to *Märchen*. *Sang Branch Settlers* is a particularly rich resource, for it represents in-depth collecting from a single family, including riddles and a variety of folksongs as well as stories. Perhaps more important than the variety of genres in Robert's collection is the fact that he provides a description of the culture from which his material comes and of his informants.

One criticism made of the work of both Campbell and Roberts is that both collectors, particularly in the case of the *Märchen*, are intrigued by the antique, so that they deliberately sought out storytellers who had preserved wonder tales no longer generally alive in the oral tradition. In doing so, W. K. McNeil feels they have assembled collections

of folklore which reinforce the image of Appalachian culture as backward-looking and unprogressive. And Kenneth and Mary Clarke assert "Even at the time of their collection these tales were localized anachronisms," adding that collections of folklore from Kentucky are unlikely to contain elaborate folktales or ballads of European origin learned purely from the oral tradition. It might be said, however, that without the work of Chase, Campbell, and Roberts, the Märchen genre in Appalachian folklore might never have reached a general audience and, further, that the stories were certainly part of the folklore heritage of some mountain families, like Roberts' Couch family, when they were collected. In the contemporary climate that prevails of collecting folklore as it exists in the context of today's culture, one must not forget older forms persist and have their value, too. In fact, there is some indication that oral storytelling including wonder tales may be enjoying a new birth, not in its old setting of family and hearthside but at storytelling festivals. The stories change, incorporating new middle-class values, but some of the flavor of the folk remains.

When the collections of narratives by Roberts and Chase are compared to the legend collections from Appalachia, the discrepancy in the quantity and quality of scholarship is obvious. Legend seems to be a

3McNeil, p. 55.


largely unexplored area indeed. There are collections, to be sure, but there is little or no analysis of them. Both Ruth Ann Musick and Patrick Gainer have based their collections largely on written versions of legends collected from students in their college classes, though Gainer includes some of his own field work. Musick, in particular, has revised her narratives "to run as smoothly as possible." As William Jansen points out in his foreward to Musick's posthumously published Coffin Hollow and Other Ghost Tales, it is the "aural aspect" of legend, the redundancies, awkwardnesses, and fragmentary quality of the legend in the oral tradition, which has been edited out in Musick's and her students' retellings. In fairness one must hasten to add that Musick is one of few folklorists, however, who recognized the contributions of immigrant groups and Blacks to the oral traditions of Appalachia. Gainer's collection Witches, Ghosts and Signs: Folklore of the Southern Appalachians encompasses a broader range of folk material than Musick's work, including folk custom, folk cures, superstitions, and folk speech; but the greater part of his book is given to legends of ghosts and witchcraft. Some of these are stories submitted to him by students, others might be called reminiscent accounts of narratives recalled from his youth. In same cases the legend texts are composites, "put together from oral sources [and] from documentary sources." Neither Musick nor Gainer gives the sort of thorough-

7 Ruth Ann Mesick, Coffin Hollow and Other Ghost Tales (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1977), pp. xii-xiii.
going treatment of legend one would like to have to supply the context in which the legend was told and some indication of the degree of belief in both narrator and audience. But, at least, they do provide legend texts for study. And such texts are difficult to find, for legends are the most fragmented and elusive of narratives.

For the aspiring folklorist much of Appalachian folklore remains to be collected and studied. The minor genres of folklore have been largely neglected. One of the few collections of riddles easily available is *Way Down Yonder on Troublesome Creek: Appalachian Riddles and Rusties* by James Still, and that is brief, unannotated, and designed for children. The area of folk belief including superstition, folk cures, and weather signs has been scarcely touched. True, the Frank C. Brown collection of North Carolina folklore includes some Appalachian entries, but they are for the most part mere listings with little analysis or information about sources.

In summary, though Appalachia excited early and intense interest among folklore collectors, the emphasis has been on folksongs, especially ballads, and folk tales. Much of folklore and folk life has been neglected and now may have passed beyond recovery. However, if, as Kenneth and Mary Clarke point out, it may no longer be possible to discover a ballad or folktale that has been handed along in the purely oral tradition, other elements of the folk tradition remain very much alive: folk expression, motifs from folktales now reformed into stories with a more contemporary thrust, and a reawakened interest in traditional skills.  

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9Clarke and Clarke, p. 6.
It is easy in retrospect to regret that earlier folklore collectors in the mountains did not more thoroughly record the context of the folklore event and analyze its function. But theirs was not that era of scholarship. Their impulse was to record old stories and songs before they vanished. Where they found a vein of folk culture that seemed relatively untouched by progress, they mined it. It has been only recently that the study of folklore has emphasized that the function of folklore is as important as the text of the item itself. With this interest in the purpose folklore serves in the group which bears and transmits it has come the realization that the folklore of a group not only reflects its culture but reaffirms it.

Of course, the folklore of a group because of its traditional nature provides a glimpse into a way of life now passed. Traditional storytellers often feel that a tale should be passed on in the same form in which they learned it, so Appalachian narratives are sprinkled with expressions like "Bedads" and "Ay gonies" and details like baking corn pones in ashes, taking a tow sack of grain to the mill, and plowing a hillside field with mules and oxen. Verbal folklore remains alive in a group, however, not because it is nostalgic but because it has a use, a function. When one analyzes an item of folklore as it functions in a group, one begins to uncover the values of the folk group embodied there. It has become a truism to say that folklore is the mirror of the culture; a more powerful metaphor is needed, for folklore not only reflects the values of a folk group, it strengthens and validates them.

The first function of folklore that one thinks of is the obvious one, to entertain. When a tale is told, a song sung, or a game played,
the performers and the audience are surely amused by their pastime; but just as the text of a poem or short story cannot be value free, so the content of a riddle, joke, or folkrime conveys values.\(^\text{10}\) The political joke, for example, serves a socializing function, but it also reinforces the common attitudes of the teller and the listener and provides a socially acceptable way for them to express their hostility or approval.

Some folklore has as its primary function education in the sense of passing on useful or practical advice or information. At the least connotative level this is true of chants and rimes that help the bearer remember empirical kinds of knowledge like how to spell geography (George Elliot's Oldest Girl Rode A Pig Home Yesterday) or how many days there are in each month. Other folklore addresses itself to the immediate problems of everyday life with information about predicting weather, planting crops, and curing common ailments. In the case of the latter, however, we have already moved beyond the direct application of folklore suggested before and into the area where cause and effect becomes debatable. For the farmer who believes in planting by the signs or on a certain date every year, that belief becomes an empirical one. One mountain woman who usually planted her potatoes on Good Friday did not do so one year, and her crop was a failure. After that experience she vowed, "Next year I'll plant my potatoes on Good Friday—even if it comes on Sunday!"\(^\text{11}\) In such cases failure to follow customary practices resulted in a poor


\(^{11}\)This anecdote was contributed by Cora Finley, a student in a folklore class at Capital University, Interim 1975.
crop. Such folk beliefs and traditions cannot be labeled mere superstition, for they do provide practical guidelines for approaching the routine problems of life, in this case planting potatoes early in the spring.

At a more subtle level the folklore of a group serves what William R. Bascom calls "the single function of maintaining the stability of a culture." This single function manifests itself in a variety of ways. First, the folklore of a group serves to sanction and validate the values of the group. The potato planter quoted earlier indirectly reflects such a function of folklore. There has been a general prohibition in mountain culture against working on Sunday based on a literal interpretation of the Bible. The woman, although she recognized this prohibition, was willing to flout it to insure a crop--the word vowed is important here. Telling children that the shadows on the moon are those of a man who burned brush on Sunday and was punished by being thrown into the sky is another reflection of the same value. In fact, Appalachian folklore is full of legends and memorates that reinforce the belief that if one works on the Sabbath his effort will be fruitless or, worse, ill-fated.

At the same time that the folklore of a group reinforces its values, it also becomes a means for enforcing conformity, either by rewarding those who conform or by punishing or threatening to punish those who do not. This function is apparent in the rules for children's games. It can be illustrated in Appalachian culture by the folklore that surrounds the role of women. It has been noted that boys after the age of eight or nine have considerably more freedom from parental control than girls.

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12 Bascom, p. 297.
Traditionally the role of women has been that they are subservient to men, obedient and silent. A high value has been placed on marriage in the culture, for it is as wives and mothers that women achieve identity and status. Thus, in earlier generations at least the worst fate that could befall a woman was that she remain a spinster. Numerous superstitions and sayings reveal that fear of remaining unmarried: If you let someone sweep under your feet while you are sitting, you will be an old maid; if you eat the last piece of bread on the plate, you will never marry. Both these beliefs while they uphold marriage as an ultimate goal also enforce conformity by cautioning against the results of indolence and gluttony. They further suggest that women can avoid spinsterhood by conforming to the accepted patterns of behavior for women.

In a culture hedged about with prohibitions some escape must be provided for the frustration the individual feels. In addition to its other functions folklore provides an escape, a release from inhibitions. A simple example of this function can be seen in sayings and expressions which contain taboo words. It is nearly impossible for a speaker to recite "She slits sheets" three times fast without pronouncing a word considered obscene. But, of course, in this case the word is an accident and the speaker utters it with impunity. As Alan Dundes points out, it is not acceptable behavior to push others around or to kiss casual acquaintances, still that is just what one must do in playing Musical Chairs or Spin-the-Bottle.13 To go a bit further, this function of folk-

13 Alan Dundes, "Folklore as a Mirror of Culture," Elementary English, 46 (April 1969), 476.
lore may explain the violence against children in Appalachian folklore. Traditionally children are highly valued in mountain families and when they are young often much pampered. In fact, Appalachian parents, especially fathers, are frequently accused of "being fools about the baby." Yet tales are often full of brutality by parents against their children as in "My Mommy Killed Me" in which the baby is killed and cooked by its mother and eaten by its father. Or one might place the cultural value of "family first" against the vengeful sibling rivalry expressed in "Polly, Nancy, and Municmeg" or in a Jack tale when the oldest brother Tom is warned by his youngest brother Jack not to be so mean to his baby brother, but Tom replies, "Yeah, you a baby all right. Dad and mother's petted you all of your life. And I don't like you no way on that account.... We catch you again, we'll kill you, Jack." In a culture where family dependency and loyalty have been a primary value, it is difficult to explain such hostility toward kin without understanding that folklore serves a function as a socially sanctioned means of expressing hostility and rebellion against the demands those values place on the individual. Hostility is vented in such tales, but the structure of the society remains intact.

The final function of folklore, implicit in those already cited, but deserving emphasis, is its capacity to define and identify a group.

15 Roberts, pp. 228-232.
Because it is generally oral, folklore demands face-to-face contact, and it exists in any group that shares an identity. Whether that identity be cultural background, age, occupation, or interest, it involves an area of common knowledge. And this shared knowledge defines for members what makes them a distinct group and what makes them different from other groups with which they come in contact. Some folklore represents the special knowledge that defines and strengthens the group from within; other folklore supplies a frame for viewing a group to which one does belong or which one does not understand. William Hugh Jansen has coined the terms "esoteric" and "exoteric" for these functions. He adds that groups which are relatively small and powerless, for some reason isolated from the mainstream culture, are most likely to demonstrate both the esoteric and exoteric elements in the folklore they possess and that circulates about them.\(^{17}\) Though in disfavor today ethnic jokes and slurs clearly illustrate these inter- and intra-group uses of folklore.

In fact the same joke may serve an esoteric function when told within a group and an exoteric function when related by others not belonging to the group. The story of the mountain woman who died and sought admission to heaven serves as an illustration. Though her record was spotless, Saint Peter was reluctant to admit her. When she pressed him for a reason, he replied that he had allowed other mountaineers to enter before but that they were always unhappy. And why? "Because," said the gatekeeper, "you can't go home on weekends." Told within the group this

joke underlines the love of homeplace and kin so characteristic of Appala-
chians and gives an indication that they themselves realize that to
those outside the group this behavior seems a bit odd. Told by those
outside the culture, it is a comment on the peculiar homing tendencies
of Appalachians who clog the southbound lanes of interstate highways on
Friday and their unorthodox work habits.

The esoteric-exoteric factors in folklore Jansen observed cut across
and unite all genres of folklore, so that they operate in the realm of
folk speech as well as in narrative forms. The dialect of a folk group,
like the faddish slang of the adolescent or the hip talk of the jazz mu-
sician, reflects a common experience and serves to certify the members of
the group to each other. The attitudes of belonging to or rejecting the
folk group are often reflected in the ease with which a member lapses in-
to the dialect of his culture or the vehemence with which he renounces
his dialect in an effort to distance himself from the group.

This brief discussion of the functions of folklore oversimplifies
the complex purposes an item of folklore serves in a group. Whether the
single folk performance is a riddle, a proverb, a joke, or a lullaby, it
operates at the moment it occurs on multiple levels; and it is as capable
of careful analysis and interpretation as a short story or poem. To il-
lustrate complex functions of a folk performance, all operating simultane-
ously, it is useful to examine one folk celebration.

Consider, for example, the various functions implicit in tradition-
al Memorial Day observances. The custom of visiting cemeteries where fam-
ily members have been buried is one that predates the contemporary holiday
weekend and goes back to a time when the extended family agreed upon a day
in the summer to come together to clear off the family plots and decorate the graves with flowers to honor their dead. The older designation, Decoration Day, is more apt than Memorial Day.

For a quarter of a century I have taken part in the Decoration Day ritual as a part of an extended family. It is the one day in the year, not excluding Christmas and Thanksgiving, when it is obligatory for the family to come together. The family, in this case, includes my husband and me and any children still living at home, as well as my husband's sister and her husband. We all return from separate homes in Ohio to my husband's family plot in West Virginia. Ours is a serious celebration, but in no way a mournful or macabre one.

A generation ago a family like ours would have taken part in this ritual equipped to accomplish a practical end. In addition to fresh flowers, family members would have brought scythes and sickles and pruning shears to cut the weeds and trim the grass away from the tombstones. There was something shameful in a family's allowing its graveyard to become overgrown with weeds and briars. Today the cemetery is well cared for, whether we come back to see it or not. Of course, we bring flowers, bought from a florist, and containers of water. We place bouquets on the graves of each family member. My husband breaks off one blossom and carries it to the old part of the cemetery, where the graves are marked with field stones or not marked at all. Though he can no longer locate the grave he is looking for, he places a token blossom on one as a tribute to a man who over a hundred years ago saved his great-grandfather from bushwackers during the Civil War. He remembers clearly his grandfather instructing him to do this.
When we have walked about the cemetery, read the tombstones, and visited with old friends and neighbors, we drive farther into the country to two more graveyards where my brother-in-law's people are buried.

For us as a family the pragmatic reason for our journey no longer exists. The family plot is cared for; we could stay at home and wire the flowers. There are tangential educational values, perhaps, in our ritual. Children learn something of their forebears and about the duty of honoring them. Still, that is not powerful enough motivation for this yearly custom. What other purposes are served by our taking part in this folk event? Our reasons, like those of many other Appalachians who make this pilgrimage each year, have to do with the psychological functions the ritual serves; and most of them are bound up in a sense of kinship, for the occasion amounts to a mini-family reunion. We take part because, if we fail to do so, we risk censure by other family members or worse still hurt feelings.

The Decoration Day ritual validates and strengthens us as a family. It is a time for catching up on news of family members, for showing off the new baby and deciding who he looks like. It is a time for reviewing the geneology, made real because it is engraved in granite all around us. It is a time for remembering the family members who lie in the graves at our feet, not with grief but with a sense of the continuity of life as we see a grandparent's eyes staring out of a child's face. We smile as we recount family stories. For a time we realize that we are links in a long chain of humanity, young and old, living and dead, who are related by blood and marriage. We know where our roots are and exactly what our identity is in our family group.
We come away with a sense of having re-formed and cemented the family as a group again by sharing experiences that are unique to us. But the deepest feeling is one that never finds expression: for a moment as the past and present merge we have faced our own mortality. And we have not found it terrible.

In summary when one begins to survey and analyze the folklore of a group, he finds reflected there the values of a culture. More importantly, folklore serves to reinforce those values and to enforce conformity to them. In the various genres of folklore, perhaps beneath the surface, perhaps not, lies an affirmation of human values. Because of this, the folklore of a group is worthy of closer scrutiny than is often given it in classrooms. A legend or ballad may be as replete with those "hidden meanings" students often speak of as a lyric poem. In any case, knowledge of a people's culture and of their folklore mutually enhance and enlarge each other. When an item of folklore is regarded simply as a text frozen in print, it is robbed of the power it has in its living context. As Mary and Herbert Knapp remind us in their collection of children's lore, folklore provides us a way of dealing with present dilemmas:

Folklore helps people cope with the here and now in three ways. It helps them escape from the unsatisfactory present into fantasy, consoles them by reminding them their troubles are not unique, and by virtue of its traditional nature, provides a safe accepted means of expressing social hostility. Thus folklore helps relieve individual frustration without destroying the status quo. 18

Chapter V

USING THE ORAL TRADITION IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

How can we as teachers put to use the rich heritage of oral tradition that many of our students carry with them quite unrecognized into the classroom? Each of them has been a part of a cultural group. Are we now to ignore that diversity and treat all of them alike? Both we and our students will lose something invaluable if we do.

The first step in tapping the folklore resources of our students is to recognize that we are all folk. If one accepts Dundes' definition, the possible kinds of folk groups, based on age, occupation, geography, ethnic or cultural background—indeed, any single characteristic, are endless. Thus a folk group might be a car pool, a 10th grade English class, railroad workers, grandmothers, Appalachians, or the teachers in the faculty lounge. In fact, most of us belong to several folk groups where we customarily interact, pass on skills and stories, or take part in some communal activity. Some of these groups like our families and our cultural group may last our lifetimes; others like a crowd of fans at a football game are transitory. Though this chapter is devoted largely
to the use of Appalachian folklore in the classroom, it is not intended
to suggest that other groups be ignored. Indeed, it is hoped that the
ideas presented here will suggest to the resourceful teacher ways the folk-
lore of many groups can be explored and used. Our cultural backgrounds
may vary, but we do not need to make judgements about the superiority of
one culture to another. After all, one may love the music of Handel, but
that need not prevent him from delighting in jazz or the blues. To ad-
mire one sort of art because it is familiar does not deny the existence
of other forms or cancel the possibility of appreciating them. The world
is wide enough to contain endless variety for our exploration.

Appalachian Dialect

At the beginning of any study of folklore in the classroom, teach-
ers first must create an atmosphere where students will feel free to ex-
press themselves and to share their ideas and discoveries, a climate of
acceptance. Teachers need to understand and to appreciate the matter of
Appalachian dialect, for too long a problem for the teacher and for those
taught. Just as we are all members of folk groups, so we are all speakers
of a dialect of English, probably more than one. The upwardly mobile and
college educated have learned a very specialized dialect, one that re-
flexes their profession or status. But somewhere under the accretion of
what has been learned moving into a highly literate society, lies the
language of our nurture, in short, the language of our folk group, our
dialect.

It is hard to conceive of any learned behavior more personally ex-
pressive than one's use of language. There is great truth in that pro-
The verbal term, "mother tongue," for much of the grammar of language is learned in families very early before entering school. By the time children enter kindergarten or first grade they have mastered the grammatical rules, the phonetics, the basic vocabulary, and the idioms of their dialect. Since their use of language is based on primary kinship and cultural groups, it carries additional symbolic and emotional freight; thus to attack the language of a group amounts to an attack on the group itself. In the past the attitude toward deviant dialects—that is those not mainstream English—in the classroom has been that of H. L. Mencken's school marm. Those dialectical expressions thought picturesque, quaint, and reminiscent of Elizabethan English on the lips of a mountaineer sitting on his porch, became illiterate and stigmatizing in the classroom.

If the reservoir of oral tradition is to be tapped, teachers need to develop a concept of what the Appalachian dialect is—and what it is not. James Reese, a linguist and folklorist, has defined dialect as "a complete, complex, homogeneous linguistic system shared by two or more speakers of the same language who usually have or have had significant cultural, social or geographical proximity. A natural dialect...is usually learned as a child and can be mastered afterwards only with considerable effort." Like other aspects of Appalachian culture, the dialect of the region attracted the attention of early local color writers and observers in the area. Today the mountaineer's use of language, perhaps

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more than any other obvious trait, sets him apart from the dominant culture. For many years the deviations of Appalachian dialect from the English spoken in other parts of the country were explained as ancient forms of English preserved among mountain people because of their geographical isolation and keen sense of tradition.

In *The Southern Mountaineer and His Homeland* published in 1921, Horace Kephart writes of the Appalachian dialect as an anachronism, an old form of English with only a handful of borrowings from German and French, characterized by succinctness and vividness. Ten years later Josiah Combs examined Appalachian speech more closely including pronunciation and syntax as well as the lexicon of mountain people. He concluded that "Brevity is the soul of the highlander's language. He prefers it to clearness and to grammatical accuracy." Like Kephart, Combs saw Appalachian speech as a relic and used remarkably similar examples to support his view. The theory that Appalachian speech is atavistic is one still espoused today by writers like Cratis Williams and Wylene Dial, who asserts that

Southern Mountain dialect...is certainly archaic, but the general historical period it represents can be narrowed down to the days of the first Queen Elizabeth and can be further particularized by saying that what is actually heard today is actually a Scottish flavored Elizabethan English.

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4 Cratis Williams has published a series of articles on Appalachian dialect in *Mountain Life and Work*, volumes 37, 38, 39 (Spring 1963), and 40 (Spring 1964).

5 Wylene Dial, "The Dialect of the Appalachian People," *Mountain*
All these writers are inclined to treat Appalachian dialect as a composite, generalizing where it is unwise to do so. There is, in fact, no single mountain dialect but many variant forms which may share common features but vary according to the status, family, and education of the speaker. Often the early studies of mountain folk speech consisted largely of word lists. Reese theorizes that the attempts to describe mountain speech as a remnant of earlier English were motivated by the desire of writers from outside the area to validate Appalachian culture by giving its language an Elizabethan heritage. The attitude expressed can be summed up only as ambivalent. On one hand, the speech of mountain people was viewed as non-standard, even illiterate; on the other, it was vivid, picturesque, quaint, and historic. Curiously today many speakers of the dialect view their language in the same way believing their speech is uneducated but concise and beautiful.

Linguistics have changed in both theory and practice since the beginning of the century when students of language hurried out to capture archaic words and grammatical usages before they vanished. The work of Kurath and the Linguistic Atlas approach discounted the theory that Appalachian speech was an anachronistic monolith and attempted to define geographical areas within which various dialects existed. By the mid-1960's the sociolinguistic approach to language encouraged scholars to study and

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6Reese, p. 484.
describe language as it is actually used by native speakers and to subject it to careful linguistic analysis.⁷

In 1976 Walt Wolfram and Linda Christian published Appalachian Speech, a sociolinguistic description of Appalachian English based on tapes of native speakers of the dialect in two southern counties of West Virginia. The informal discourse of speakers was recorded by indigenous collectors. From the Wolfram and Christian study emerged a description of phonological and grammatical features of Appalachian English (AE) which distinguish it from informal standard English. Wolfram and Christian concluded that "There are intricate and detailed rules which account for the forms of AE—just as there are for any dialect or language.... The AE system can in no way be viewed in the incomplete mastery of the rules of standard English."⁸ And they refuted some common misconceptions about Appalachian speech: (1) that non-standard dialects are simply unsuccessful or uneducated attempts to master standard English, (2) that speakers of a non-mainstream English dialect speak an unsystematized and unpatterned form of English, (3) that children who speak a non-standard dialect of English learn their language at a slower rate than children who speak standard dialects, and (4) that speakers of a non-standard dialect are "handicapped cognitively by their language system."⁹

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⁷Walt Wolfram, "On the Linguistic Study of Appalachian Speech," Appalachian Journal, 5 (Autumn 1977), 94-96. A good bibliography spanning almost one hundred years of linguistic research follows this article.
⁹Wolfram and Christian, p. 131.
Unfortunately, these misconceptions about dialects not only have currency in English classrooms but are actually reinforced there. We make evaluative responses to a speaker's use of the language based on pre-conceived notions of what the usual behavior of his group is; judgements about his education or lack of it, his social position, and even his worth are often based on his use of the language. When teachers begin to recognize that "it is the social class structure, not the linguistic structure which determines which forms will be socially stigmatized and which are socially prestigious," then the way is open to a more accepting, non-judgemental view of dialect. As Reese observes

> social and aesthetic preference for any one dialect is an arbitrary judgement based on the prejudice of the hearer not upon any intrinsic linguistic superiority of one dialect over another. A person may or may not enjoy listening to one dialect, just as he may like or dislike cabbage; and although such attitudes reveal information concerning the hearer — his prejudice — they supply little regarding the speaker.

So long as teachers adopt a condescending attitude toward Appalachian dialect or attempt to eradicate it in the classroom, students will not feel free to express themselves.

Though it seems generally true that a person who feels his culture is inferior will also feel his dialect is inferior, this is not true of the mountaineer. He may recognize that his speech is not "good" English, but he does not see this as a reflection on his cultural heritage. Reese quotes such a mountain man who "did not consider his lack of formal education as a reflection on his intrinsic worth" as saying "Learning and

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10 Wolfram and Christian, p. 132.
11 Reese, p. 487.
good words may improve a man's knowings but it hain't nary made a body a better Christian person." When Appalachian children come into contact with the mainstream culture, as they do in public schools, the divergence in their dialect is noticeable to them and to their teachers and fellow students. However, Morton Leeds, a political scientist and expert on urban affairs, has noted that among migrants to urban areas the employment pattern and the food and clothing of the family change but that language patterns are slowest to undergo drastic changes. When changes do occur in dialect, they generally consist of adding new vocabulary to the rural base. Those children who feel much a part of their families develop two dialects; those who are ambitious and upwardly mobile spurn their dialect. Thus the folk speech of Appalachians can become another area of conflicting values.

There is some indication that Appalachian dialect is changing as are other patterns in American English. Certainly it is not simply the anachronism it was once thought to be. For, in addition to usage that can be thought of as antique, it also contains some characteristics that are new developments in the phonology and grammar of English. Various features change at different rates. Vocabulary is one element of the dialect that appears to be changing more rapidly than others. In a survey made recently in Western North Carolina, one researcher, comparing

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12 Reese, p. 488. Much more than an attitude toward dialect is suggested in this statement when one recalls the power of religion in mountain thinking and the conflict between religion and education.

current vocabulary items with those in an earlier Kurath survey, found that folk terms associated with the house, farming, wild life, and domestic animals have been displaced by more standard terms, probably because of the disappearance of a largely agrarian way of life. The surveyor concluded that "there has been a striking loss of terms where the everyday activities of the people no longer bring them into contact with a folk way of life" and that "many of the localisms of the colorful folk vocabulary of the southern mountaineer are dying in Western North Carolina"; and Wylene Dial asserts that Appalachian dialect is "a watered thing compared to what it was a generation ago."^15

Wolfram and Christian's study indicates that there are generational differences in the speech of Appalachia, but that one should not assume that the dialect will disappear. Certain features of the language combine to distinguish it from other varieties of English. It is still "alive and well."^16 Even with changes in vocabulary, the dialect still retains distinctive older grammatical and phonological features. One researcher has observed, however, that this is not culturally significant, for conservatism in language is also the hallmark of formal written English. Rather the rhetoric of Appalachian dialect, figures of speech, tropes, and idioms, is the "conscious manipulation of the language and therefore very reflective of the culture and the people who enjoy and use it."^17 Drawing upon everyday life and a large store of traditional ex-

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15 Dial, p. 90.
16 Wolfram and Christian, p. 162. For further discussion see Wolfram, p. 98.
17 Reese, p. 490.
pressions which he adapts to suit the occasion, the mountaineer expresses himself in a characteristically colorful fashion when he says, for example, to a disheveled friend "You look like you've been a'sortin' wild cats."

It is not the purpose of this writing to evaluate the degree to which speaking a minority dialect may interfere with students' reading and writing skills. Instead, two propositions are set forth. First, schools have not been notably successful in teaching standard spoken English though they have been trying for years. The most important single factor perhaps in determining whether or not a speaker of a non-mainstream dialect will learn standard English is "the desire on the part of the learner to become a member of the group represented by speakers of the new language variety." In a very real sense language is equated with group identity. Second, as teachers of English, we need to regard dialect diversity not as a problem which can be solved only by requiring all our students to speak in the same way but as a natural resource in the classroom. Here we have a living laboratory for examining the diversity that exists in language use which provides the opportunity to explore not only the variety of regional dialects that exist in a single class but the variations that occur when a speaker adapts his language to a given audience.

If we mean to use the folklore of a group as an approach to teaching English, we need first to appreciate and value the voice of the folk themselves. In this instance it is time to put into practice what we have subscribed to in the Students Right to Their Own Language statement.

18 Wolfram and Christian, p. 146.
of the NCTE made in 1974. From a folkloric point of view it is unconscionable that items collected from the oral tradition should have their grammar and syntax regularized and their vocabulary made tidy as they are collected and recorded. To do this is to make the proverb, tale, or ballad as false as Bowdler's version of Shakespeare. Without an acceptable climate for dialect in the classroom, examination of the folklore of a group degenerates into examining the oddity of that group. There are positive values in examining the variety in folk speech. Raven McDavid summarized them as follows:

What all studies of folk speech accomplish is to point out the richness and diversity of our heritage and to develop on American soil a fuller understanding of each group's cultural traditions--an understanding that may result in a more intelligent appreciation of the common tradition of all mankind and a deeper respect for the particular traditions of other nations.19

In adopting a positive rather than negative approach to the dialects students speak, teachers should begin by pointing out that every native speaker of English uses some dialect of English. The dialect that one naturally speaks is one he has learned from childhood. There is nothing intrinsically good or bad about any particular dialect; there are simply wide variations which reflect the cultural diversity of the American people.

The activities which follow are but a few suggested strategies for making students more aware of the vitality and beauty of their own linguistic heritage and appreciative of the heritage of others.

(1) Tapes and records of native speakers of a dialect are one way students can become attuned to varieties of spoken English. Students should also have typescripts of the text of the recorded or taped material, at least until they become accustomed to listening carefully.

(2) If tape recorders are available, students working in small groups can record and then transcribe brief informal conversations. This activity not only helps students attend more closely to the sounds of spoken language but also emphasizes the difference between spoken and written language and the difficulty of capturing dialect in writing.

(3) Students should keep a log of grammatical and vocabulary usage which seems to them unusual or particularly expressive. The speaker and the context of the expression should be noted.

(4) Inexperienced readers frequently have difficulty reading and interpreting poetry and fiction which contain dialect. Teachers can find selections from any number of regional writers to illustrate how dialect is used in imaginative writing. Reading brief sections orally will help students capture some of the sound of the language.

(5) Teachers and students will want to discuss together how successful a given writer has been in reproducing dialect. Mary Noailles Murfree, Jesse Stuart, and James Still, to name only three, are authors who have used Appalachian dialect extensively in writing. However, the purposes for which dialect is introduced in their writing and the degree to which the writer attempts to reproduce the spoken word in print are quite different in each case. Thus the presence of dialect in fiction raises interesting questions about how the writer views his characters and how he or she wants the reader to perceive them.
The collection and study of proverbs and proverbial expressions is a natural place for students to begin tapping their own knowledge of folklore. Nearly everyone has a store of these familiar sayings to draw upon. By calling forth these expressions the four identifying characteristics of an item of folklore can be demonstrated. Proverbs and proverbial expressions are traditional and formulaic. They exist in variant forms and their authorship is lost. In addition to being traditional in themselves, the context in which proverbs are used is also traditional.

To recognize a proverb or proverbial expression is a far easier task than to define one. In fact, Archer Taylor in his preeminent study pointed out that attempting to define a proverb is "too difficult to repay the undertaking" and that even if a definition were to capture all the elements of a proverb it still would not be helpful in identifying such expressions. He concluded that one must "be content with recognizing that a proverb is a saying current among the folk." Although a complete description of proverbs and proverbial expressions is probably impossible, each has a characteristic form. Both are "fixed forms," that is they circulate in the oral tradition with little or no change from one person to another, unlike jokes or stories which the individual alters from performance to performance or which are changed as they pass from one teller to another. The proverb, unlike the proverbial expression, is a complete statement, not a single word or phrase, which is

passed on in the oral tradition in a relatively fixed form and which expresses a general truth about or sums up a situation, often in metaphorical terms. A proverbial phrase, by contrast, is not a complete sentence but an incomplete grammatical element which can be varied in person and time to suit its use in conversation. The proverbial expression can be expanded by the speaker. Thus the "Whistling girls and crowing hens always come to a bad end" is a proverb; but to say of a loquacious woman that "her tongue wags at both ends and is hinged in the middle" is a proverbial expression. Traditional similes using like, as, or so...that are proverbial comparisons which may vary from region to region though folk speakers in a given folk group will use, recognize, and perhaps expand on a particular form, for example "as ugly as (homemade) sin," "as poor as Job (Job's turkey)," "as busy as a bee (in a tar bucket)," "as wiggly as worms (in hot ashes)," or "angry as a bear (with a sore paw)." Both proverbs and proverbial expressions are commonplace in conversation; however, proverbs possess "a moral weight of their own and an argument that is virtually self-sufficient" while proverbial expressions, perhaps the most familiar elements in folk speech, "exist for no other reason than to decorate speech."²¹

To attempt to uncover the origins of most proverbs is a well nigh impossible task, for their history is ancient and way leads upon way as one traces it. Furthermore, the search for origins is probably too tedious and demanding of scholarship to interest most high school students. ²¹

It is probably sufficient to say that proverbs are drawn from a variety of sources linked to the life of common man: from rural life, the round of household chores and observations of nature; from fables and narratives; and from the Bible. Most proverbs sum up or comment upon a situation in an impersonal, witty, and frequently metaphorical way, though weather proverbs and those dealing with medical cures may rest on superstition and are not metaphorical.

More applicable to English classes than the origin of proverbs is an analysis of their structure. The vocabulary of proverbs, coming as it does from daily life, is unexceptional. Some proverbs may contain unusual or archaic words, but most of the diction is limited to "the simplest and most obvious materials." Students could begin by simply calling upon their own resources to recall as many proverbs as they can in a given period of time. When the proverbs are listed, students would be asked to focus not upon the content of the proverbs but on their structure. One way that proverbs are alike structurally is that each consists of a subject and some comment on it, so that a proverb may be represented as an equation, A = B: "Haste makes waste," "There's no fool like an old fool," "Misery loves company." Closer analysis of the structure of proverbs reveals that this two-part composition is a four-stress line conforming to a line of folk verse broken by a caesura. Proverbs embody those characteristics of poetry which often elude students' comm-

22Taylor, 135.
24Abrahams, p. 121.
prehension: assonance, alliteration, internal rime, metaphor, parallelism, balance, and contrast. For example, consider the structure of these proverbs: "A new broom sweeps clean," "Red sky at night, sailor's delight; red sky at morning, sailors take warning," "Penny wise, pound foolish," "Marry in haste, repent at leisure." These poetic devices, so frequently labelled "literary," are in fact the very stuff of folk sayings, the qualities that fix proverbs in their form and in our minds. Though the terminology used to denote them may be formidable, the speech patterns themselves are as familiar as the back of our hand.

An even more difficult concept for students to grasp is that of metaphor when they encounter it in poetry. Still most of the proverbs we know, with the exception of those that have empirical uses like the weather proverbs above, are metaphorical. In fact, it is this out-of-context quality of metaphor, the abrupt shift in discourse which distinguishes the proverb from the conversation surrounding it. Consider this conversation, for example:

Wife: What? You've finished raking the leaves already?
Husband: Well, a short horse is soon curried.

Or a mother to a daughter hovering expectantly about the telephone: "A watched pot never boils."

In the context of the situation all the participants understand that the metaphorical horse and pot tell a condensed story so well known that it needs no further elaboration.

Proverbs and proverbial expressions are so much a part of our common language that we use and understand them without thinking of their vividness, economy, and elegance. Nor do we consider how frequently we
make use of them in our oral behavior. Proverbs are part of our language—because they work. "In early times," Archer Taylor says, "proverbs were collected for their didactic value, as rules and guides for life." Even today among unsophisticated people proverbs are regarded as the wisdom of accumulated experience, and in some societies they function as an important element in legal proceedings. For the most part, however, in our society, proverbs serve the function of identifying a recurring situation in human life, naming it, and commenting upon it, often suggesting the solution to the dilemma faced. Though proverbs offer traditional advice, they do so in witty, metaphorical or abstract, and impersonal terms. It is this tone in proverbs which makes the suggested course of action palatable to the person to whom it is offered. For example, "The pot called the kettle black" or "People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones" suggests that one should assess his own deficiencies before criticizing another, but both sayings lift what might otherwise have seemed preachy advice to the impersonal level. Even proverbs that contain you are objective in implying a general application: "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." Abrahams points out that proverbs work because they seem to embody the wisdom of the past and because they make problems less personal by suggesting that situations like this have arisen before.

The break in discourse and their fixed form which characterize proverbs in the oral tradition enable the writer to "detach" them from an

26 Abrahams, p. 122.
oral social situation and use them in different ways by relocating them in a literary context. In such a text proverbs serve a dual function. Not only do they serve the writer's purpose, they also recall to the reader the kind of social situation where the proverb was used. One obvious use of proverbs in literature is, of course, in delineating character. Depending upon the author's purpose, proverbs placed in the mouths of characters may reveal them to be sages, wise fools, or ridiculous poseurs delivering themselves of irrelevant, contradictory platitudes. Other writers employ proverbs as a means of conveying the value and flavor of a particular culture or as a device for authorial intrusion. Whatever the writer's purpose may be, proverbs nonetheless remind the reader of the relationship between oral and written disclosure, "for they both dramatize the freedom of the written word from the situational constraints of discourse and, at the same time, remind us that texts are not so autonomous and self-contained after all." 27

James Still uses folk speech and proverbial expressions to delineate character and to state two conflicting values that run like contrasting threads through his novel River of Earth. 28 On one hand stand the values of the mother's family who cling to and live close to the land; on the other, the father's urge to be "forever moving, abiding nowhere long." Of course, the father is the master in his house, so the family is constantly moving from one coal camp to another as he seeks work. In

the closing episode of the novel the two attitudes clash for the last
time in a dialogue between the mother's brother, Uncle Jolly (surely one
of the most appealing figures in Appalachian fiction), and Brack Baldridge,
the father who is about to transplant his family once again.

"Never I'd be a raggedy-rump miner," Uncle Jolly chides.

"Take a hook to your own weeds," Brack replies, by way of reminding
Jolly that he has been something of a rambler and has not married and
settled down himself.

But Jolly is quite unruffled. He has chosen a pretty girl and sent
her word that he is coming with a preacher and a license to marry her.
Then they will live on the home place. Brack refuses the offer to live
on the farm with Jolly and his bride saying he was "born to dig coal."

Concerned for his sister and her children, Jolly warns that there
is only a slight chance of Brack's getting work even when he does move.
But Brack replies that nothing is sure in "this day and time" and con­
ccludes, "We'll make the bung fit the barrel."

The proverbial expression indicating Brack's determination to
carry out his plan and to "make do" somehow, even though it will be a
hardship for his family, effectively ends the discussion between the two
men. There is an unarguable finality in Brack's statement just as there
would be if the conversation had taken place in an actual social situation.
Jolly can only observe sadly, "Be-grabs if you folks h'aint a pack o'
Walking John Gays,²⁹ allus a-going. Don't warm one spot of ground for

²⁹Walking John Gay is a legendary figure who wandered about from
place to place never having land or possessions.
Like other genres of oral folklore, proverbs and proverbial expressions are traditional, alive in the oral tradition, of anonymous authorship, and, to a limited degree, exist in variant forms. However, perhaps more than other forms, proverbs are universal in their themes. The similarity of human concerns voiced in proverbs suggests recurrent social dilemmas common to all. It cannot be said, therefore, that collections of proverbs from a particular folk group mirror and reveal its peculiar concerns. Rather, the proverb repays study for another reason, as Seitel suggests:

The simple, yet subtle and complex, nature of proverb use makes its study an important step in understanding the general problem of the social uses of metaphor. To a person interested in the social uses that literature of all kinds may serve, the investigation can offer significant insight. 30

Because of the metaphorical quality of proverbs and, even more, because they are so widely recognized and used, they suggest a variety of activities for students. Teachers might consider the following suggestions—and add others of their own.

(1) After a discussion of the nature of proverbs and proverbial expressions, write as many proverbs as possible in a given time.

(2) Keep a log of the proverbs and proverbial expressions heard in conversation or on television or radio over a few day's time.

(3) Choose a proverb, and then create a social context in which it might be used. Present these dramatizations in class.

(4) Write a dialogue consisting largely of proverbs in which participants try to top each other by voicing a more relevant or colorful proverb; or construct an argument consisting of contradictory proverbs.

(5) Write a narrative that explains the origin of a proverb and conclude with that proverb. What situation, for example, might have led to the saying "You can't teach an old dog new tricks"?

(6) Compose an original proverb observing the structural and metaphorical characteristics of the genre, an exercise more difficult than it sounds.

(7) Identify proverbs and proverbial expressions in a piece of imaginative literature and interpret their use.

Family Folklore

The final, and most personal way, in which students and teachers can begin to recognize and appreciate their individual reservoirs of folklore is to survey the wealth of folklore which exists in their own families. There will be persons, of course, for whom the collection of lore from their own family may be too difficult or painful to be practicable; for those few, alternate sources, perhaps an older friend, a fellow teacher, or an older person in the community, can serve. Most students, once they understand what kinds of material constitute folklore, know the pertinent questions to ask, and have some format for recording their findings, really enjoy exploring their family history and traditions. The collection of family lore, though it may not be extensive, is valuable in the classroom because it includes almost every genre of folklore, verbal, non-verbal, and material. Teachers might well suggest that verbal
folklore, particularly family stories, are sought though certainly family ways of celebrating holidays, recipes, and crafts should not be overlooked. A purist might object that student collections of this sort constitute mere amateur dabbling in an area best left to the professional. However, the purpose here is not to make an exhaustive or scholarly collection but to give students an opportunity to explore their own heritage. In addition, the chance that a professional folklorist would stumble upon an individual student's family as informants seems remote.

There has been since the close of the turbulent late 1960's an awakened interest in the history and traditions of families as well as ethnic groups, and the family is, after all, the first folk group to which most of us belong, an extremely powerful one. It is there, as Karen Baldwin says in her study "Down on Bugger Run: Family Groups and the Social Base of Folklore," that our "folkloric socialization" first takes place, where family members acquire different genres of folklore and learn how to perform the skills that they will later carry into relationships with larger groups.\(^{31}\) Broadly interpreted family lore slices across all genres of folklore and may include items as diverse as making biscuits the way grandmother did without a recipe or telling bedtime stories. Baldwin set out to describe "the patterns of folkloric exchange among persons who recognize themselves as a group and call that group 'family'."\(^{32}\) She has included a great variety of folklore including prose narrative,


\(^{32}\) Baldwin, p. 40.
oral geneologies, family legends, descriptions of family reunions, and celebrations. Like Baldwin's study, the folklore gathered during the Festivals of American Folklife by The Family Folklore Program of the Smithsonian Institute covers a broad range of material; that, in fact, was the intent of the collectors when they simply asked informants who dropped by to "tell us your stories." What resulted from this collection is a mixture of personal reminiscences, family expressions and traditions, and even family pictures.\(^{33}\)

Mody Boatright proposes a narrower view of family lore which he terms "family saga." His concern is not with folklore that is passed on as folklore in families, or with the nonverbal items of folklore, but with "a lore that clusters around families, or often the patriarchs and matriarchs of families, which is preserved and modified by oral tradition, and which is believed to be true."\(^{34}\) This may be the most useful definition to guide student collectors of their own families.

The collector can not expect to find a coherent history of his family in the collection of family narratives. Rather the stories will cluster about periods of history that were particularly significant for the family or about colorful characters in the family group. Neither can he expect that the same incident will be retold in the same way with identical details and emphasis by different narrators in the family. For example, in my family there is a narrative about an eight-year-old boy,

\(^{33}\)Family Folklore, Collected by The Family Folklore Program of the Festival of American Folklife (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1976).

\(^{34}\)Mody Boatright, "The Family Saga as a Form of Folklore," Mody Boatright, Folklorist: A Collection of Essays, Ernest Speck, ed. (Austin:
who grew up to be the family patriarch, hiding beneath the puncheon floor of the cabin to escape from marauding Indians. Because he was "too big to carry and too small to walk fast," he had been hidden by the rest of the family before they fled to a nearby farm. My grandfather told this story with great pride in the courage and composure of the boy; my mother, not a great admirer of what her father's people regarded as virtues, always concluded her telling of this story with "Now, what kind of people would go off like that and leave a little child?"

Boatright points out that narratives recount "an event in the family saga [that] has a relationship to a social context and reflects a social value." That is, a particular story may not be historically true, but it does reflect the way a family member is believed to have acted in a historical situation. My grandmother used to tell me the story of her mother hanging out the Union flag in defiance of Morgan's raiders on their way past her settlement to burn the nearby oil fields during the Civil War. There is a bit too much of Barbara Frietchie in this story for it to be credible to me now. Still my grandmother certainly told it to me "for true," and it doubtless reflects the way a woman of strong Union conviction should have reacted in a border state during the Civil War. In short, the incident relates "the pattern of conduct people expect of their ancestors" in an historical context.

35Boatright, p. 125.
36Boatright, p. 127.
Family narratives often include pioneer stories of this sort—tales of encounters with Indians and wild animals and hunting stories. There are stories, too, of farthest-back ancestors and the founding of the family in a new land; more recent stories of border crossings and narrow escapes from imprisonment by communist governments; and stories of how family fortunes were won or, more likely, lost. In some family stories the patriarch is something of a renegade. A student collector gave the following account of the beginning of her family.

The Pickrell Family

OUR BEGINNING:
All of my grandparents are dead, but the story has come down through the years that our great-great grandfather stole a horse and killed a man. He lived in Georgia and had to go into the wilderness of what we now know as Alabama. He changed his name from Pritchitt to Pickrell and built a new life for himself. He married an Indian girl of the Cherokee nation, and had several children. After several years word reached him that he could return to his family home. I have never heard our family history from then to modern times. 37

Somehow like the festival-goers that shared their stories with the folklorists from the Smithsonian, sometimes we would like to believe that our ancestors were "pirates" though we know they were decent, industrious people.

Family narratives are replete with stories and anecdotes of strong-minded and eccentric ancestors who often reflect family characteristics and crochets: frugality, independence, stubbornness. One student recalled this story of his grandparents, two contrary old people.

37 Brenda Casto, Student Collection, Capital University, Interim, 1976, n.p.n.
Stubborn Grandparents

Three and a half days before New Year's Day, my grandfather swore that he would not live on York County, S.C. [South Carolina] ground another day in a new year, so it was settled that he and grandmother would move on New Year's Day, into a house in King's Mountain, N.C. [North Carolina]. Settled with the exception [of] Grandmother that is. She never said a word about not wanting to move until Grandfather and some of my relatives started packing up the breakables and moving furniture. Grandmother was sickly in those days and she couldn't get around so well, but nonetheless she managed to unpack whatever they packed up. She undid the strings on boxes when the relatives were busy elsewhere or at home and grandfather was at the new house. When my grandfather asked her why she unpacked the glassware and china, and all the mantelpiece things she tearfully told him "I love this old house and I will not leave it to rot. I will stay in this house until I meet my maker."

Grandfather was speechless and an aunt asked her why she hadn't spoken of this before. Grandmother answered simply "You didn't ask."

My grandfather lived right on the line between N.C and S.C. but paid state taxes only in S.C. The new house site was in N.C. 2 1/4 miles down the interstate. The next day my dad was out in the yard under his old Ford two-door when he felt the ground rumble underneath him. Thinking it was a slight earthquake, he climbed up and saw a short distance down the road large trucks and tractors pulling larger machinery loaded down with heavy chains and hooks. Grandfather pulled into the wide yard and within an hour and a half men placed jacks under the little house and moved it to where it is now, 2 1/4 miles up the interstate.

My father explained to me that my grandmother really did intend to stay in that house until she met her maker, because through all the preparations and noise, the actual moving of the house 2 1/4 miles, she did not move from her bed. She just lay there, reading her bible and praying. My father said of his father that he never once could say that his old father didn't know how to compromise. 38

Besides their connection with historical events, family incidents are "memorialized in stories" because they represent extraordinary occur-

38 Frankie Starr, Student Collection, Capital University, Interim, 1976, n.p.n.
rences in people's lives; dramatic incidents, especially those involving a conflict and resolution, are subjects for re-telling. Finally, incidents that mark turning points in the life of family members, the rites of passage, and family journeys make good stories. 39

Stories that become part of a family's oral tradition and remain alive from generation to generation must continue to serve some function for the group. To discuss all the functions such stories serve requires far more time than can be devoted to them here. Briefly, however, the motivation for telling the story may vary from one social context to another, and stories may be didactic and cautionary or simply a means of socializing. The re-telling of an incident may be triggered by a family possession or picture. Whatever other function the stories serve, they are retained because they are emotionally satisfying to the teller and the audience. They serve to identify and validate the family as a recognizable group because they seem to say "This is the kind of people we are and this is what we stand for." Family folklore gives individuals a frame upon which to organize and evaluate experience. If the incidents of a person's life were simply enumerated, one would have a relatively meaningless list of events. The value of family folklore is that it orders and assesses those incidents.

The forms of folklore represent one of the important ways we give life meaning beyond the immediate present.... In our minds, we order our lives into eras, organize and dramatize incidents within them. Each form represents a triumph of our culture in supplying us with a way of organizing experience so that it can be communicated to others and to ourselves over time. 40

39 Family Folklore, p. 9.
40 Family Folklore, p. 8.
There is a wealth of family folklore waiting to be collected and eager informants ready to relate it. Boatright has observed that "like their elders [students] are searching for a past" and that they "get keen emotional satisfaction in questioning elderly friends and relatives and writing their family lore." ⁴¹ Certainly I have found students enthusiastic about family folklore projects whenever they have been assigned in class. One student seems to have summed up the feeling of the others who explored their family heritage when she wrote: "It has made me grow as an individual being, find more about where my family, values, customs, [and] beliefs originated.... Many things I took for granted before I now treasure and respect."

Obviously one useful purpose the collection of family lore has in English classes is to provide a basis for writing. The success of Foxfire and other student publications indicates that students are highly motivated to research and write about their own cultural backgrounds. To render as authentic an account as possible, students may wish to use a tape recorder if it is available and transcribe the material. In any case, students should be encouraged to capture the family story as nearly as possible as the teller has related it. Skills in asking the right questions and in interviewing techniques can be emphasized too. The guide published by the Smithsonian, "Suggestions for Interviewing Your Own Family" should be helpful to both students and teachers. ⁴²

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⁴¹ Boatright, p. 144.
⁴² Family Folklore: Interviewing Guide and Questionnaire, Folklife Program, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.
narratives are collected, students should also record the informant from whom they are collected, some information (age, relationship to collector, etc.) about him or her, and the social setting in which the folklore event occurred. It is helpful to record family narratives or other forms individually on separate sheets of paper or large index cards. Then they can be analyzed and classified according to their contents. All earliest ancestors, frontier, or Depression stories might be grouped together, or, if not a chronological arrangement, then the theme of the narrative might provide topics: eccentric relatives, family journeys, or fortunes, for example.

When students and teachers begin to gather and examine family folklore, they come to realize how universal the instinct is to tell and re-tell stories. But in that great sea of stories, some of them mere fragments, that washes about us there are common themes and motifs that appear again and again in folklore and in written literature. The stubborn old grandparents, for instance, find their equal in the ballad "Get Up and Bar the Door" (Child 275) and in Leonard Roberts' story "Rat or Mouse?" of an old couple "so contrary they can't stand themselves sometimes."

The collection of family folklore can be related to literary texts in a variety of ways. Writers frequently use material from the oral tradition as a basis for their writing. It is rather surprising to discover how often stories of encounters with Indians recur in the family lore of

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Appalachian students. In some cases the family narratives are concerned
with forebears carried into captivity by Indians or with Indian attacks
on white settlers. However, all these stories are not relentlessly hos­
tile, for stories of friendly Indians and of the medicinal lore learned
from them also survive. The narratives of the Hammons family, for ex­
ample, give accounts of an old Indian warning the family of a planned
Indian raid and of Indians teaching a white child to swim. Often family
folklore recounts an Indian ancestor, frequently a great-great-grandmother.

If one considers only the parallels between narratives in the oral
tradition which relate Indian captivities and the treatment of the same
theme in written literature, there is a wealth of fiction there. In both
fiction and in the oral tradition the stories often follow a departure
and return pattern, not always with a happy ending. One such family
story tells of a little girl who was captured by the Shawnees near Lowell,
West Virginia, and carried into the Indian country of Kentucky. Several
years passed before her family learned that she was alive and could ran­
som her back. By that time, she had become a young woman and thought of
herself as an Indian. Though she returned, she was never completely
happy. Sometimes she was seized by fits of restlessness when she would
mount a horse and, clinging to its mane, race wildly up and down the
Greenbrier River, making the hills echo with Indian shouts. Eventually

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45 This family story was narrated by Miss Ella Holroyd, a ninety­
year-old white lady, and taped in August 1978 at her home in Athens,
West Virginia.
she married, raised a family, and lived to be an old woman, but she never forgot her Indian past. On her death bed, so the family story goes, she sat bolt upright, gave the Shawnee war whoop—and fell back dead.

Two novels by Conrad Richter are based on the theme of Indian captivities and their effects on the protagonists of the novels. In *A Light in the Forest* the ransomed captive, True Son, finds only tragedy in his return to his white family, and in *A Country of Strangers* the heroine experiences a series of cultural changes after her capture. Stories of the captivity and return of adults, particularly women, often end on a happier note. There are many such stories in the oral tradition; Phoebe Cunningham, a pioneer woman in West Virginia, and Jenny Wiley from Kentucky are the heroines of two such accounts. Leonard Roberts has included two stories of successful escapes from Indians in *Sang Branch Settlers*. The Jenny Wiley story is apparently the basis for a short story by Caroline Gordon, "The Captive." To create the impact of verisimilitude that the narrative would have when it is told in an oral situation Gordon uses the point of view of a first person narrator in her fictional account.

Family stories often cluster about those periods in the history of the family when it was threatened or when momentous changes were necessary. The stories which tell of the migration of the family from one home to another and the adjustments that were required by such moves constitute another category of family stories. Some such stories may tell

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of the family's struggle to establish itself in the frontier wilderness, but there are more recent stories as well of the movement of the family from the mountains to the city. Just as the oral tradition memorializes these changes, so they find their way into literature. Perhaps the best known of these stories is Harriet Arnow's novel *The Dollmaker*, the narrative of the struggle of a Kentucky mountain family to adjust to life in a housing project in Detroit. Another novel on the same theme, better suited to younger readers, is *The Mimosa Tree* by Vera and Bill Cleaver, the narrative of a mountain family's migration to Chicago.

The importance of kinship in Appalachian culture suggests a thematic approach using family folklore as a prelude to literature. Of course, Jesse Stuart's *W-Hollow* stories reflect the importance of the extended family and they are certainly well worth reading. Less well known are novels like *The Tall Woman* by Wilma Dykeman set in western North Carolina during the Civil War and *The Hawk's Done Gone*, a collection of stories bound together by the complex relation of kinship, by Mildred Haun. James Still's *River of Earth* is the story of an eastern Kentucky family for whom the bonds of kinship are both a comfort and a trial. In either case they are never denied, though they may be circumvented. Early in the novel the mother knowing her husband will never turn out his worthless, sneering cousins, burns down the house and moves into the smoke house, so there is simply no room to board kinfolks any more. Still's novels and short stories, though set against the grim backdrop of hard times in the coal mining regions of Appalachia, stand apart from other works of the same genre by conveying much of the joy, merriment, and good-natured teasing that is characteristic in mountain family life.
Folk Narrative: Myth, Legend, and Folktales

The term legend, like myth, is frequently misused and misunderstood in common parlance; both terms are employed as euphemisms for falsehood or a popular misconception. Such a connotation is in opposition to the folklorist's definition, for one of the characteristics of both legend and myth is that the narratives are believed, to some degree at least, by the teller and the audience and are told for true. Many family narratives, like the Indian captivity story cited earlier in this chapter, are in folkoric terms family legends. The folktale, on the other hand, is told to entertain and does not purport to be a true account of an event. It is useful to distinguish between myth, legend, and folktales simply to have a means for examining them more critically although in doing so one must remember that the folk themselves do not make these distinctions. The narratives rather compose a portion of the traditional lore that circulates in the oral tradition among a folk group, who do not label them in any way. Linda Dégh has observed that in actual performance in the folk group there is a blurring of the distinctions between the genres. The same narrative may be classified as a folktale, a legend, or an anecdote depending on its form, function, or meaning in a group.47

Myths, like legends, involve belief on the part of the teller, but myths are regarded as sacred narratives, while legends may be either secular or sacred. Myths concern themselves with the activities of gods

and demigods and the beginning of the world; legends relate the activities of human beings though they may contain supernatural events. The setting of myth is remote in place and time; legend is set in the real world in a specific location. The incidents recounted in myth are assumed to have taken place in a distant time, before the world as man now knows it; legend takes place within man's historical concept of time. In a real sense, because myth seeks to answer those universal questions which man has always asked about the beginning of the world and the meaning of his life and because the mythic answers are symbolic and may be interpreted in countless ways, one might say with Levi-Strauss that myth is "timely and timeless." However, it is useful to apply Alan Dundes' more limited analogy of an hourglass as a means of understanding time in myth, legend, and the folktale. Mythic time, now ended, is represented by the lower half of the hourglass open at the bottom and reaching back to man's earliest imaginings. Time in legend, the upper half of the hourglass, begins with man's history but is open into the present. Dundes adds that "the action or plot of a legend is not completed in the narrative, and in fact the action continues into the present as even into the future." Thus the treasure that was lost in the past continues to be sought in the present. In contrast, folktales are set in a fantastic realm, removed from the real world of time and place.

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Even though most folklorists would agree on the major components of the definition of legend, the classification of legends in an orderly fashion, as folktales have been classified for example, has been the despair of folklorists. Wayland Hand has discussed the problems in compiling an index for American folk legends. First, there is the complex interweaving of folk belief and custom with legend. Then, legends include a great variety of narratives: witch and devil tales; ghost stories, religious lore, treasure legends, and narratives about unusual characters and historical events. Finally, the fragmentary nature of many legends makes it difficult to include them in an index. Dundes suggests that unlike myths and folktales which are limited in number there are probably countless numbers of legends; moreover, they have the quality of being constantly re-created and re-formed. Richard Dorson simply classifies legends as narratives about places, events, or persons purported to be true.

In spite of the difficulty of classifying legends, they remain for folklorists one of the most fascinating forms of folklore because of their fragmentary nature, their variant forms, their pervasiveness in folk groups, and their ability to reveal the values of a culture. Only rarely can one expect to collect a legend in a complete, polished form from a single narrator. In fact, Dorson states, "A local legend... can

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50 Dundes, p. 25.
never be accepted in one text, for the proof is on the legend collector
that it pervades the social group." Generally, members of the group
will know only portions of the legend. Dégh explains this fragmentary
quality of the legend by noting that the setting in which legends are
normally related is "conversational", with a group sitting about discuss­ing ordinary matters. "Sometimes the community pieces the story together
and there is no dividing line between the audience and teller. They make
no effort to elaborate and polish the story. In many instances, the more
factual the legend is, the more communal and less polished is the tell­ing." Another factor which contributes to the fragmentary quality of
legends is that their content is well known in the community in which
they are told. It is unnecessary to recount the entire narrative for a
group already familiar with it. Therefore, providing an allusion, a bit
of the pattern, is all that is necessary.

Folklorists are in disagreement as to whether or not legends can
be said to have a structure as folktales do. Max Lüthi quotes Leopold
Schmidt as saying there is no "generic style in legends; in the legend,
everything is content." But Lüthi himself disagrees, pointing out that
this assertion does not distinguish between legend and folk belief. Dégh
believes that legend, even though it is fragmentary, has a "well recog­

52 Dorson, p. 84.
54 Dégh, p. 74.
nizable structure" consisting of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The opening of the legend contains specific references to time, place, and characters to emphasize the credibility of the narrative. These concrete details are one way, in fact, a legend differs from a folk-tale. Throughout the narration of the legend the teller "does everything possible to convince the audience of his trustworthiness." The legend closes with the repetition of the warning it sets out to illustrate.

One sort of legend that is particularly revealing of the culture that produces it is the belief legend. Alan Dundes, noting the relationship between superstition and folktales, applied Vladimir Propp's terminology to the structure of North American Indian folktales, a practice which can be extended to many belief legends as well. It is especially useful, for it provides a means for analyzing legends. Dundes points out that there is a close relationship between superstition and American Indian folktales. Superstition presumes a violation followed by a consequence. If someone gives you flowers for planting and you thank them for the flowers (cause condition) the flowers will die (consequence).

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56 Kenneth Clarke disagrees with this notion saying, "The authentic folk legend is fragmented, anecdotal. The usual domestication treatment is Procrustean--forcing it into some familiar literary guise to give it form (beginning, middle, end), continuity (missing elements supplied and transitions invented), and theme (moral or topical relevance according to the temper of the times)." Uncle Bud Long: The Birth of a Kentucky Folk Legend (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1973), p. 4.

57 Degh, "Folk Narrative," p. 75.


is a common superstition. The consequence can be avoided by simply not thanking the donor, and at the same time explaining the reason. If the person supports this belief by citing a first- or second-hand account of an incident that affirms his belief, that account is a memorate. Dundes adds that the interdiction-consequence pattern is also apparent in other genres of folklore; in games, for example, when a player breaks a rule, he must pay a penalty.

Patrick Mullen has applied Dundes' structural pattern to the belief legends of Gulf Coast fishermen, and his study provides a means of approaching belief legends from other cultures as well. At the center of many legends lies a folk belief which may be either a generalized belief or a specific superstition. If a superstition is the basis of the legend, then the structure of the legend consists of an implied interdiction, followed by violation of that interdiction, a consequence, and an attempted escape. This legend structure corresponds to the Cause condition and Result pattern of the superstition at the core of the narrative. Mullen explains that

The underlying pattern is the same in superstition and narrative; in the narrative the condition is present because the interdiction is violated, and the consequence element of the legend is the same as the Result element of the superstition. Structurally, the legend is dependent on the superstition; without the Cause-Result superstition there would be no interdiction-violation-consequence pattern.

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60 Dundes, "Structural Typology," p. 214
62 Mullen, pp. 412-413.
Mullen agrees with Dégh that the narrator of a belief legend strives to make the narrative credible, to give it a ring of authenticity. Stylistically the narrator uses concrete details citing specific persons, places, and events. He suggests that the consequence of violating the interdiction is a serious one. He uses the past tense to supply a "historical context" thus creating "a sense of the distant past." Each of these devices enhances the believability of the narrative, an essential quality if the legend is to validate and enforce the norms of the group where it is told.

The degree to which the teller or his audience believes the legend to be a factual account of an event is difficult to assess and must be judged not by asking direct questions but by studying the performance of the teller himself. Dégh discounts conscious belief as the most important element in the creation of legends saying that setting and style rather than degree of belief of the teller make the legend a realistic genre. She adds that "As a genre of folk literature, the legend focuses on its aim: the communication of an open or hidden message. All its roughness, seeming poor composition, the mixing of story motifs and everyday facts, further the acceptance of this message."63 But what is this message and what function does the legend serve in a folk group? "The reason for telling a legend," Dégh states, "is basically not to entertain but to educate people, to inform them about an important fact, to arm them against danger within their own cultural environment."64 In fact,

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63 Dégh, "Folk Belief," p. 67.
64 Dégh, "Folk Narrative," p. 73.
one of the major functions legend serves in a folk group is a cautionary one. The baby-sitter horror stories that circulate among young teen-age girls who are just beginning to sit with younger children in the evening illustrate that sort of legend. Appalachian folklore abounds with legends, particularly ghost stories, that have this cautionary tone. One legend which seems widespread and exists in variant forms is "The Crying Stair Well," collected by Richard Dorson in Buying the Wind. The narrator begins by describing the setting of the legend, an old-fashioned log cabin on the Cumberland Ridge in Kentucky forty or fifty years before. The story is told as a true experience which happened to the step-mother of the narrator, who was a girl of seventeen at that time. Shortly after moving into the house, the family is disturbed by the sound of "babies a-crying all over the house." Finally after a revelation in a dream, the girl breaks the lock on the woodbox in the stairwell and finds "the skeletons of five little babies." The narrator concludes "And they found out, two (or) three days later the neighbors told them, that the woman that lived in that house --a young girl--killed herself, and the parents moved away; and later the father hung himself." The narrator affirms her belief and urges belief on her listener by interjecting "And this is supposed to really happened..." and "See what I mean, that wasn't

superstition, that really happened."

Because the listener does not understand the implications of the legend, the informant interprets it for her, something that would not have been necessary in the culture in which the informant learned it, for everyone in the tradition would have understood the implication of the story. Degh points out that "The story does not have to be recited in full from beginning to end; for its components are traditionally known in the given community. Hence the fragmentary and unfinished form of the legend narrative." 66 The girl had borne five babies, drowned them in the rain barrel, and hidden their bodies in the wood box in the stairwell. The narrator concludes: "She drowned them 'cause she wasn't married; you don't know what tradition is in Kentucky, they pretty near hang 'em for havin' a baby and not being married down there."

When one applies the Interdiction-Violation-Consequence pattern to this belief legend, one sees that in the usual telling of the legend the interdiction would have been an implied one against premarital sex, a traditional value for women in Appalachian culture. There may even be a suggestion of incest here, but that is a taboo too powerful for the narrator even to remark on it. The young girl violates the interdictions against both premarital sex and murder. The consequence is that she dies a suicide; but the consequence does not end with her death, for the parents move away and eventually the father too kills himself. In this legend no one escapes the consequences of violating the interdictions against premarital sex and murder.

"The Crying Stair Well" serves the very educational purpose Dégh has cited:

The legend explains an extraordinary phenomenon or a memorable event, it communicates traditional learning and knowledge to the young and uninitiated, it advises people how to act in critical situations and warns them against doing the wrong thing. This educational essence is dramatized by an example that is the narrative content of the legend. 67

Legends, then, whether they tell of places, persons, or events, are rooted in the real world as man knows it. They seek to provide answers to real problems that human beings must solve in the crises of everyday life. Though often veiled with the mystery of the supernatural in belief legends, at the heart of legend is an attempt "to answer an unuttered question about man's microcosmos." 68 Legends that recount how a town was named or those about a legendary local hero may be optimistic, but legends that have a folk belief at their center are essentially tragic.

The powerful content of legend, so pervasive in the oral tradition, naturally finds its way into written literature. Students will find a bridge between belief legends and literature in structure and content. One might begin to study the structures of both by collecting legends current in a class and analyzing their structure. Contemporary legends seem to be created by a communal process by groups to suit specific situations. Dégh suggests that American legends are remarkable in being the province of the young, initiation legends, not narratives of older people.

A good number of American belief legends have been developed, maintained, and used for special purposes in the life of young

68 Dégh, "Folk Narrative," p. 74.
people between junior high school and college age. The period of coming of age, the passage from childhood to adulthood, the crises of sexual maturation generate tensions and conflicts that convert supernatural and horror stories into suitable outlets. 69

Students will be familiar with legends like "The Hook," which recounts the horror of what happens to a young couple who park in a remote place, or stories of babysitters who go to sit at the home of a family they don't know. In class discussion this sort of legend will probably be recreated by the communal process already suggested. When students have an opportunity to survey and analyze the legends they know, they then can apply this same process to the fiction they read. Short stories of ghosts, witches, and demons are but one area to which this analysis can be applied.

A short story which illustrates legend-become-literature is "The Boarded Window" by Ambrose Bierce.70 The narrative is set in 1830 in the wilderness "only a few miles from what is now the great city of Cincinnati." The major character—an old man, Murlock—lives as a recluse in a cabin with only one door and a boarded window he had built long before. After Murlock's death the cabin is believed haunted, and it becomes a part of the folk tradition of young people to approach the house stealthily and throw rocks at it.

The remainder of the story, learned by the narrator from his grandfather, is an account of the reason the house is haunted. One day return-

69Degh, "Folk Belief," pp. 63-64.
ing from hunting, Murlock, then a young husband, finds his wife deathly ill. In spite of his best care, three days later the wife dies, and Murlock, in shock, prepares the body as best he can for burial, a task about which he knows little. While sitting up with the body, he hears an "unearthly cry" in the forest surrounding the cabin. Still unable to comprehend his wife's death, Murlock falls into a stuporous sleep to be awakened by the sound of a barefoot step. There is a wild scuffle in the dark. Murlock fires his rifle toward the noise and in the sudden light from the discharge, he sees a panther dragging the dead body through the window. Once again he falls unconscious. But later, in the morning light, he sees his wife's body in disarray before the window, hands clenched and "between the teeth was a fragment of the animal's ear."

Stylistically the correspondence between legend and this short story is particularly striking. The story is set in the distant past, in a specific place and concerns a specific individual. The narrator himself has seen the cabin. All these elements add credibility to the short story in the same way specific details authenticate legends. The attribution of the explanation of the haunted house to the narrator's grandfather further documents the tale. Mody Boatright observed that confrontations between forebears and wild animals were a frequent element in family sagas, and oddly enough those animals were often panthers. The start-

71 For other panther stories see Leonard Roberts, "The Last Chase," in South from Hell-fer-Sartin, pp. 175-176 and Roberts' "Leaping Panther," in Sang Branch Settlers, pp. 291-292. The panther's terrifying cry, often described as sounding like a woman's scream, its wanton attacks on domestic animals, and its cat-like character seem to make it a favorite figure in Appalachian legend.
ling conclusion of the short story, too, is similar to the oral tradition of legend telling. William Hugh Jansen has observed that "Oral narrators have the trick of withholding an important detail from their audiences until the very end, where it enlightens or shocks," precisely the effect Bierce achieves in the short story with his conclusion. Finally, the plot of the story is unveiled bit by bit as the narrator unwraps the layers of the story to reveal the incident at its core, very like the sort of piecing together that must be done in legend telling.

Structurally, too, one finds the pattern of a legend here, though because the cultural context is not apparent the structure can be judged only from the text of the narrative. The implied interdiction seems to be one against neglecting to watch over the body of a person who has recently died; the term wake itself suggests this. Bierce emphasizes a number of times that Murlock is unfamiliar with death and the process of preparing a body for burial. Had Murlock been a faithful watcher, he would have detected signs of life in the corpse. However, he falls into a deep sleep, violating this interdiction. The consequence is that his wife is killed in the struggle with the panther, and he lives out the rest of his life a distraught man, feeling himself to be, through his neglect, his wife's murderer.

The pervasive quality of legend and the fact that the form floats freely from the oral tradition into literature and back again suggests innumerable ways that the belief legend genre can be used in the classroom. Fiction that deals with themes of the spirit world and the occult

comes immediately to mind. Clarke points out that the source of a literary work can often be traced to a story teller in the oral tradition: "If we are to know the dimensions of literature and know it truly, we must continually renew our awareness of its sources and how they work. One of these sources, perhaps the primary source of all other sources, is the telling of a real or imagined event in the folk setting." The students in our classrooms know legends though they do not think of the narratives in that generic way. Appalachian folklore, like that of other cultural groups, is full of local belief legends. And the circulation of legends does not end when a folk group migrates. Linda Dégh calls legend "the hardiest of folk narrative forms, not only adjusting easily to modern conditions but...generating new types based on the most up-to-date issues of contemporary life." The Legend and the Folktale

Legend has been defined as a narrative, often a fragmentary one, which is believed to some degree to be a true account of an event by the teller and by his audience. The distinction that Jacob Grimm made in the introduction to his fairy tales collection between legend and fairy tales still remains generally accepted by folklorists. Though there are many similarities between the legend and Märchen in structure and in content, the same motifs often appearing in both genres, the distinction

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73 Clarke, p. 5.
74 Dégh, "Folk Narrative," p. 77.
75 Linda Dégh and Andrew Vazsonyi in "Legend and Belief," Folklore Genres, pp. 93-119 have written an excellent discussion of the importance of belief to legend performance.
remains a useful one:

Looser, less fettered than legend, the fairy tale lacks that local habitation, which hampers the legend, but makes it more homelike. The fairy tale flies, the legend walks, knocks at your door; the one can draw freely out of the fullness of poetry; the other has almost the authority of history. 76

Time and place are real and specific in the legend; the fairy tale takes place outside real time and place as the "once upon a time" beginning indicates. "One does not escape the real world into legend," Dundes tells us, "rather legend represents fantasy in the real world."77 That is, as improbably as the events in legend may be, they seek to convey a psychological truth of what it is to be human in the day-to-day world, to face turning points in our lives, to encounter evil and death.

Even more important for the teacher of literature are the differences in the way man is portrayed in legend and in the Märchen. In legend the human lot is essentially tragic; in the Märchen, comedic, to borrow the term from Northrup Frye. The focus of the two forms differs. "The Märchen considers the man," Max Lüthi observes; "the legend considers what happens to the man."78 In the fairy tale the focus is on the hero, not on the forces that he meets or that oppose him. He is isolated, but he succeeds because, for one reason or another, he is granted good fortune. He does not create his success so much as it is bestowed on him. The major figure in legend, on the other hand, is "suffering man, stricken and perplexed, questioning, brooding, explaining, but also strug-

76 As quoted in Dégh, "Folk Narrative," p. 72.
78 Lüthi, p. 24.
gliding with a difficult decision, losing himself in wantonness or rising to a sacrificial act." The fairy tale hero represents an escapist world where man triumphs and is rewarded; the hero of legend is often vanquished even while he retains his human dignity.

In structure, the Märchen is a finished form, unlike the legend whose major characteristic may be its fragmentary nature. The Märchen has those elements of plot one traditionally expects in a narrative: a beginning, a middle, an end, and conflict. Indeed, the focus of the storyteller is on the action of the plot and not upon the character of the hero, who like other characters in the story is often a flat character. The fairy tale genre as Lüthi says, "likes everything to be sharply defined, of specified form." Thus we have formulaic beginnings and endings, a traditional sequence of events, substitution of repetition for lengthy description, and characters who are represented as either completely good or evil.

All these distinctions between the genres of fairy tale and legend do not mean that the two are completely unrelated forms. There is, in fact, much interchange between the two forms. We have already seen that the Interdiction-Violation-Consequence pattern which Propp applied to folktales can also be used as an approach to the legend. In addition, many legends can be classified as tale types and their motifs classified. The themes and motifs of tales also appear in legends. One variant of the panther story, a family legend, tells how an ancestor escaped from a

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79 Lüthi, p. 24.
80 Lüthi, p. 20.
panther by dropping pieces of meat she was carrying one by one in the panther's path, thus distracting and delaying the animal. The same motif of escape by deception appears in fairy tales and myth as well.

For the purposes of this writing only one type of tale, the Jack Tale, will be discussed, largely because of its importance in Appalachian folklore.

**Jack Tales**

Folktales, unlike legend whose intent is to instruct, are narratives told to delight and amuse their hearers. This is not to say that folktales are devoid of values—they are not; but sanctioning cultural values is not their major end. The term folktale itself is a very broad one, encompassing a wide variety of narratives told for entertainment: ghost stories told for chills not because they are believed, jokes, anecdotes, tall tales, animal stories, and what are commonly called fairy tales. That term is generally not suitable, for there are very few fairies in fairy tales, even in European versions; to call such narratives magic tales, wonder tales, or to use the Grimm's term, Märchen, is more definitive. For the purposes of this study only one sub-genre of Märchen will be discussed, the Jack Tale, leaving untouched all sorts of inviting narratives that might be explored.

The Jack Tales, so called for the name most often given to their hero, lend themselves to study because they are peculiarly Appalachian variants of European Märchen; they contain the themes and motifs of their European counterparts, but they have taken on the character, tone, and details of their mountain setting, becoming distinctive from European
wonder tales in content, structure, and context. The tales have been so transformed through generations of retelling in a relatively limited area that it is nearly impossible to determine what their original source or form might have been. The earliest collectors of the tales, Richard Chase in particular, attribute them to British sources. And Herbert Halpert in his appendix to Chase's *Jack Tales* supports this idea. Leonard Roberts, however, cites, in addition to English sources, Scotch-Irish, German, and Irish sources. And Henry Glassie believes that the tales grew out of a blending of the narratives of various cultural groups who settled in the Appalachians "with some Indian and French infusion." He notes that though most of the tales have German parallels, all these groups had trickster-hero stories and that the cultural borrowing that went on between cultures led to a combination of folktale elements.

The first collection of Jack Tales from Mrs. Jane Gentry was published in the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1923 by Isabel Gordon Carter. Carter noted that even at that time there were few people who could remember the old tales in enough detail to tell them. It remained for

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85 Glassie, p. 88.
Richard Chase to bring the tales to a popular audience with the publica-

tion of *The Jack Tales* twenty years later. Chase first learned of the
tales in 1935 from Marshall Ward, who had had them handed down in his
family from his grandfather Council Harmon, also Jane Gentry's grandfa-
thер. The family connection indicates that European folktales that can
be found alive in the oral tradition are often discovered in families
with a strong storytelling tradition like the Harmon-Ward-Gentry family
and the Couch family, in eastern Kentucky, from whom Leonard Roberts col-
lected Jack Tales. The existence of the tales throughout the central
Appalachian area suggests, however, that they were once widely known,
perhaps as a cycle of stories about Jack. It is not surprising that
the stories remained alive in families, for that was precisely the setting
in which they were told. Carter says flatly "The stories were told to
entertain children." And Mrs. Maud Long, also a grand-daughter of
Council Harmon, says the stories were told when the family was gathered
to engage in dull, repetitious household tasks, "and to keep our eyes
open and our fingers busy and our hearts merry, my mother would tell
these marvellous tales."

Although the Jack Tales had their roots in Europe, they have through
years of re-telling become thoroughly American, or more specifically Appa-

87 C. Paige Gutierrez, "The Narrative Style of Marshall Ward, Jack
89 Chase, p. x.
lachian in setting, characterization, and values. The landscape described in the Jack Tales is that of small mountain settlements and hollers. Kings appear in Jack Tales; but, stripped of their royal trappings, they have become merely well-to-do farmers who can be "hollered out" of their houses like anyone else and whose wives do household chores. W. H. Ward comments that characters in the Jack Tales have become so "Appalachian-ized" that "really in name only does the king of the Märchen survive the Jack Tales." 92 The most remarkable transformation, however, is in the character of the hero Jack himself. It was Richard Chase who first pointed out that the Jack in Appalachian tales is very different from the hero of European tales. He "has acquired easy going unpretentious American manner" in contrast to the dash and elan of European Jacks. He is, in fact, an Appalachian farm boy with wit, courage, and luck. His character remains much the same from tale to tale, so that Chase observes, "Folk prosody rarely has presented so well-rounded a figure as Jack." 93 Depending on the narrator of the tale, any one of a number of Jack's virtues, which reflect the culture, may be emphasized, most often hard work, kindness, cleverness, and daring.

The Märchen and their Appalachian variants, the Jack Tales, are in Max Lüthi's term end-forms, narratives polished by countless tellings to a verbal folk art form. Not everyone who knows the tales can tell them well, for that requires intelligence and imagination. Like writing stories, telling them is an art. The artistic quality of Jack Tales can be

93 Chase, xii.
most clearly seen in their structure. They do not have the vague shapelessness of legend, but rather have distinctive patterns which can be analyzed.

First, like the familiar "once upon a time" beginnings that let the audience of Märchen know the kind of story they are to hear, Jack Tales often begin "One time Jack" or "Jack and his mother was having it hard." The beginning of the Jack tale, however, suggests that the character of Jack is familiar to both the narrator and his audience. The conclusions also—in Märchen "and so they lived happily ever after" and in the Jack Tales the less euphoric "last time I heard of Jack he was doing right well"—are formulaic. These traditional beginnings and endings form the frame which encloses the narrative.

Within the brackets of the formulaic beginning and ending, the Jack Tales consist of "three or more episodes unified by a 'lack/lack liquidated' structure." Each of these episodes is often a free-standing narrative which can be added to a particular tale or detached from it. One might speculate that the teller of the tale included or deleted these individual episodes depending upon the amount of time at his disposal.

Just as the frame lends unity to the Jack Tale, so does the repetition of incidents, dialogue, and catch words within the tale. This repetition, most often in threes, is actually the means of fleshing out Märchen and is one of the hallmarks of folk narrative. Repetition and

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not elaborate description are the ornamentation of these tales. 96

Using Propp's structural analysis in her study of fifty-one Jack Tales, C. Paige Gutierrez found that the lack/lack liquidated function was by far the most common obligatory function in Jack Tales. 97 In most of the stories it is poverty which incites the action of the hero and sets the frame for the story. At the conclusion of the tale Jack finds wealth, and often a wife as well. Unlike some heroes of European Märchen, Jack Tales do not begin with the hero losing his wealth and position through the action of a villain and then regaining it. There are few villains, indeed, in Jack Tales. In her analysis Gutierrez also found that Propp's function "the hero leaves home" appears in a great number of the tales where Jack is depicted as a questing hero. The structure, which is not peculiar to Jack Tales, and the consistent characterization of Jack from one narrative to another make the tales a distinctive folk-tale sub-genre. 98

Max Lüthi has observed that unlike the hero of legend who stays close to home, the hero of Märchen is thrust out into the world as a wanderer. 99 He is free to adventure because of the nature of the nuclear family as it is portrayed in the Märchen and by his own spirit. The world as it is reflected in the Märchen family, which plays a greater role in organizing the narrative in Märchen than in legend, is full of

99 Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 140.
conflicts and tensions. The hero or heroine may be safer abroad in the world than in the family. More important than the effect of family in the Jack Tales is Jack's non-conformist attitude. He displays the ability to perceive and make use of the potentialities of his situation. In the tales where Jack appears with older brothers Will and Tom, they fail because they are doggedly unimaginative; Jack succeeds because he has the vision to seize an opportunity. Jack's character illustrates a balance between conforming to the norms of society when that is desirable and departing from those norms when it is advantageous to do so. Thus we find Jack putting down meat in the traditional way when his heifer is killed, but stuffing the hide with corn shucks and dragging it about with him. "The message to children hearing these stories," Gutierrez says, "would be to value the traditional way of doing things but not be chained by it."  

In Jack's character we also find that characteristic of the Märchen which Lüthi discusses, the contrast between appearance and reality. Jack may appear to be the youngest, the weakest, the stupid one, but in actuality he is gifted. He is granted courage, cleverness, and, most of all, luck. The narrators of Jack Tales themselves seem to recognize this gift, for Sam Harmon said, "If I was to name my boys over, I'd name them all Jack. I never knewed a Jack, but that what was lucky." Sometimes Jack's luck is pure chance; sometimes it seems fated; sometimes it results

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102 Halpert, p. 187.
from his good nature; but often it comes out of his hard work and skill. The tales reinforce the "need for work, thinking, perseverance, and kindness," not an unexpected quality in a subsistence society where hard work alone does not insure success. In fact, such folk expressions as "He went to farming tobacco, but he never had no luck at it" reflects this attitude.

The theme of the journey of the hero, common to so many Märchen and Jack Tales, cannot fail to fascinate teachers of literature, for it provides an approach to countless works of fiction. Closely related to the quest-journey theme is that of the rites of passage from childhood into adulthood. The hero must leave the familiar real world and journey into a mysterious realm to find his fortune and true personhood. While they threaten him, the dangers which he encounters in this fantasy world provide the opportunity for the hero to realize his authentic character. Thus the Märchen are not mere stories of wish fulfillment, but a depiction of the process of maturation recounting the hero's triumphant passage from weakness and childishness to an adult station in life. In the Jack Tales when Jack leaves home he enters "a dark world in which one may be destroyed or from which one may emerge with a new personality." But Jack and other Märchen heroes and heroines do not cross the boundary and venture in the mystic realm alone; they often acquire helpers and mentors, both real and animal, who provide them with supernatural

104 Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 115.
aid freely or in response to a kind deed. Jack, like his counterparts in other tales, must undergo a series of tests and frequently engages in battles with a supernatural force before he can return to the real world. The battle is one of the major themes in Märchen though contests in the tales may also be psychological battles, contests of wits. Sometimes the battles are between the forces of good and evil, polarities that are sharply defined in these tales; sometimes the contest is for a prize, a fortune, or the hand of a princess. Having triumphed, the hero can once more cross the boundary into the real world with a boon for himself and for others. The heroes of Märchen, however different they may seem, all portray "man's deliverance from an unauthentic existence and his commencement of a true one." It is this goal of becoming one's best self that Jack achieves though he does not win great riches, a royal princess, or a crown as his European cousins do.

In Ray Hick's narration of "Jack and the Three Steers" one can trace the structure of the Jack Tale and the cycle of the hero. The tale is framed by a beginning expressing a lack, "Jack and his mother, they was without flour and nothing to eat" and a formulaic ending, "him and his mother lived good then for a while." To liquidate the lack Jack must journey into the strange and frightening world of a robber-infested forest which Hicks describes as "dark woods--dark in the daytime." Through the night and the rain he sees "a little light down in a holler." Follow-

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106 Lüthi, *Once Upon a Time*, pp. 121-122.
ing the light he arrives at a door where he is grudgingly admitted by his helper, a little old woman who warns him it is a robbers' house. When the robbers come home, they first plan to kill Jack but agree to spare his life if he will steal three steers from a farmer who lives nearby. He is to be paid three hundred dollars for each steer he succeeds in stealing; should he fail he will lose his life. In his narration of the tale Hicks makes it clear that Jack is reluctant to steal but "a man has to do something to save his life." He does not believe in "hurting nobody" so three times he takes the steers from the farmer by trickery. The robbers spare his life and pay him nine hundred dollars. He returns home, now the family provider.

If the pattern of the hero just sketched were limited to fairy tales, there would be little point in introducing it in literature classes. But the journey-quest pattern pervades much of the fiction our students read and many of the films they see. Lüthi states that fairy tales have inspired and renewed literature into our own time and that "the fairy tale, like all true poetry, is an elemental form from which great writers have repeatedly drawn strength and inspiration." When students have learned to recognize the journey of a hero in the Jack Tales, which have a simple structure and are related in the idiom and setting of Appalachia, they will have a bridge by which to approach many forms of fiction. Diverse readings as old as Beowulf and as contemporary as Tolkien contain the hero cycle. In American literature short stories

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109 Consider for example Star Wars, Superman, and Lord of the Rings.

110 Lüthi, Once Upon a Time, p. 133.
like Irving's "Rip Van Winkle," Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," and Faulkner's "The Bear" are tales of heroes' journeys into the unknown. Rip and Goodman Brown are perhaps ironic heroes, but the story of Ike McCaslin in Faulkner's fiction is a rich account of a young man's rites of passage to adulthood.

The final chapter of the novel Sporty Creek by James Still provides an example of how an author, consciously or unconsciously, shapes a portion of the hero cycle to his artistic purpose. One would not want to press the analogy too far, but there are similarities in the characters of Jack and the unnamed young narrator of Still's story. Both are courageous, bright, and capable of imagining life beyond the narrow world in which they live. James Still's hero dreams of exploring the world outside the hollers and coal camps where he has been raised. He wants "to live everywhere" and to do everything. Finally, his father agrees to allow him to attend Hindman Settlement School at the forks of Troublesome Creek.

His companion on this long journey is his younger brother, Dan, who expresses all the doubts and anxieties about the venture that the narrator has suppressed. "We ought never thought to be scholars," Dan sighs as they walk along the dusty road, barefoot with the sun burning down on them. And Dan adds that he has heard that "they do strange things at the Settlement School" like ringing bells to remind themselves to get up and to eat. All in all, the boys feel that they have left behind the

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familiar world of family and home as they undertake their journey to a different world. The motivation of the narrator and his less willing brother is a quest for something lacking in their lives, formal education. The narrator says this clearly when he tries to encourage Dan, saying, "There never was a pure scholar amongst all of our kin.... Not one who went clean through the books and come out on yon side; I'm of the opinion we ought to do it."

In addition to the physical discomfort they endure, the boys must defend themselves from the ridicule of a neighbor, Saul Hignight, who confronts them along the road. Saul believes that education is "a lot of fool notions," that it "burdens the flesh with unnatural things, not a speck of profit to anybody." The hero is able to refute this criticism, but when Saul declares that he has "heard they teach the earth is round," in contradiction to the Scriptures, neither of the boys is able to reply to that assertion.

Overcoming their homesickness, exhaustion, and the doubt which Saul has reawakened, the boys trudge on toward their goal. It is dark by the time they reach the top of the ridge which overlooks the settlement. Still's description of the scene is reminiscent of the way Hicks has described Jack's sighting of the robbers' house in the forest.

Lights were bright in the windows, though the shapes of the buildings were lost against the hills.... No sound came out of the strange place where the lights were, unblinking and cold.

Still ends his novel here, with his young hero on the brink of entering a strange new world. The reader can only guess at how the cycle of this hero will be fulfilled, what his quest will bring him, and how
his life will be changed by the new knowledge he gains in that mysterious realm before him.

The purpose of this chapter has been to suggest ways in which the folkloric resources of students can be discovered, valued, and used in literature classes. The smallest, simplest, and most familiar elements, the individual's own speech, were introduced first. Proverbs and proverbial expressions, more complex, but still part of our common store provide the next step. Family lore, because it contains many genres of folklore including elemental fiction forms is a transition to the more complex forms of legend and Märchen. The narratives folklorists call legends are familiar and circulate freely in the oral tradition in their myriad variant forms. As for that most sophisticated of verbal narratives, the Märchen, the chances of capturing a bona fide Jack Tale or wonder tale that has existed exclusively in the oral tradition are extremely slim. The form, however, is so pervasive that students will recognize it easily once they have learned the pattern.
Chapter VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The verbal folklore of a cultural group, as Loyal Jones has said, is actually "the literature that people carry around in their heads." It is certainly the oldest form of literature, and it may even be that through folklore genres like proverbs, legends, and tales we learn what the form of a poem or story should be. The study of the oral traditions of a group and the knowledge we gain about our own cultural heritage and the heritage of others has gone unrecognized, for the most part, in the English curriculum. In addition there are correspondences between the oral and written traditions which have been neglected. All this suggests that folklore can be a useful tool for the teacher in junior high school and high school English classrooms. This is especially true when students from culturally different backgrounds are taught. Still it is doubtful that the reservoir of the oral tradition of students is widely known or appreciated. One can draw the following conclusions from this study.

(1) A survey of the existing literature on using folklore as an approach to imaginative literature reveals that some writers have been
interested in the value of using folklore, but their emphasis has generally been on the value of folk and fairy tales for young children.

(2) Scanty literature has appeared on the use of Black folklore in literature classes, but little has been written on using the folklore of other ethnic or cultural groups, especially Appalachians, even though Appalachians are probably the second largest minority group in Ohio schools.

(3) Appalachians may be defined as a folk group either in the broad sense of that term, that is that they constitute a group who share at least one factor in common, or in the older sense that they are a group which has been largely rural, relatively poor and uneducated, and isolated. As a folk group Appalachians share a common history and culture and common values, not necessarily those of the majority culture.

(4) When Appalachians migrate to urban areas outside the Appalachian region, they bring with them their cultural baggage. There is reason to believe that in the unfamiliar urban setting they cling even more tenaciously to their values and beliefs, even when those values and beliefs are in conflict with those of the majority culture.

(5) Because the folklore of a group reflects and reinforces the traditional values of that group, it provides a way of seeing a culture from the "inside out."

(6) The collection of folklore in the Appalachian region for more than half a century has created a reservoir of folk material including folk sayings, legends, and folktales which reflects the cultural values of the group which produces them.
(7) The formulaic patterns which exist in folklore and which have enabled the bearers of the folk tradition to hand on proverbs, legends, and folk narratives from one generation to another also recur in written literature.

(8) There are values for both students and teachers in learning to recognize and use the richness of the oral tradition in literature classrooms. It enables the adolescent student to understand and appreciate his own cultural heritage at a time in his life when discovering his identity is of great importance to him. In addition, students can be led to observe that there are universal themes and patterns common to the folk tradition which appear cross-culturally and in written literature as well.

Implications

Implications for the classroom teacher

(1) This study suggests that teachers should be more aware of the cultural diversity among students in their classes and of the effects of that diversity. The educational stance in the past has been to treat all students alike, when in fact they are culturally different. The melting pot theory has been discounted; teachers need to explore the possibilities inherent in the cultural pluralism of our society.

(2) The folkloric approach to literature is a critical approach that is as valid and demanding as the traditional critical approaches. It is a critical tool, however, which demands both breadth and depth of knowledge in folklore and in related fields. And it is an approach which requires sensitivity and insight on the part of the teacher.
If folklore is used as an approach to literature, it should be considered a scholarly tool to be pursued seriously, and applied to varied forms of written literature throughout the curriculum. Folklore should not be simply a novelty which adds a fillip to an otherwise dull reading, nor should it be used to suggest the quaintness or cultural deficiency of a folk group. Rather, the emphasis should be on the universal concerns of man which folklore mirrors and the varied ways cultural groups respond to those concerns.

Some controlled study needs to be made to investigate the hypothesis that linking the oral tradition to written literature does indeed provide a mediation for students.

Regional writers whose writing genuinely reflects the culture of a group and its values should be added to the conventional canon of literature classes.

Implications for Teacher Training

Prospective teachers should be provided with more opportunities to experience cultures different from their own. The study of folklore enables one to see a culture "from the inside out."

Prospective English teachers need more training in linguistics, particularly in the way native speakers of English acquire their dialects, what the characteristics of that dialect are, and the effect that dialect has on learning.

English departments at the college level should incorporate a folkloric approach to literature as a critical tool and recognize the debt which the written literature they teach owes to a living oral tradition.
Using folklore in the teaching of literature is not proposed in this writing as an anodyne for teachers of literature, nor is it championed as the single approach to written literature; for it is the very nature of imaginative literature that it may be interpreted and enjoyed on a multiplicity of levels--and students should not be deprived of any of them. Rather, the proposal I make is a modest one: that teachers recognize the rich cultural diversity that exists in their classes and put it to use in a positive way by recognizing the reservoir of oral tradition which is their students' birthright. The folklore of a group can illuminate the literature we read, but, more importantly, it can enlarge our naturally ethnocentric vision.
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