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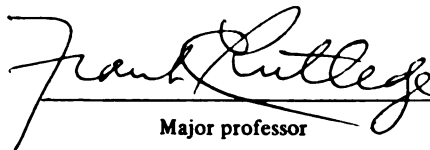
An Investigation of the Depiction
of the American Mountaineer Character
in Selected American Plays

presented by

David Jonathan Jortner

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**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE DEPICTION
OF THE AMERICAN MOUNTAINEER CHARACTER
IN SELECTED AMERICAN PLAYS**

By

David Jonathan Jortner

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE DEPICTION OF THE AMERICAN MOUNTAINEER CHARACTER IN SELECTED AMERICAN PLAYS

By

David Jonathan Jortner

This study explores how the character of the mountaineer is portrayed in select American dramatic literature. The mountaineer, with his rich history and legacy of adventure, appears to be an excellent dramatic character. This study will contrast the archetypal traditional mountaineer with the mountaineer as seen on-stage, and examine the accuracy with which this character has been represented.

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1995

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background.....	1
Chapter 2: A Historical Overview of the Appalachians and the Character of the Mountaineer.....	10
Chapter 3: Analysis of Dramatic Literature.....	39
Chapter 4: Conclusions.....	83
Bibliography.....	92

Chapter 1:

Introduction and Background

A. Introduction

I grew up in Blacksburg, Virginia, in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains. My house was located on a small hill in Ellet Valley, about seven miles from the town limits of Blacksburg. Enclosing the valley, and visible from my bedroom window, were both Parris and Black Mountains. Through the gaps in the mountains other ridges, hills, and valleys could be easily seen. I spent many years exploring and playing around these hills, fishing and swimming in small mountain streams and hiking through the woodlands and forests of the area. As I grew older, Blacksburg and Ellet Valley became my home, and I now think of myself as a resident of that region.

However, neither myself nor my family has any real historical connection to the Appalachians. Although I am "from" the region, I will always be separated from the true mountaineers by two factors. Firstly, I am originally from suburban New Jersey, and lived there until I was ten years old. My father moved to Blacksburg, as did many other families, to teach at Virginia Tech. I had moved from a suburb of New York City to a rural Appalachian town, and still retain mannerisms and

habits of the northeast that directly conflict with those of the native mountaineer. Secondly, my family is Jewish. We were one of approximately forty Jewish families in Blacksburg, and very few things could have placed us more on the outside.

However, these factors did not preclude us from getting to know our neighbors, and making friends with many other residents. Despite the differences in background and income, all of the residents of Blacksburg get along and work together. As a child, my friends stretched across socioeconomic boundaries, and my high school had advanced placement courses for the sons and daughters of professors, as well as a vocational wing for the children of the mountains. Although most of my friends in high school all had backgrounds similar to mine, I still felt an affinity towards the people of the mountains. When I returned to the northeast to attend college, I was struck at the popular misconception of the entire region and its people. I then realized that I held many of these misconceptions myself. In high school my friends and I were contemptuous of mountain people. However, as my pride in my state and town grew, so did my concern for its oldest residents.

As I became more involved with theater, I started to look for representations of the mountaineer onstage. I believed that the mountaineer was an inherently dramatic character. He was fiercely

independent, yet had declined into a state of almost total dependency, he had close family ties yet rarely expressed that closeness, and he had become a part of the American mythological canon due to the exploits of men such as Daniel Boone and the Hatfields and McCoys. Yet surprisingly, there was very little dramatic literature with the mountaineer as a strong central character. The common perception of the mountaineer seemed to be locked into the "Jed Clampett/Snuffy Smith" stereotype, and few authors placed these characters at the center of their work. However, some playwrights, such as William Richardson, William Berney and Romulus Linney created plays with strong mountaineer characters at their core. Often, these playwrights borrowed the plots of their plays from the stories, ballads and myths of the region. All of these authors wrote after 1945, when the Appalachians began to be "rediscovered" by the nation. However, it is within the past fifteen years that the archetypal mountaineer has become a viable dramatic character.

B. Purpose of Study

This study examines how the character of the mountaineer is represented in contemporary American dramatic literature. This study will use archetypal mountaineer characteristics as determining factors in establishing accuracy of dramatic depiction. These characteristics will be determined through previous sociological studies done of mountaineer society. These include Yesterday's People by Jack Weller and Night Comes to the Cumberlands by Harry Caudill. Both of these works provide comprehensive overviews of the mountaineer's character and provide definitive characteristics for this study.

The mountaineers, with their rich history and legacy of adventure, appear to be ideal dramatic characters. A clear American icon, with three hundred years of history and a strong sense of independence, the mountaineer seems ideally suited to be a major heroic character in American dramatic literature. This study will examine how the mountaineer has been represented as a dramatic character and whether or not this representation has been accurate.

C. Organization of Study

This study is organized into four chapters, each focusing on a different aspect of either the history and life of mountaineer or the representation of this character on stage. The first chapter introduces, delimits, and defines the terms of the study. The second chapter gives the history of the mountains and the mountain people as well as define the mountaineer. The third chapter of the study explores the representation of the archetypal mountaineer character in selected American plays. The final chapter of the study examines the conclusions reached and provide concepts and ideas for further study.

D. Limitations

This study will focus on the role and portrayal of the mountaineer in select American dramatic literature in the latter half of the twentieth century. Central to the study will be the mountaineer of the Southern Appalachian mountains and not the hunter/trapper "mountain man" of the Rockies and the Southwest. Plays selected for the study are those that are set in the geographical region and have a mountaineer character as a primary focus. The investigation will not examine music, stories, folklore, or poetry about that region. In addition, films and novels set in the region are not covered in this study.

E. Definitions and Terms

The Appalachian Mountains are some of the oldest mountains in the world. They stretch from the Catskill mountains of Southern New York through the hill country of Alabama and Georgia (Ergood, and Kuhre, Appalachia: Social Context Past and Present 6). However, the mountains are culturally divided between the North and the South. The common dividing line is the Mason-Dixon line north of Maryland (Campbell, Appalachia: Social Context Past and Present 15).

This is also true for the purposes of this study. The Southern Appalachian mountains are defined as "the four western counties of Maryland; the Blue Ridge, Valley and Ridge counties of Virginia; all of West Virginia; eastern Tennessee; eastern Kentucky; western North Carolina; the four northwestern counties of South Carolina; northern Georgia; and northeastern Alabama" (Campbell The Southern Highlands and the Southern Highlander Defined 15). This definition incorporates both those states that fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War as well as those states that remained neutral (Maryland and Kentucky). The common denominators linking these states together are the patterns of settlement and the pace and nature of economic and social development. These factors combined to create the unique culture and

character of the Southern Appalachian mountaineer.

A mountaineer is defined by The American Heritage Dictionary as "A native or inhabitant of a mountainous area" (American Heritage Dictionary 817-818). However, for the purposes of this study, a mountaineer is defined as an individual of primarily European descent whose family has settled the Southern Appalachian mountains, and who currently resides in that area. This mountaineer has specific characteristics, detailed by sociologists, which have resulted from the way he and his family have lived. These elements, as well as geographical residence and family history, have defined the character of the mountaineer.

Plays selected for this study have two distinguishing features. They are set in the geographical region mentioned above and they have a mountain man or woman as a main character. In addition, all of the plays examined were written after 1945. After the social upheavals caused by the Great Depression and the Second World War, the plight and situation of the mountain people became much better known to the rest of the country. In the 1960s Lyndon Johnson once again focused the attention of the nation on the Southern Appalachians (Weller 23). As a result of this increased exposure, many of the cultural myths and beliefs about mountain people were examined by many Americans. Several playwrights began to explore the region for possible dramatic

material. They attempted to portray the mountaineer and his society accurately on-stage. In addition, because of increased social interaction in the past fifty years, the Appalachians have begun to lose their sense of individualism and unique identity.

The plays chosen for this study include Dark of the Moon, by William Richardson and William Berney, Tennessee, Sand Mountain Matchmaking and Why the Lord Come to Sand Mountain by Romulus Linney, and The Kentucky Cycle, by Robert Schenkkan. Dark of the Moon was selected because it is one of the most popular American plays set in the Southern Appalachian mountains and has several mountaineer characters in primary roles. Romulus Linney's plays were chosen because Linney has been one of the most prolific American playwrights to feature mountaineer characters. The Kentucky Cycle was selected because of its epic nature and scope. Also, it won the 1992 Pulitzer Prize for dramatic literature.

Chapter 2

A Historical Overview of the Appalachians and the Character of the Mountaineer

A. Use of Weller and Caudill

The character of the mountaineer has been studied thoroughly by many different sociologists since 1945. Two of the most comprehensive observations of the history and the character of the mountain man come from Harry Caudill's Night Comes to the Cumberlands and Jack Weller's Yesterday's People. Both works vividly describe the mountaineer, his culture, and his history. Caudill's work takes a historical approach to the subject, tracing the changes in the mountaineer character as he responds to various social upheavals. Caudill uses quotations and excerpts to support its contentions. One of Caudill's conclusions is that the mountaineer character has remained fairly constant with its pioneer ancestors. In contrast, Weller's work codifies and clarifies common mountaineer characteristics in sociological terms. These terms provide a clear definition of the mountaineer character, and can be used as a basis for determining the

accuracy of dramatic depiction of this character on the stage.

Jack Weller has lived in the Appalachians for most of his life and worked with the people of that region for many years as a pastor and sociologist. Harry Caudill is one of the primary Appalachian historians in America and a native of eastern Kentucky.

B. Historical Overview of the Appalachians

The first inhabitants of the Appalachian mountains were the Native American Choctaw, Shawnee and Cherokee tribes (Caudill 13). However, as the American colonies began to grow, the settlers and colonists pushed westward from the Atlantic coast into the interior of the nation. They soon discovered the Appalachians, which proved to be the first geographical barrier to the pioneer's expansion. The mountains were impassable in some places, and contained many natural dead ends and cul-de-sacs. However, through careful exploration various mountain passes were discovered and the terrain began to be colonized.

The people who colonized the Southern colonies were generally divided into two classes. There was the rich, planter upper class which controlled the plantations as well as much of the colonies' political and social life. The second class were the lower class immigrants brought over to the colonies for use as laborers. They were debtors, petty thieves or prostitutes, or street people who were kidnapped and thrown on boats headed for the new world. Generally this class became indentured laborers for the plantations and were treated little better

than slaves. They worked for seven years on the plantations and were then released by the plantation owners (Caudill 5). With no land available along the coast and no employment prospects beyond that of continued indentured servitude, the lower class colonists moved west into the mountains of Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky and the Carolinas. Joining them in this westward migration were the second and third sons of the upper class, who also sought new opportunities. Harry Caudill, in Night Comes to the Cumberlands, his history of the Cumberland Plateau, describes the early mountaineer, saying "...the people who settled the Kentucky mountains were not inspired Europeans...determined to found a citadel of religious and economic freedom...He had simply moved over a few hundred miles to find unplowed creek bottoms, a more plentiful supply of game, and to get away from his neighbors" (Caudill 10).

These individuals found that the land was plentiful and fertile, especially along the valleys and river banks. In addition, game and timber abounded on the mountainsides. Expansion into the Appalachians really increased with the opening of the Cumberland gap by Daniel Boone. This valley, which was easily passable both on foot and in wagons, opened up Kentucky and most of the Southwestern Appalachians. Although there were several skirmishes and fights with Native Americans, for the most part both the mountain settlers and

their Native American counterpart co-existed. There was a great deal of intermingling and intermarriage, and the mountaineers often traded with the natives. In return, the natives showed the settlers the best plants for medicines and the best areas to hunt game. However, after the American War of Independence the newly created Congress granted many parcels of mountain land to veterans whose pay had been either delayed or denied (Caudill 9). The influx of these men, as well as the continuing stream of poor sharecroppers trying to start new in the mountains proved too much for the native population. Their population was decimated through a combination of disease and open warfare. Finally, through a concentrated effort, the federal government moved the native tribes west into reservations.

While this was occurring, the mountaineer was gaining his reputation for independence and individualism. The mountains he had settled made social interaction problematic because of the difficulty of travel. Although small towns developed along major trade routes, the mountaineer was still very much left to his own devices. His land was worked by members of his own family, and it was common to see a valley or ridge dominated by a single surname (Weller 13). Because of this extreme isolationism, mountain people developed a strong distrust of strangers and a fear of intrusion by either other settlers or government agents. Therefore, when a mountaineer was seeking to

arrange a marriage for his son or daughter, he often turned to relatives nearby. The practice of intermarriage became common, as that allowed the mountain clan to maintain control of the land.

In addition, such isolationism also fostered a strange mix of beliefs. The mountaineers were almost always exclusively Christian, yet his interaction with the Native Americans had left him with several superstitions and myths. The interaction that the sharecroppers had had with Africans on the plantations augmented these superstitions (Caudill 26). Although some communities had a church and full time minister, many did not. Travelling ministers taught the Biblical principles through repetition and preached hellfire and damnation to try to illustrate Christian ethics. There were a few families with copies of the Bible, yet few mountain families knew how to read. Thus, the Christianity that was practiced by these men and women was a mix of African and Native American beliefs along with whatever biblical stories they could remember. Many of the mountain ridges and passes were said to be inhabited by "haints" or ghosts, and were to be avoided on certain nights. In certain parts of Appalachia these beliefs and superstitions continue to exist.

It was also during this time between the revolution and the Civil War that many of the legendary family feuds broke out in the mountains. These could be precipitated by almost anything: a dispute

over land, a failed marriage, or even a suspected slight in manners. The epic Hatfield–McCoy war, the most famous of these feuds, began in 1882 when the Hatfields of West Virginia crossed the state border to vote in Kentucky elections (Caudill 47). The McCoys, angered by this practice, killed Ellison Hatfield outside of a voting precinct (Caudill 47). What followed was years of slaughter in which at least 65 people died (Caudill 47). Feuds ranged throughout the Southern Appalachians and often lasted entire generations. The government was incapable of stopping these battles, and was sometimes drawn into the bloody conflict. Caudill writes "...at Hillsville Virginia...feudists in the "Allen--Edwards Wars"...entered the circuit courtroom and shot to death the circuit judge, commonwealth attorney, sheriff and three of the judges" (Caudill 49). These feuds became as much a part of the mountain landscape as the ridges and valleys themselves.

Just as the Civil War split the nation, it also divided the Southern Appalachians. The majority of the mountain states broke away from the Union. Tennessee, Virginia, Georgia and the Carolinas were all supporters of the Confederacy, and fought against the United States. The state legislature of Kentucky voted the state neutral, while the people of West Virginia broke away from Virginia and formed their state in support of the Union. The mountain states all managed to contribute men and supplies to their chosen sides during the war, and

this forced the mountaineer to become both militarily and politically active.

However, many of the mountain people were able to remain isolated in their mountain strongholds, and the war had no effect on them at all (Caudill 38). Yet there were strong supporters of both the Confederacy and the Union in the mountains. Many mountaineers resented the interference of the federal government. They were often encouraged by those few landowners who had enough land and money to own slaves. One of the most famous quotes from this camp was "If they can take our niggers away from us they can take our cows and hosses, and everything else we've got" (Caudill 38). These mountaineers "...resented the idea that property earned by hard toil—even when that property consisted of fellow human beings—should be wrested from the owner" (Caudill 38). The Union sympathizers were compelled by a sense of loyalty to the government which had allowed them their freedom. In addition, many were resentful of the wealthier slave owners, and wanted to see them defeated. Finally, the mountaineer who fought for the Union often firmly believed that slavery was wrong and that no man should be owned by another.

On the battlefield, the mountaineers were wonderful soldiers. After all, they had spent their entire lifetime sneaking around the mountains in search of game. As a result, many were expert scouts, marksmen

and calvary troops. However, in camp, the mountain soldier seemed loath to take orders and was often intractable and unmanageable. They would often desert if pay was not received on time, or if rations were too thin. Once a mountaineer decided to leave for home, there was little that either army could do to make him stay (Caudill 39). Many returned home for planting season or to see loved ones again. For the mountaineer, personal necessities took precedence over a war which, in all likelihood, would not affect him despite its outcome.

After the Civil War, life in the Appalachians returned to what it had been before the war. Yet in the latter half of the nineteenth century, many investors in the east became interested in the region because of its natural resources (Caudill 61). The Southern Appalachians had vast stretches of virgin old growth forests that had been untouched for centuries. The lumber companies were quick to buy up these stretches of land from the mountain people. Many mountain families were unwilling to sell their land, yet sold the logging rights for mere pennies. They were unaware of the market price for lumber and to them, the trees were a nuisance that had to be cleared away in order to make land arable for subsistence farming. In other occasions, there was no complete documentation of land ownership with the county, so the lumber companies bought the land outright. In these cases mountain families were suddenly pushed off their land or forced to pay rent on

land they had farmed for generations. While several individuals were employed as lumbermen, the pay was low and the danger high. Yet perhaps the greatest damage done by lumbering was the loss of topsoil. When all the trees were taken from a particular hillside, the spring and summer rains would wash the rich topsoil into the rivers and away from the mountain farmland (Salstrom 26). Without this invaluable natural resource, crop yields fell dramatically. The mountaineer could no longer rely on the family farm to produce a profit, and in some extreme cases, he could no longer feed his family (Weller 18). In order to gain better farmland he would clear a neighboring hillside, thus repeating the cycle. This is one of the factors that would lead to the collapse of the mountaineer's independence.

Later in the nineteenth and early twentieth century the businessmen of the east again turned towards the Southern Appalachians. This time, their interest was sparked by the vast amounts of coal that lay underneath the hills and ridges. The Southern Appalachians had vast reserves of bituminous or soft coal. This type of fuel burned easier and was easier to extract than the anthracite (or hard) coal found in the mining areas of Pennsylvania and New York. The coal barons immediately bought the mineral rights to the mountaineer's land, using the same tactics that they had employed to gain the timber rights. Thousands of mountain families sold their land

at a fraction of its worth (Caudill 73). The coal industry then began to recruit workers from the mountain population (Salstrom 12). They built towns with general stores and other "modern" conveniences. Many of the coal companies recruited miners by playing on their fears about the future. The mountaineer often abandoned his ancestral home and moved his family into the coal towns. The coal companies paid wages in scrip instead of cash, thus assuring that the miner would get all of his necessities from the company store. The costs of rent and fuel were taken out of the miner's pay. While some coal towns had adequate sewage, educational and recreation programs, many ignored these luxuries and provided only what the miner needed to survive (Caudill 100).

Surrounded by manufactured goods, many mountaineers began to desire a lifestyle that they had never experienced. Women demanded manufactured dresses and fancy window coverings for their houses. Men had access to new hunting gear as well as a variety of bottled liquor and material possessions for the first time in their lives. This fact, combined with the high prices charged and the low wages paid by the company forced many families into debt for the first time in their lives. They were forced to obtain loans either at the company bank or from the company itself. Thus the mountaineer began his long downward spiral into economic servitude.

The mining profession was immensely profitable in the early 1900s as the United States began to mechanize. Coal was the fuel of choice for most of the nation, and the high demand strained production capabilities throughout Southern Appalachia. Many mountaineers found that they could make much more money in the mines than in the fields, and wrote to relatives encouraging them to come and work for the coal companies. Although coal mining is one of the most hazardous professions (slate falls and cave-ins were not uncommon), the coal companies never had trouble finding employees at the beginning of the century. If a miner was injured, there was little that he could do in order to provide for his family. There was no accident or life insurance, and after an accident or a death the coal company usually evicted the injured person and/or their family. With only scrip money, many injured miners joined their relatives either back on the family farm or in the coal towns (Caudill 121).

As the larger coal companies became interested in the coal reserves of the Southern Appalachians, they set up corporations and mines throughout the region. With these corporations came supervisors and bosses from the east. Almost always these men had worked as bosses in the northern coal mines or been trained in business at the eastern colleges. Very few mountaineers were made foremen or bosses, and there was little upward mobility for the miner. A few mountaineers

did gain positions with the coal companies, but they were almost always reviled as traitors to their neighbors. This discrepancy in cultures between the workers and the management widened the gulf that separated them and made it difficult for the two to negotiate (Caudill 113). This was to become a major factor when the miners finally began to unionize.

Although coal production continued to be high throughout the first twenty years of the twentieth century, the Great Depression hit the Southern Appalachians as hard as anywhere else in the United States. Few companies had saved any liquid assets, having poured most of their profits into the search for more coal. When the economy failed, there was a huge supply of coal and no demand. Prices for coal fell drastically, and the companies started cutting payrolls and closing mines to stay solvent. As a result, many mountaineers found themselves suddenly unemployed with no marketable skills. Many returned to their ancestral lands to try to eke out a living as farmers. Still others left the mountains for the cities of the east and midwest, where they hoped to find work for themselves and their families. The fact that the mountaineer had been paid with scrip and not cash only increased his economic problems. However, with the election of Franklin Roosevelt and the implementation of the New Deal things began slowly to improve for the mountain people. The twin programs

of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Tennessee Valley Authority employed hundreds of young mountain men while improving the standard of living for almost all of the residents of the Appalachians (Caudill 207).

It was during these times that the first mass unionization began. The United Mine Workers and the Progressive Mine Workers both sent representatives into the coal camps to try to gain new members (Caudill 192). Originally these organizers were treated with distrust and suspicion. Many mountaineers, recalling their hatred of outsiders, refused to deal with the union men. Others firmly believed that any union must be influenced by the communists and as such it was inherently unpatriotic to join one. However, as the union organizers continued to foment dissent amongst the miners the mountaineers began to listen. To many, it finally appeared as if someone was going to look out for their interests. Many miners enlisted in the union's ranks, and pressured their fellow miners to do the same. Soon afterwards, the first strikes were held (Caudill 200). Many Americans viewed the strikes as unpatriotic and dangerous to the welfare of the nation. After all, the miners were stopping a large percentage of the American fuel supply. Many of the mine operators brought in scabs as well as hired guards, and bloody battles that rivaled the family feuds of earlier generations erupted. Violence broke out between the scabs and the

union men and between the union men and the hired guards and town police (Caudill 193). In addition, the UMW and the PMW often fought amongst themselves in trying to enlist men into their union. Harlan County, Kentucky has been the scene of so much union violence that it has earned the nickname "Bloody" Harlan County (Caudill 193). A strike called here in 1931 resulted in the death of one miner and three company guards (Caudill 196). Even today, Harlan County still bears the legacy of violence. The documentary Harlan County, U.S.A. depicted the struggles of the 1975 UMW strike, where miners were killed by thugs allegedly hired by the company.

In 1939 with the beginnings of the war in Europe, many of the unions and the coal operators settled their differences and production started increasing to meet the increasing demand (Caudill 219). Demand for coal skyrocketed with the entry of the United States into the conflict. This high demand lasted till the end of the fifties, when demand slacked off. During this time another element had arrived which threatened the mountaineer/miner. The automation of mining had increased steadily and resulted in a dramatic increase in production. With this increased production came a decrease in the amount of men needed to work in the mines. In addition, those men that were needed had to be trained in the operation of this machinery. Many of the older mountaineers who had never worked outside of the

mines now found themselves without a job and without any useful skills. The majority of these men were forced to live on whatever pension checks the union could pay and whatever unemployment they could collect. For the most part they had been reduced to a total state of dependency (Caudill 259).

This increase in technology and automation reached its apex with the incorporation and implementation of strip mining in the 1950s. Strip mining is a controversial method of extraction where the top layers of dirt and slate are removed by heavy digging machinery such as bulldozers. The coal is then scooped up once it is exposed. Strip mining is infinitely safer than the older methods, yet it is much more damaging to the environment (Caudill 311). Hundreds of streams and rivers throughout Appalachia have become choked and polluted with the refuse left by strip mining. The mountaintops have lost almost all of their topsoil, as there is nothing to hold the soil onto the ground once it is replaced. For the mountaineer, strip mining has meant an end to a way of life that has lasted him over eighty years. Again, mountaineers are being forced to learn new skills or face unemployment as much of the machinery and techniques used in strip mining are complex. In addition, the mountaineer is seeing the mountains that have provided for him and his family systematically destroyed.

The history of the mountain people is a sad history of neglect,

despair and dependency. Every major event that has affected them has been precipitated outside the mountains. The mountaineer, while once self-reliant, has become needy and dependant upon others. This is slowly changing in the mountains, as the influence of television, radio, and travel have begun to enlarge the mountaineer's horizons. Many mountain men and women now see the importance of education for their children and have encouraged them to stay in school and get an education. However, as the mountaineer's horizons are expanding, he is losing many of the qualities that make him an unique figure, and is becoming assimilated into mainstream society. Thus the mountaineer may well be on the way towards improvement of his situation, but at the cost of his identity.

C. The Mountaineer

The mountaineer is unique among rural American icons because of his relationship to his history. While many of the traditional American icons have made their own fortunes, the mountaineer has been influenced by outside factors which have shaped his past and contributed towards his character. The mountaineer has endured these changes with an sense of fatalism. This is in contrast to the common perceptions of the other primary rural American icons, all of whom have influenced the nation and changed their lives for the better. While historically, these icons may have been influenced and controlled by the actions of others, the common perception of them is that they were self-made men who struggled and succeeded in controlling their destiny. For example, three prominent mythic rural American icons: the midwestern farmer, the cowboy of Texas and the Southwest and the 49ers of California have all changed their own history and conquered their environment. The farmer had often pulled up everything and moved his family to the Great Plains. He endured drought, tornadoes and locust infestations while bending the land to his will. Eventually, he created the farmland that provides the nation with food. The 49er also moved himself and his belongings across a

continent in order to seek wealth. He settled the land around San Francisco, and made California a recognizable place on the map. His success spurred others to join him and to eventually settle the west.

The cowboy is perhaps the greatest American rural icon. He also found a way to live in harmony with the land and to create his own fortune. He drove cattle from the plains to the great cattle stations in the cities. Along the way he learned how to provide for himself and his cattle from what the land offered. He also defended his cattle and land from attacks by bandits and others. The great image of the cowboy is of him breaking a wild horse to the saddle. This is a perfect metaphor for how the cowboy conquered the west.

In contrast to all of these icons, the mountaineer has never been able to manufacture his own history. He has, for the most part, been extremely isolationist to the point where he cannot or will not take action that involved others. All of the important events that have changed the mountains: The Civil War, the coming of the coal barons, and the rise of the unions, were all begun by someone outside of the mountains who dragged the mountaineer into the situation. In addition, once in these situations the mountaineer seemed to be content to ride it out and wait for a change in the outcome. Only when prodded to the greatest extremes did the mountaineer take up the challenge and try to change his situation. Out of all of the rural American icons, the

mountaineer is still the only one viewed in a less heroic image.

However, the mountaineer has been a powerful presence in many aspects of American culture. Bluegrass music is derived almost exclusively from the Appalachians and has become a popular musical style, influencing blues, rock and country. The stories told for generations by mountain storytellers have been collected and published in numerous volumes. The legendary figures of the mountains have become a part of the American mythological canon. The stories of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett, the two best known mountaineers, have both been made into major films. In addition, the stereotype of the mountaineer is seen in everything from the Snuffy Smith comic strip to the Clampetts on The Beverly Hillbillies. Yet this has not fully translated to increased exposure for the mountaineer on the American stage. Since the end of the Second World War, only a handful of plays have attempted to portray the mountaineer and his society on the stage.

The mountaineer's specific character evolved over time and is the result of long periods of geographical isolation. Indeed, many mountaineers in the Southern Appalachians share common traits with other mountain people throughout the world. Jack Weller, a noted sociologist and resident of the Appalachians, compares the mountaineer to middle class America in his book Yesterday's People.

Through this comparison the characteristics which define the mountaineer are revealed. Weller claims that the mountaineer has several common traits that make up his nature: individualism, traditionalism, fatalism, action seeking, the psychology of fear, and people orientation (Weller Yesterday's People 9-45). These traits have evolved over time. Weller says "Just as the rubbing shoe, unknown to the wearer, begins to put calluses on the foot, changing its contour, so the mountaineer has had calluses rubbed on his mind and soul, worn there by the constant brushes of life against a tight environment and an economy that denied him room to develop freely" (Weller 29). These are the traits which dramatists incorporated into the most resonant and accurate mountaineer characters.

The first trait is individualism. Many of the first settlers in the Appalachian region were either second sons without any inheritance or indentured servants who were recently freed. They settled in the hollows and valleys of the mountains, cut off from their neighbors by the mountains that stood between them. Because of the poor quality of the soil on the mountainsides, large amounts of land were needed to feed families. Therefore, the mountaineer claimed this land and was not willing to share it with his neighbors. However, over the years this independence was transformed into an extreme individualism because of the lack of interactive social activity within the mountain

community. Due to the distance and difficulty of travel, very few community activities were held. Therefore the mountaineer became concerned with the personal success of only himself and his family. Weller defines the difference between independence and individualism by saying "A man with independence may well work in his own way for a cooperative and common good. Surely many of the great leaders of the world have been independent thinkers..." (Weller 30-31). Weller continues, saying "Individualism, on the other hand, has a self directed quality in it: a man works, perhaps in independent ways, with his own gain or well being in mind. It is to this quality of individualism that the mountaineer's independence has come. All that he does has the self and its concerns at heart" (Weller 31). As evidence of this trait, Weller cites a study where the mountaineers were asked whether or not public welfare was a positive thing. Weller says "...six out of seven respondents agreed that it is, and two out of three indicated that there is no stigma attached to a family's being on relief" (Weller 32). The mountaineer has no problem accepting welfare and not contributing to the economic life of his community in order to aid his family. Clearly the individualistic nature of the mountaineer has alienated him from his community and the nation at large, and prevented him from bettering himself and the communities in which he lives.

Another trait of the mountaineer is traditionalism. The

mountaineer has a regressive outlook and lives for the past (Weller 34). The life of the mountaineer is difficult; as a farmer his crop yields were often small because of poor productivity, and life in the mines was always dangerous. In addition, there was little to look forward to in terms of advancement. Because of his limited outlook, the mountaineer cannot visualize himself leaving the family and community to seek a better life elsewhere. Due to these factors, the mountaineer tends to not care about the future, and views the past with an idyllic eye. They tend to forget the troubles of the past and remember the good times shared with family and friends.

This trait also manifests itself in the way the mountaineer views his possessions. This viewpoint can be seen in the "existence-oriented" nature of the mountaineer. Weller says "the existence oriented society...is geared toward achieving only the very basic goods needed for survival—food, clothing, shelter and a minimum of comfort. The secondary goals of beauty, excellence, refinement...are not considered" (Weller 35). He then describes how this applies to the mountaineer, saying "Even when a coal miner is enjoying a good income...his house...may show no sign of improvement, and his cultural investment for himself and his family may not change" (Weller 35). The prevalence of this traditional, existence oriented society is not only seen in the neighborhoods and lifestyles of the mountaineer, but is also

reflected in the music and stories that are told. Weller writes "Much of mountain music is nostalgic and melancholy" (Weller 34), and the subject matter of many of these songs is past heroes of the area or forbidden loves in older times. It is no coincidence the the Southern Appalachians are one of the last areas in America where storytelling is still alive as a popular art form.

Another trait of the mountaineer that is closely linked to the traditional outlook is fatalism. Due to their traditional religious outlook, many mountaineers have embraced the concept of predestination. It is this belief that allows the coal miner to return to an often unsafe mine day after day. One mountaineer expressed his viewpoint, saying "If that's the way God wants it, I reckon that's the way it'll be. We just have to take what the Lord sends us. He knows best" (Weller 37-38). In addition, this fatalism reinforces the idea that poverty is a holier state of being than wealth, because if God wanted the mountaineer to be rich he wouldn't have placed them in the mountains. The past failures of the mountaineer are the reason for this current outlook. He tried to farm hillsides that gave him a poor crop yield which decreased year after year. Then the timber and mineral rights to his land were bought from him for pennies. After all of this the mountaineer had learned not to hope or plan for the future or try to effect change. Fatalism became a solid tenet of the mountaineer philosophy.

Another aspect of the mountaineer philosophy is the concept of the mountain man as an "action seeker" (Weller 40). The action seeker eschews the normal, routine life. He or she lives a life that is "...episodic. During the routines he cannot escape, he usually just exists, waiting for the next episode of action that will provide the real meat of life" (Weller 41). For the mountaineer, these episodes could be fishing or hunting trips, sporting events or social gatherings. Routine pursuits are endured so that the mountaineer can participate in these moments of excitement. School and church as two examples of this. The mountaineer child will sit through school so he can play football or basketball. However, he makes no attempt to improve himself through education (Weller 42). Church works the same way. Weller writes "He (the mountaineer) tends not to be a churchgoer, since church is routine. On occasion, however, he may attend tent meetings and revivals, but such attendance really bears out his need for action" (Weller 42).

Even the professions of the mountaineer are ones that are based on excitement and uncertainty. In the old mines, the slate and rock was blasted away from the coal through the use of explosives. These charges were often unstable and would explode too soon or not at all. Even when new, safer explosive charges replaced the older ones, the "thrill" of working in the mines still remained. Weller writes "The dangers involved, the constant movement of the job into ever new

areas of work....even the walkout and the strike--all lend an excitement to the work that is anything but routine" (Weller 43). Even the traditional mountain jobs of logging and farming were fraught with uncertainties and exciting to the mountaineer. The logger's job allowed him to move freely through the mountains, seeing new people and areas each day. In addition, there was a great amount of danger as the logger could easily be maimed or killed by falling trees on the steep hillsides. Even the Appalachian farmers were constantly faced with the uncertainty of the weather and the crop yields. For many a subsistence farmer, a poor crop yield meant hunger for him and his family. The mountaineer's love of these uncertain lifestyles has hampered his ability to provide a stable, constant income for his family.

Interestingly enough, the mountain women embrace the idea of routine much more so than their male counterparts. Most of the men draw their social contacts from work, and have little use for such activities as the PTA or church groups. The women, in contrast, are almost always unemployed and have to gain their social connections elsewhere. Many then join church or school groups that meet on a regular basis. In addition, the daily routines of cleaning, cooking and taking care of children give the mountaineer women a clearer sense of routine.

Another element of the mountaineer's persona is his orientation

towards people rather than career goals. An object oriented person works towards the achievement of goals and objectives that will better herself and her community. While this is seen in some parts of the mountain culture, the majority of mountaineers are people oriented. This means that they place personal relationships above career objectives. Weller describes it well, saying "The person oriented individual also strives, but not for objects...He wants to be liked, accepted and noticed...he is reluctant to separate himself from any group in which he finds this acceptance" (Weller 50). The common misconception among mountaineers is that an object oriented person is cynical, manipulative and ruthlessly ambitious. Many mountain men refuse to take positions of authority over their peers because they are afraid of being thought of in this manner. In addition, many of the mountaineers who have achieved positions of power (such as a union foreman) will not be removed from that position despite their success or failure. To do so would be to insult the holder of that position, and the mountaineer is too oriented towards people's feelings for that ever to happen.

This has both positive and negative aspects for the mountaineer. He is on very good terms with his neighbor and lives an unhurried lifestyle. Small errands to borrow sugar or get information almost always become 20-30 minute informal conversations. The mountaineer

is almost always willing to put aside meetings or work if a neighbor needs help changing a flat or watching her kids. However, this type of behavior has caused tremendous headaches for relief agencies trying to assist the mountaineer. In addition, this lack of ambition is partly to blame for the constant state of poverty that the mountaineer lives in. This is one of the reasons that it took the coal miners of the Southern Appalachians so long to organize into unions. While their Northern counterparts were quick to see the benefits of a strong union, and elected good negotiators as their leaders, the miners in the south were apprehensive about the organizers. In fact, most of the organizers and strategists for the United Mine Workers came from the north. The Southern Appalachian mountaineer was too "people oriented" to push for change, as such an action would embarrass the mine management (who the mountaineer knew) and would be perceived as an ambitious grab for power.

The final important trait of the mountaineer is the relationship of the mountaineer to fear. Many instances have been recorded of the bravery of the mountaineer in combat or when faced by disasters such as flood or mine explosions. However, Weller claims that "In daily life, however, mountain society is filled with apprehension" (Weller 44). Parents control their children through fear, and public presentations are greeted with dread. Much of this relates to the people oriented

nature of the mountaineer. He doesn't want to appear pushy or foolish in front of his family and peers, and is thus unwilling to participate in public activities. Even the mountaineer family reinforces this. Weller writes "The members of a family...are bound to each other by ties of emotional dependence which tend to increase insecurity...the family is not so much a mutually supporting group...as it is a group in which each member demands support from the others" (Weller 45). The mountaineer only feels comfortable when he is in security of the familiar. The fear of the unknown or unfamiliar has prevented the mountaineer from moving his family off of unfertile land or out of the unsanitary coal camps. It has lead them to become trapped in an unprofitable and unchanging way of life.

Chapter 3

Analysis of Dramatic Literature

A. Dark of the Moon

One of the most popular plays to incorporate the mountaineer character was William Richardson's and William Berney's Dark of the Moon. Written in 1945, Dark of the Moon tells the story of John, a witch boy in the Smokey Mountains. John sees Barbara Allen, a mountain girl, and asks the Conjur Man and Woman to make him human so he can marry her. Conjur Woman agrees, but only on two conditions: John can never enter a church and Barbara Allen must remain faithful to him for an entire year. After he agrees, John is transformed into a human and goes into the town. At first, the townsfolk are suspicious of him, but Barbara immediately gravitates to the stranger. She recognizes him as the same man she spent a night with before he was human. Despite the protestations of her father and Marvin Hudgens (who wants to marry her himself), Barbara agrees to marry John although the family knows nothing about him. However, when John bests Marvin in both a wrestling match and in a lifting contest, the townspeople begin to wonder if he is a witch. When John

refuses to be married in a church, and gives Barbara a ring from a dead member of the community, their suspicions are confirmed. After the wedding, when John is finally human, he discovers that life in the mountains is difficult, and he labors over the smallest tasks. Finally when Barbara delivers their baby from the night they spent together when he was a witch, it is born dead, deformed and black. The townspeople then know that the birth of the witch baby is proof of John's heritage. Meanwhile, up on the mountains, the two witches from John's past make a bet with Conjur Man that Barbara Allen will be unfaithful and John will still stay with her. If they win, Conjur Man agrees to kill Barbara Allen. In the next scene, Barbara's family has dragged her to a revival being held by Preacher Hagglar. At the revival, Barbara reveals the agreement made between John and the Conjur Woman, including the fact that she has been faithful to him throughout the year, which ends tonight. Upon hearing this, the preacher pushes Barbara forward, encouraging someone to sleep with her so that she is no longer married to a witch and her soul can be saved. Marvin then declares his love for Barbara, and the two are forced together by the members of the congregation. Meanwhile, John has asked Conjur Woman for another chance with Barbara. Conjur Man, living up to his end of the bet, has told John that he will kill Barbara at the end of the night. Finally Barbara arrives and tells John of how they

forced her to be unfaithful. John reveals that he has to leave her, and tells her that she will die. The play ends as Barbara dies in John's arms, and then he transforms back into a witch and runs off into the mountains.

Dark of the Moon is based on the popular Appalachian "Ballad of Barbara Allen." The story was taken from this historic ballad, and the authors have remained close to the original song. In addition, the structure of Dark of the Moon allows for an interesting exploration of Appalachian mountain society. Richardson and Berney have intermingled scenes set in private locations with those set in public forums. This alternating structure allows the authors to show how these mountaineers react in various situations. The first introduction of the mountaineer characters in the play comes in act I, scene ii, where the townsfolk have gathered together to have a dance. These were traditionally popular in Appalachia, as they allowed the community to gather together and exchange information. Those attitudes are shown in this scene. Mrs Bergen and Uncle Smelicue exchange pleasantries and information. She says "You Lookin' spry. Heerd tell as how you were tuckered up rheumatism" (Richardson and Berney, Dark of the Moon 9). Mrs. Summey also gives some information to the community, saying "Uncle Smelicue...Heerd yer cousin Emmer married a right well-to-do man" (Richardson, Berney 9). The casual way that information is

given and shared reinforces the idea of the mountaineer as people-oriented. There is no fighting amongst those gathered, as they all know their social roles for the dance. It is only when a stranger, John, enters the group that things become tense and uncertain. Still when John proves himself by wrestling Marvin, he is accepted into the group, having gone through an unofficial "trial" of sorts. In addition, Richardson and Berney also use these scenes to reinforce the traditional nature of the mountaineer. When asked about his rheumatism, Smelicue replies "My rheumatism's kinda calmed down sinst I been totin' them horse chestnuts around in my pocket" (Richardson and Berney 9). Smelicue relies on a traditional remedy, despite whatever medical evidence there is to the contrary.

Richardson and Berney also show the mountaineer society in the fourth scene of the play. Set in the general store, they once again present the audience with a large gathering of mountaineers who have arrived and are simply sharing information. This is an example of the "people-oriented" nature of the mountaineer. Throughout the entire scene, there is only one purchase made, and even that is done in a leisurely manner. Most of the mountaineers are content to hang around the store and share gossip and stories. Later in the scene, when John and Barbara appear and ask to be married, Richardson and Berney show the audience another aspect of mountaineer culture. The

acceptance by the mountaineers of a wedding in a general store displays the "action seeker" in their lifestyle. This is something that otherwise wouldn't happen, and it captivates the townspeople. Despite some protestation, the preacher agrees to perform the service. The fact that neither parent is present for their daughter's wedding echoes a trait Weller describes in Yesterday's People. Weller writes "...the wedding is often thought of as 'doing what's necessary' rather than being an experience that is planned for...often the young couple will just 'decide to get married' one weekend...going to find any 'preacher' who will perform the service right away" (Weller 73). This is exactly what John and Barbara do in Dark of the Moon. John says"...Preacher, we'd like to get married right away...We wants to git married to-day and right now" (Richardson and Berney 37). While the mountaineer townsfolk are surprised by this announcement, the only objections are raised when John and Barbara refuse to get married in a church. The mountaineer accepts the speed of the engagement and marriage ceremony because it adds excitement to their lives.

Richardson and Berney also show the mountaineer culture at home when the scene shifts to the Allen cabin in scene three. In private, the Allen family displays several of the archetypal mountaineer traits. The Allens, particularly Mr. Allen, are the characters that are the most similar to Weller's definition of the mountaineer in the play. The

Allens are definatly superstitious and traditional. Floyd asks his mother when hog killing time is, and she responds "The signs ain't right yit, son. Got to slop the hawgs till the signs git right" (Ricardson and Berney 17). The Allens also show the individualism in Weller's character definition. Mrs. Allen says, when asked about a social worker "Social worker say a heap aside her prayers. She edicated" (Richardson and Berney 17). This is delivered with a sense of amused scorn. Later in the scene, when the preacher has come by to try to arrange a marriage for John to Barbara, Mr. Allen disagrees, saying "I ain't got no truck with furriners" (Richardson and Berney 23). He also argues that "...he ain't fer me. You don't know nothin' about him...Hit jes seem quare somehow" (Richardson and Berney 24). The Allens also show the people-orientation and hospitality that the mountaineer is known for. When Preacher Haggler arrives, Mr. Allen offers him a chair, saying "Howdy, Preacher Haggler. Draw you up a char and set a spell" (Richardson and Berney 19). Later in the scene, Mr. Allen shares his whiskey with the preacher, and Mrs. Allen even offers to cook him a meal. Only after all of these pleasantries have been exchanged does the preacher reveal the reason he came to visit. Even John, stranger that he is, is offered a meal when he arrives at the cabin. Mrs. Allen says "(to John) Kin I git you some supper?" (Richardson and Berney 23). Richardson and Berney show the native mountaineer culture in

comparison with that of outsiders in this scene. The slow, relaxed way of business that Mr. Allen and Preacher Haggler engage in is shown in direct contrast to John's quick, staccato replies to the questions asked by Mr. Allen and Mrs. Allen. The Allens are shown as an average mountain family, and Richardson and Berney have tried to portray them accurately.

Despite all of this, Dark of the Moon fails to portray completely any single mountaineer character. Mr. Allen, Preacher Haggler, Marvin Hudgens and the rest of the townspeople all have certain mountaineer characteristics, yet none of them are fully developed into more than caricatures. John, as the main character, is too much of an outsider to ever become a "true" mountaineer. Even when he becomes fully human, John still remains hopeful for the future, and never becomes trapped in the fatalism and traditionalism that is the hallmark of the mountain culture. At the end of the play, as his life is falling apart, John still approaches Conjur Woman begging for another chance. He says "I want you to give me another chanst...let me be human jes' a little while longer" (Richardson and Berney 69). John's continual hope is the opposite of the traditional mountaineer outlook. Even Barbara Allen, a mountain woman, is too hopeful to be classified as a mountaineer. Barbara never reconciles herself to her fate until the very end. Throughout the play she defends John and her lifestyle to

the members of the community. Even when her baby is born deformed and dead, she still defends John instead of accepting the status quo. When they question whether John has left her, she says "He ain't left me! He come back" (Richardson and Berney 49). It is necessary for these two characters to be optimistic and hopeful if the drama is to be successful. However, the very traits that make them heroic are opposite the traditional traits of the mountaineer.

B. The Plays of Romulus Linney

Romulus Linney has also explored the character of the mountaineer in his plays. He is one of the most prolific contemporary American playwrights, having written over 30 plays in a thirty year period. Linney is also special amongst American authors as he has incorporated many of the stories and legends of the Appalachians into plays, notably Tennessee (1979), Sand Mountain Matchmaking and Why the Lord Come to Sand Mountain (1985). Linney also wrote Holy Ghosts, a play which deals with Pentecostal Church Snakehandlers, which could be set in the same geographical area. However, Linney defines the location of Holy Ghosts as "The rural South," (Linney The Sorrows of Frederick and Holy Ghosts 98) and therefore it is not a subject for this study.

However, Tennessee and the Sand Mountain series are directly linked to the Southern Appalachian mountains. All three plays come directly from stories and legends told in the region. In addition, Linney has made a mountain man or woman the focus of these plays. Linney has attempted to portray an archetypal mountaineer character as a driving force in these stories, and has succeeded in creating an interesting theatrical portrayal of the mountaineer.

Linney has set Tennessee in the Appalachian mountains of North

Carolina in 1870. In it he tells the story of an old woman who appears at a mountaineer's house one day. The woman then tells the family that her family once lived in their cabin. Then, through a flashback, she relates how she married a young man who promised to take her to Tennessee. She tells them that after a long and difficult trip, she and her husband made it to Tennessee. They lived a difficult life there until her husband died and she left. After a few days of travelling, she arrived at the family's cabin. Having seen clues on her journey, the old woman reveals that her husband only drove her a short distance away and told her that they were in Tennessee. In reality, she was only seven miles away from her family and friends.

Linney has taken this story from a popular Appalachian folktale. In the book Where Time Stood Still, authors Bruce and Nancy Roberts write:

The story is still told in the Appalachian Mountains of the young man who abducted his sweetheart because her family opposed their marriage. He carried her away with him deep into the mountains and built a cabin for his bride at the edge of a dense forest. One day several years later, when her husband was out hunting, she decided to go berry picking. She wandered farther and farther into the woods in search of berries and finally, as she crossed a stream, saw a cabin a short distance away. To her surprise she recognized the

home of her parents! For five years she had been living only three miles from her family, unknown to them or her. (Bruce and Nancy Roberts, Where Time Stood Still 1).

While the story is slightly different from Tennessee, the similarities are unmistakable. Linney has only exaggerated the story in order to make the play more dramatic and tragic. In addition, by increasing the amount of time that the old woman spent away from her family, Linney has illustrated several of the key characteristics of the mountaineer.

The primary mountaineer characteristic that is a key part of the old woman is her fatalism. She accepts everything that has happened to her, even when the truth is revealed. Instead of moving back with friends or her family, she decides to return to "Tennessee." She says "That damn man! Whew. Shoo. Well, that's that. Think you lived all your life in Tennessee. Find out you didn't...Good Luck...Bye" (Linney Tennessee 23). When she is asked where she is going, she replies "Back to Tennessee. Where else?" (Linney 23). In addition, she also displays the mountaineer's trait of individualism earlier in the play. When asked about her choices for marriage, she says "Damn men...Wanting to lie on top of me one minute, and work me to death the next...Well I won't! I won't leave this house, and you, to be plowed under like dirt by some sweating, groaning, bone-headed man! Hell no!" (Linney 12).

Despite the fact that her entire family wants her to marry, the Old Woman refuses to do so until she gets what she wants. This is a clear case of the mountaineer's individualistic trait. Another characteristic of the mountaineer culture that Linney incorporated into the characters in Tennessee was people-orientation. Although the family on the porch doesn't know the old woman, they immediately offer her a place to rest and food to eat. They ask her about her story and patiently answer her questions. This interplay between strangers is common in the mountains, and is a clear example of inter-personal orientation. The action-orientation of the mountaineer is also seen in the Old Woman's decision to go to Tennessee. She doesn't know what is in Tennessee, but in her mind it has to be more interesting than her current situation. This is another element of the mountaineer's psyche.

However, possibly due to the length of the play, Linney fails to incorporate several key mountaineer elements into his main character. The Old Woman defies both her parents and her family in making her own decision about whom she will marry. While this is a good example of her individualism, it also flies in the face of the traditional nature of the mountaineer. If Linney had incorporated the traditional beliefs of the mountains, then the Old Woman would have been wed to whomever her father chose. In addition, Linney also doesn't incorporate the relationship to fear and the unknown that any

mountaineer moving to a new area would encounter. Although it appears as though the Old Woman has a few regrets, for the most part she is the one pushing for Tennessee and willing to leave home. She never appears apprehensive about her trip or future. Because these traits are omitted, the Old Woman is not a complete portrayal of the mountaineer archetype, although she comes close.

Linney has also written two other plays set in the Southern Appalachians. His Sand Mountain series is composed of two short plays, Sand Mountain Matchmaking and Why the Lord Come to Sand Mountain. Both plays have mountaineers as central figures, and both explore the mountaineer's relationship to others. Sand Mountain Matchmaking tells the story of Rebecca Tull, a young mountain widow from Virginia who is seeking remarriage. Although several mountain men offer themselves to her, she refuses to marry them because of their attitudes. Finally, in frustration, she seeks the wisdom of Lottie, an ancient mountain woman. Lottie tells Rebecca to say a simple sentence to each of the men, and she will know which man to marry based on their responses. The sentence is "A man's horn is three times the size of his nose" (Linney Sand Mountain Matchmaking 71). Lottie claims that this charm will work, and, although she is doubtful, Rebecca does as she is told. After several men walk away embarrassed, a mountain man named Sam Bean arrives, intrigued by Rebecca's

boldness with the other men. After a brief give-and-take negotiation, they agree to continue seeing each other.

Sand Mountain Matchmaking exposes the audience to a variety of mountaineers and explores several of Weller's archetypal traits. Rebecca's first three suitors are all different aspects of the mountaineer. Clink, the first one, is a young virile man who says he "Tolerates a woman's carnal nature" (Linney 66). He is followed by Slate, who asks her to sleep with him immediately, because "...you'll take the man will have you, take him fast and gladly. There's worse than me" (Linney 67). Her third suitor, Radley, appears to be a gentleman, but spends his entire time with her quoting the Bible. These three men can be seen as different aspects of the same mountaineer. Clink is the young, strong man, who knows what he wants from his wife, and expects her to know her place. Slate is an older version of Clink, having been worn down by the mountain and the years. After all of this, he has little use for pleasantries and conversation, and so is even more blunt than Clink. Radley, the third, can be viewed as one of the more sophisticated mountaineers, having the ability to read. Still he shares many of the same attitudes as the other two, but uses the Bible to justify his actions. One element that all of these men share is their belief in traditionalism. All three warn Rebecca about what she can expect as an unmarried woman on the

mountain. They expect a woman to know her place, and to care for the man and take care of the family. Slate tells Rebecca about his friend, who took a wife who could read and write like Rebecca. He explains how this woman waited for a man, but was finally reduced to marrying, and now she accepts her role in mountaineer society. He says "She don't talk to nobody now. She tends his younguns...and HIS meals, and HIS clothes...and everythang else that's HIS, afore she even commences pondering anything that's HERS. It will happen to you..." (Linney 67). In addition, all three men have a fatalistic belief that Rebecca will cave in to their charms. All three leave her by declaring that they'll be back, and all tell her that she will marry them.

Rebecca, in contrast, holds none of these beliefs. She came to Sand Mountain from Virginia, and, as the daughter of a preacher, knows how to read and write. She also has definite opinions of what she wants in a man, and is strongly independent. Although these are not typical mountain woman traits, Rebecca still possesses enough mountaineer traits to make her a mountain woman. She has a strong respect for her parents and her elders, as is shown in the scene with Lottie. Although Lottie first appears as a batty old woman full of homespun philosophies, Rebecca never disdains her or treats her badly. In addition, Rebecca's parents are pushing her back into marriage, and she acquiesces to their wishes. This respect for one's elders are examples

of both the "person-orientation" and traditionalism seen in the mountaineers. Another example of Rebecca's person-orientation is in the way that she treats her first three suitors. Although they are all rude and insulting to her, she maintains her decorum until they leave, and never lets them know how rude she found them.

Rebecca is also very individualistic. She has agreed to marry again, but wants it to be on her terms. She rejects the men who offer her nothing but work. Finally, when Sam arrives, she asks him a slew of questions to make sure that he respects her as a person. They "Talk turkey and squirrel" (Linney 75), and Rebecca asks Sam about his faithfulness to her. She says "How long you calculate hit'd be, Mr. Bean, afore you got plumb tired and familiar with me in that great feather bed...turning away from me and my comfort, to your own?" (Linney 75). Rebecca is assuring herself that the man she marries will be honest and faithful to her. Because she does this, and does not accept the traditional offers of the other suitors, Rebecca is seen as an individualistic woman who has several mountaineer traits

Despite this, there are no fully developed mountaineers in Sand Mountain Matchmaking. Rebecca's early suitors are described as mountaineers, yet they do not have enough stage time to validate that claim with actions and words. Rebecca herself is too much of an outsider to be a true mountaineer. She is a rarity in the mountains, a

strong willed woman who can read and write and knows what she wants in a husband. Rebecca's expression of her individualism is also one of the things that prevents her from being a complete portrayal of a mountaineer woman. Sam, although possibly one of the most mountain-based characters in the play, is too interested in Rebecca's strangeness to be a traditional mountaineer. Lottie, the old mountain woman, certainly reflects the traditionalism and fatalism of the mountains with her homespun remedies, but she is only present for a short scene and appears as more of a caricature than a full character. Thus, the main characters in Sand Mountain Matchmaking help to illustrate the character of the mountaineer by showing the audience what the mountaineer is not. Their positive traits, combined with the negativity and selfishness shown by the mountaineer characters, show the mountaineer as an extremely negative and unflattering dramatic character.

Linney also explores the traditionalism and fatalism of the mountaineer's life in the second part of the Sand Mountain series, Why the Lord Come to Sand Mountain. The story, a revised version of the classical Baucus and Philomon myth, has been a staple of Appalachian storytelling for years. It begins with an introduction by an Appalachian storyteller, who introduces herself to the audience and sets the scene. Jesus and Saint Peter then appear and ask the

storyteller for directions to Sand Mountain. They then proceed to Sand Mountain, meeting a wealthy farmer who invites them to spend the night with him. Jesus and Saint Peter decline, and the Lord then says that he has found the shack he was looking for. The two then stop for the night at the house of Jean and Jack, two poor mountaineers. The two welcome Jesus and Saint Peter into their home and share their poor supper with them. After supper, Jack, Jean and Jesus all share tall tales from the mountains that they had heard. Their stories are simple and amusing, and by the end of the night everyone is in a good mood. Finally, Jesus encourages the two mountaineers to tell him the story of his birth. Soon afterwards, Jesus and Peter retire for the night. The next morning, Jesus gives the couple a magical gift of clothing, and he and Peter leave to go home. The play ends with the storyteller telling us how she believes in the story.

Once again, Linney has chosen to explore the traditionalism and fatalism of the mountaineer. He does this through the characters of Jack and Jean, the mountain couple that Jesus and Saint Peter visit. Through Saint Peter's opening remarks, the traditional state of Jack and Jean's household is established. Peter knowingly asks Jack "Old Man, Young Woman. Whiskey. You two married? (*They look at each other, then shake their heads*) You go to church? At all? (*Same*)" (Linney 83). This is how many of the poorer mountaineers have lived for centuries,

and it is the only life they've ever known. Jack explains this to the Lord, saying "...what with the chillun being so puny and poorly, we stopped going places much, and afore we knowed it, we wus living up here alone" (Linney 83). Jack has slid into his situation, not caring about the changes until it was too late. This is the sort of fatalistic attitude that is prevalent throughout mountaineer society, and still remains a force in many mountaineers today.

In addition to the fatalism seen in Jean and Jack, Linney also explores the traditionalism and people orientation that are hallmarks of the mountaineer character. Jack and Jean give everything that they have to the Lord and to Saint Peter, even though they aren't sure of their identities. They invite them in and feed them, although they barely have enough to feed their family. This is a clear example of the mountaineer's person-orientation. In addition, the traditional nature of mountaineer culture and customs is shown when Jack, Jean and the Lord begin to tell stories. Jack's admission, earlier, that he and Jean didn't get out much is an important element in this. Since they haven't been in a social environment, the stories that Jack and Jean tell have obviously been passed down through the generations. Their method of telling them, as well as the hospitality offered to the Lord and Saint Peter, are obvious examples of mountaineer traditionalism.

While these are strong arguments for Jack and Jean as a true

mountain couple, they are not fully developed in the play, and do not fulfill the mountaineer archetypal requirements. Linney uses Jack and Jean as storytellers, and he does not explore their relationship to fear or their action orientation. In Why the Lord Come to Sand Mountain, the three mountain folk : Jack, Jean, and Gen Sang, the narrator, all focus on telling the story and advancing the plot. Their characters are never fully developed because they don't need to be in order for the play to work. Thus, although Linney has several plays set in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, he has yet to incorporate a complete mountaineer character into his plays.

C. The Kentucky Cycle

One of the most recent dramatic works to explore the world of the mountaineer is Robert Schenkkan's The Kentucky Cycle (1992). This two night theatrical event is composed of nine one act plays that tell the history of a county in Kentucky over the course of two hundred years. Schenkkan explores the evolutions and changes that six generations of three different families participate in. Based loosely on Caudill's Night Comes to the Cumberlands, The Kentucky Cycle depicts the effects and reactions of major historical events upon the lives of these mountaineers.

The Kentucky Cycle opens with its first play, titled Masters of the Trade. In it the audience is introduced to Michael Rowen, an indentured servant who has recently moved to Kentucky in search of land and freedom. He meets Earl Tod, a trader, in an open clearing near a river. During their conversation, Michael reveals that he was from a town named Zion, which had been destroyed by Cherokees wielding rifles. Just as he confirms that it was Tod who sold the Cherokees the rifles, Tod is shot by Michael's friend, Sam. The Cherokees then approach, and Michael promises them more rifles and ammunition in exchange for land. As part of the deal, the Cherokees demand revenge

for Tod's murder, whereupon Michael swiftly stabs Sam with his knife. The play ends with Michael telling the dying Sam that the blankets that he has given to the Cherokees were poxed, so they are revenged for Zion's massacre. The play ends with Michael surveying his new land as Sam dies at his feet.

The second play in the series is entitled The Courtship of Morning Star. This play opens with Michael Rowen, slightly older, dragging home an Indian maiden named Morning Star to be his wife. She tries to escape when he is sleeping, only to find that he has tied her to him. She then tries to kill him and run away, but Michael tracks her down and cuts her Achilles tendon, insuring that she'll never leave him. The next scene is a dream sequence by Star as she relates the fate of the poxed tribe and her own trials at the hands of Michael. One of these involves the birth of her daughter, who Michael takes away and leaves on a mountain to die. At the end of this scene, it is revealed that Star has given birth to a son. The final scene in The Courtship of Morning Star has Morning Star nursing her baby, while Michael refuses to accept his role as a parent.

The third play in The Kentucky Cycle is entitled The Homecoming. The play opens with Patrick Rowen, the sixteen year old son of Michael and Morning Star, hunting on a field away from their cabin. He is joined by Rebecca Talbert, a young girl of fourteen who he is enamored

of. They discuss how they are going to tell their parents that they want to get married. Patrick then sees his father returning from a trip into Lexington, and returns home to greet him. When he arrives, he sees that his father has brought home a slave, named Sallie Biggs, to work in their fields. Michael also announces his plan to breed Sallie to himself, and to leave Patrick out of any inheritance. Patrick demands a share of what is his, and he and his father get into an argument. Star distracts Michael by pushing lye soap into his eyes, and Patrick stabs him. Just then, Rebecca Talbert and her father Joe appear, having witnessed Michael's murder. Joe and Star reveal that they were planning to run away together, and then Joe demands that Patrick be tried for murder. Star pleads on his behalf, and gets Joe to agree to let Patrick leave the land and move west. Patrick moves to bury his father, but then whirls around and kills Joe with his father's pistol, claiming "This is *my* land! *Rowen* land! I ain't leavin'!" (Schenkkan, The Kentucky Cycle 78). He then orders Rebecca into the house, saying "'A man's wife cain't witness against him" (Schenkkan 78). He then orders Star off his land, apologizes to Sallie, and buries his father, asking for a blessing on his marriage from the man he killed.

The fourth installment is called Ties that Bind. At the opening, the audience is introduced to Zach and Zeke Rowen, the children of Patrick and Rebecca. They are wrestling and playing with Jessie Biggs, Sallie's

son, when they are interrupted by Patrick telling them to get ready, as a circuit court is coming to visit. When the court does arrive, it is made up of a judge, several bailiffs and a man known as Jeremiah. The judge reveals that the Rowens have accumulated a substantial debt, and that Jeremiah is their creditor. After hearing this, Patrick explains that he bought and sold everything with Bank of Kentucky money, which was no longer viable currency, yet was all that he had. The money had become devalued when the bank had switched from paper money to silver money, and now he was being forced to default. According to the judge, he owes Jeremiah nine hundred and eight seven dollars and thirty five cents. Patrick agrees to sell his land, but because it has devalued, he still owes Jeremiah some four hundred dollars. Gradually, in order to pay the debt, Patrick sells off his original homestead, his mules, and even his slaves. When he sells his slaves, Sallie reveals to Patrick that his father once slept with her, and Jessie is his half brother. Zach is outraged by the thought of Patrick selling his brother, but Patrick is still willing to do it. Finally, with everything sold to Jeremiah, Patrick still owes him twelve dollars and sixty five cents, which Jeremiah allows him to carry at ten percent a year. After Patrick begs Jeremiah not to throw him off of his land, Jeremiah allows him to sharecrop for him, and arranges it so that he gets 75% of all the crop yields. Jeremiah then reveals that his last name is Talbert, and he is

the son of Joe Talbert, the man who Patrick killed so many years ago. Star also reappears, getting one last look at her son. After the court leaves, Zach also goes, saying he can't stand to be in the same house as a man like his father. The play ends with Patrick being held by Zeke, crying for the loss of Zach, as Zeke swears revenge.

The fifth play in the series is entitled God's Great Supper. It is forty two years later, and the Rowens are still sharecropping for the Talberts. The play opens with Richard Talbert, Jeremiah's son, riding up to the Rowen household to ask Jed Rowen to accompany him as he joins the Army of the Confederacy. Jed and his father, Zeke, have an argument over this, with Zeke reminding Jed of the family feud the two families are in. Jed tells his father to mind his own business and agrees to join Richard in the morning. As soon as Richard leaves, he and his father celebrate that Richard bought Jed's story. They make plans as to when and how Jed can kill Richard and gain revenge for his family. The next day, the army moves out and encounters heavy resistance on the Cumberland river. Richard almost dies, but Jed saves his life, only to kill him by pushing him into the river when they cross. Stuck on the wrong side of the border, Jed hooks up with Quantrill and becomes a part of his famous raiding party. After the brutality witnessed at Lawrence, Kansas, Jed decides that he has had enough of Quantrill, and, with some of the other soldiers, deserts and makes his way back to

Kentucky. There he is greeted by his father and mother, who had just buried Patrick Rowen, his grandfather. The next day the Rowens, accompanied by Jed and his friends, ride out against the Talbert household, killing everyone in sight. Although they kill all of the males, Jed allows two of the Talbert women to live, in addition to freeing a slave family by the name of Biggs. The play ends with Jed freeing the two Talbert women, and them chanting the names of the people who destroyed their family. This is how the first night of The Kentucky Cycle comes to a close.

The second night of The Kentucky Cycle is composed of four plays which deal primarily with the coal industry's entrance into the Appalachians and their influence there. The sixth play of the cycle is entitled Tall Tales, and it is set in 1885 in the house of Jed Rowen. The audience is introduced to Jed's daughter, Mary Anne, as she tells them about how the land used to be before the coal came. The play then shifts in time to when Mary Anne was an adolescent, when she met JT Wells, a storyteller. She and he exchange pleasantries, and she invites him back to her house when she discovers that he is looking for her father. Mary Anne's boyfriend, Tommy Jackson, is jealous of JT and goes back with them to the house. Later, after supper JT entertains Jed, and Lallie, his wife, Mary Anne and Tommy with several stories. After he tells a derivative of the Romeo and Juliet story that insults Tommy,

Tommy gets upset and is sent home by Jed. JT then tells a variation of the Baucis and Philomon story. Afterwards, he expresses his concern for Jed and Lallie's welfare, and offers to purchase the mineral rights to their land from them. After it is explained to Jed that this is just "rock removal," Jed signs the paper. He is also able to negotiate a substantial increase in the amount of money offered to him by JT when he discovers that they will be building a road and using his water. Still, Jed agrees to sell the rights to his land for three hundred and fifty seven dollars. Afterwards, Mary Anne agrees to take JT back to the road. Along the way, Mary Anne attempts to seduce JT and get him to take her with him. Tommy catches them together and attacks JT with a knife. Mary Anne saves him by knocking Tommy unconscious with a shovel. Ashamed of himself and at what he has done, JT tells Mary Anne the truth about the deal that her father has struck with him and tells her to tell her father to tear up his check. The play then returns to the older Mary Anne, who reveals that her father was too stubborn to destroy the check and then tells about how the land and mountains were destroyed by the coming of the coal companies.

The seventh play in the series, entitled Fire in the Hole, explores life in a stereotypical coal camp. Mary Anne has married Tommy, who has become a miner for the Blue Star coal company. They have had four children die on them, and their fifth is very sick when a stranger

appears on their doorstep, asking about spare lodging. At the same time, a cave-in occurs where Tommy is working, and he barely survives the collapse. The stranger, known as Abe, diagnoses the child as sick with typhus, and tells Mary Anne to boil his water, and then asks about lodging again. Mary Anne tentatively agrees, but says that the final decision is up to her husband. He comes home, and after an argument, agrees that Abe can stay as long as he can pay his own way. Abe gets a job with the company on Tommy's recommendation, and prepares to work with him. At the same time, their son, Joshua, gets better and begins to hear Abe and Mary Anne exchange talks about the condition of life in the camps. When asked if he is a union organizer by Tommy, Abe agrees that he is. However, when he starts to talk about the union to Tommy, Tommy shuts him off. Tommy also gets Joshua to go down into the mines with him by faking a birth certificate and taking it to Andrew Talbert Winston, the foreman of the mine. As Tommy, Abe and Joshua end their lunch break, a loud explosion occurs. Although none are killed in the coal bump, enough of their friends are for them to listen to Abe's talk of unionization. They all go on strike, leave their houses and set up tents in a hollow. The coal company tries to drive them out with an armored train, but the miners refuse to be intimidated and arrange to buy some guns from a black miner by the name of Cassius Biggs. Mary Anne gives away the Rowen family watch

to allow them to purchase weapons. However, Tommy, fearing for his life and his family, tells Winston of the location of the gun swap in exchange for the safety of himself and his family. The gun exchange goes horribly wrong and Abe is killed as Joshua watches. When the men return to the camp, there is much talk of who betrayed the miners to the company. Finally Joshua pulls the watch out of his father's vest and describes what he saw. Mary Anne rejects Tommy, saying he "quit on her," and she returns to her maiden name of Rowen as the miners carry off Tommy. The final scene in the play has Mary Anne and the other women leading the men in a charge to take over the mine. They force Winston to give them cash wages and to recognize the union by threatening to blow up his entire operation. He signs the paper and Mary Anne ends the play with a thrilling scream of "Union!" (Schenkkan 264).

The eighth play in the cycle is entitled Which Side are You On?, and it examines the life of a middle aged Joshua Rowen. Joshua has become an executive in the UMW, and spends his time in the county working for the men. He and James Talbert Winston, along with Franklin Biggs, have become the most powerful people in the county. The three of them meet together whenever business forces them to, and their backroom deals make the decisions for the county. Into this mixture comes Scotty Rowen, Joshua's son, who has been fighting in Korea. He

has joined Joshua as a worker for the UMW, and is assigned a job as a field representative. However, while Joshua has become pragmatic, sacrificing things like safety to push deals through, Scotty is idealistic and takes his job seriously. When the men approach him with complaints, he gives them his full attention and tries to correct every wrong. However, this puts him in conflict with his father, who is trying to get a new contract approved that would result in a new round of layoffs. Scotty gets angry at his father for asking him to rubber stamp complaints, and, when he hears complaints about safety at Blue Star, goes against his father's wishes to pull the men out. Soon after that, there is a huge explosion from Blue Star. Although it was originally believed to be a bomb blast, a mine guard confirms that it was a dust explosion. Finally, as Franklin Biggs and James Winston arrive, it is revealed that Scotty was down in the mine when it exploded. The play ends with a reading of the list of the dead, with Scotty's name read last.

The ninth and final play in the series is entitled The War on Poverty. It opens with two grave robbers unearthing a piece of Indian buckskin. They are scared off by rifle fire from a sixty four year old Joshua Rowen. He, James, and Franklin have come out to the mountains to look over property that they are planning to sell for strip mining. As they sit and rest, Josh, James and Franklin remember the good times

before Scotty was killed, and recount a litany of problems that currently plague them. They, like their ancestors, have been forced into bankruptcy and are trying to unload their remaining assets. Still, Josh feels uncomfortable about the destruction of the mountains. He and James get into an argument, and James walks away to cool off. While there, he sees the piece of buckskin that the graverobbers dropped. He pulls it out of the earth and the three of them unwrap it. Inside is a dead Native American baby, perfectly preserved. While James and Franklin argue about who "owns" the baby, Joshua suddenly orders them to put her back in the earth. When James refuses, he threatens him with his rifle, saying that "It makes a Difference!" (Schenkkan 330) what they do with the baby. James backs off and leaves, threatening to sell the land without Josh. Franklin also leaves, promising Josh that he'd think about what was happening to the land. Finally Josh is left alone on stage with the baby. He wraps her back in the buckskin, and then covers her with his own jacket and lays her in the earth. He also places the Rowan family watch next to her. As he does so, the figures of all the characters who have fought over the land come to life behind him and watch. These include Star, finally reunited with her baby daughter, the Talbert family, Mary Anne and Tommy, and finally Scotty, Josh's son. As this happens, a long wolf howl is heard, and Josh turns to see a wolf on the mountain. He fires his rifle

in the air and shouts in exultation as the play ends.

The Kentucky Cycle is one of the most complete presentations of the mountaineer's character and history seen on the contemporary American stage. In it Schenkkan has, at one point or another, incorporated all of Weller's basic mountaineer characteristics in the Rowen family. These are mostly seen in the second half of the play, but can also be detected throughout. In addition, the evolution of these traits can be traced throughout the play.

One of the most obvious of Weller's mountaineer character traits in The Kentucky Cycle is the people orientation of the mountaineers. Even from the beginnings of the play, when Earl Tod invites Michael Rowen to share his food, the hospitality and courtesy with which strangers are treated is evident. From that first episode, this trait is seen again when the circuit court judge and his men are given liquor and a place to sit by Patrick Rowan in the fourth play. In addition to sharing the alcohol, Mr. Grey, a bailiff, and Patrick swap stories about their adventures in the War of 1812, and they have to be interrupted by the judge, who says they could have shared stories all night. This tradition and characteristic is also seen when JT Wells is given food and drink in exchange for a story in Tall Tales. And the same type of hospitality and courtesy is extended to Abe in Fire in the Hole. In each play, although strangers are greeted with suspicion, they are also given good

treatment with nothing expected in return.

The people orientation of the mountaineers in The Kentucky Cycle also extends to how they treat each other within the community. This is most clearly seen in Fire in the Hole and Which Side are You On?, the seventh and eighth plays of the cycle. Here, the community has taken on a life of its own, and people who violate the spirit of the community are punished. In Fire in the Hole the person who violates the community's wishes is Tommy, when he goes to Andrew and tells him of the gun exchange and where it is taking place. Although Tommy was acting to protect his life and the welfare of his family, he betrayed the goals of the group. Mary Anne calls this action "quitting," and rejects him and his name. She says "I thought 'They can tear these mountains apart, but Tommy Jackson won't quit on me'...And then you quit on me. My name is Rowen. Mary Anne Rowen. I got one son, Joshua Rowen, and this man is a stranger to me" (Schenkkan 260). Mary Anne rejects Tommy because he has acted solely in his own interests and has failed to take the other miners' needs into account. As a result of his betrayal Tommy is dragged off and killed. In Which Side are You On, Josh Rowen betrays the community because they looked to him, as leader of the union, to provide for the safety of his men. When they were killed by a problem that he said he had taken care of, the community of mountaineers knew they had been betrayed. Joshua describes the

feelings of alienation and ostracism that he had after the explosion in The War on Poverty. He says "I can't help thinkin' bout things...All those women, all those widows and daughters, standing there in black...lookin' right through me...Or Stucky handin' me Scotty's watch and then walkin' away, not able to shake my hand or even look me in the face" (Schenkkan 325). In both of these instances, one person has placed his own personal needs above those of other people, something that is anathema to the mountaineers. And in both cases, because they violated the people orientation of the mountain communities where they lived, they were severely punished. This aspect of the mountaineer psyche is barely examined elsewhere, yet Schenkkan pays a great deal of attention to it in The Kentucky Cycle.

Another aspect of the mountaineer's character that Schenkkan deals with is their strong belief in traditionalism. The way of doing things as one's forefathers had done is deeply ingrained into the psyche of the mountaineers. One of the advantages of creating a dramatic work that stretches over two hundred years is that the audience can see where these traditions come from. One example of this is the traditional mountaineer outlook on land. To the mountaineers in The Kentucky Cycle, land is a special thing that should be treasured. Michael Rowen realizes this at the end of the first play. He says "'My Land.' Oh, there's a grand sound to that, isn't there?" (Schenkkan 24). Patrick murders

his father for his land, and then defends himself in front of the judge and Jeremiah when they try to take it away. He says "I ain't sellin this land! I got family buried here... This land here...it's all I ever knowed. All I ever wanted. I know...I know every foot of this place" (Schenkkan 103-111). Once a tradition has been established, such as this respect for the land, Schenkkan follows it throughout the play. In the sixth play, Tall Tales, Lallie shares her reservations about Jed selling the land. She says "This land been in your family back before anybody can remember, and I don't think you ought to be sellin' it...even them rocks" (Schenkkan 193). Finally, the modern version of this tradition is seen in Joshua's refusal to allow the strip mining companies into the mountains. The audience is able to see this traditional viewpoint develop and be passed down through the generations because of the epic nature of the play.

Another element dealt with in The Kentucky Cycle is the mountaineer's fatalistic views. Although in the first night of plays the Rowens do not appear fatalistic, they become so when their land is stolen from them by the coal companies. This is shown in the seventh play, Fire in the Hole. In this section, Mary Anne has lost her ancestral home and her family's land. She describes this experience in the end of Tall Tales, the sixth play. She says "They came a couple of years later, just like he said they would and they cut down all the trees, includin'

my oak. I was right about it holdin' up the sky, 'cause when they chopped it down, everythin' fell in: moon 'n stars 'n all" (Schenkkan 206). In the beginning of Fire in the Hole, she describes how she lost four children and has become fatalistic. In the opening monologue, she says "We had five kids, five sons, and every rainy season for four years the fever came and took one of my boys. He's the last, my Joshua. I sit with him now as he burns and I do what ever grievin' mother has done since the beginning of time: I lie" (Schenkkan 212). Although she might hope otherwise, Mary Anne has resigned herself to the fact that her son will join his brothers in death. Even when Abe Steinman, the union organizer, comes by and tells her how to save her child, Mary Anne is still resistant to change. She tells him that she doesn't believe in truth anymore, saying "Truth? Hell, I may be nothing but a dumb hillbilly, but even I know there ain't no such thing as truth" (Schenkkan 231). When asked how she makes it through the day, she replies "Habit!" (Schenkkan 231). This is a clear example of the mountaineer's fatalism. Mary Anne believes that she is incapable of changing her situation, and has learned to endure and suppress her hopes and dreams in order to survive and keep her sanity intact. Tommy Jackson, her husband, has also inured himself to his situation and accepted the fact that he cannot change it. After a coal bump kills several of his friends, Tommy simply replies "He's goin back, we're all goin' back. We

always go back!" (Schenkkan 243). Tommy's fatalism is so deeply ingrained that, when the miners finally go on strike, he betrays his community and asks for his job back and a return to the company life. It isn't until Tommy betrays the community that Mary Anne forces herself to change her situation. Joshua describes it as "rolling a rock offa their hearts" (Schenkkan 262) when Mary Anne finally motivates herself and the other miners to form a union and change their situation. Mary Anne's fatalism is representative of the fatalistic attitudes of many mountaineers who found themselves trapped in the coal camps.

Schenkkan has also incorporated the action seeking aspect of the mountaineer's mentality into the characters in The Kentucky Cycle. The action seeker in the mountaineer drives him to seek the exciting or unexpected. In addition, this trait is used as a reason why the mountaineer disdains scheduling or regimentation of any sort. This is seen several times in The Kentucky Cycle. In Tall Tales, Jed and Lallie Rowen think nothing of JT Wells unexpected visit, and welcome him into their home. No appointments were made by either party. In fact, when JT Wells runs into a young Mary Anne Rowen, he says "That'd be a real pleasure, Miss Rowan. Fact of the matter is, I'm here to see your daddy" (Schenkkan 178). Another aspect of the action seeking personality of the mountaineer is seen in the way Tommy Jackson and the other miners are willing to put themselves at risk in a dangerous

profession. None of the miners even mention the danger of going into the mines when they laid their demands out for the union. Still, despite these examples, this is the one aspect of the mountaineer persona that Schenkkan does not explore fully in The Kentucky Cycle. One possible reason for this is that in order to see this aspect of the mountaineer psyche, one has to observe him in everyday life and note how the uncertainty in life doesn't faze him. However, there are few portrayals of everyday life in The Kentucky Cycle, as Schenkkan has focussed on the turning points in the history of the Rowens.

Another element of the mountaineer's system of beliefs is the mountaineer's relation to fear. Schenkkan explores this in The Kentucky Cycle throughout the play. The mountaineer is often willing to undertake perilous jobs or professions while being unable or unwilling to take control over his fellow mountaineers. The mountaineers in The Kentucky Cycle are not afraid to use violence or face violence in order to get what they want. In addition, the characters in The Kentucky Cycle are willing to place themselves in perilous situations to improve the lives of their fellow men. This is seen in the fifth, seventh and eighth plays of the cycle. In God's Great Supper, the fifth play, Jed Rowen is unswayingly calm and collected in the middle of a battle where the rebels are significantly outnumbered. He saves Richard Talbert's life when he is injured in battle, and helps

him out of the battlefield towards an escape. In addition, when Quantrill's threatens to get his men killed, Jed takes several of the men and leads them to safety. In Which Side are you On, the eighth play, Scotty Rowen also acts bravely to save his fellow miners. Although he is defying his father and the union management, Scotty goes down into an unsafe mine in order to lead the men out. Although there would be terrible repercussions, Scotty does what he feels is vital to the safety and health of the miners.

The mountaineer's relationship to fear is fully explored, moreover, in the seventh play, Fire in the Hole. For here, in addition to showing the bravery and courage exhibited by the mountaineer when faced with disaster, Schenkkan also shows the reticence and fear the mountaineer has about changing his situation. Fire in the Hole has two major cave-ins in the mines, and both times the miners, particularly Tommy Jackson, respond by staying in the unsafe areas and trying to rescue their fellow workers. At the beginning of this section, when Tommy and Mackie are working a seam, Mackie nerves snap and he runs down the gallery. Although the explosives planted minutes before are about to explode, Tommy leaps up to run after him. Only the fact that another miner pulls him down saves Tommy's life. When the explosion causes a slate fall, Tommy immediately takes command, saying "I need some tools here, dammit! Get a doctor! You two get

some timbers and start shorin' this line up 'fore we all get killed!" (Schenkkan 214). Even though the situation is still dangerous, Tommy remains where he is trying to free his trapped friend. Even when ordered out of the gallery by the mine owner, Tommy works so hard to free Mackie that he has to be practically dragged away from the scene of the accident. Yet strangely enough, this certainty, courage and leadership in the face of disaster does not translate into leadership in Tommy's daily life. He refuses to confront the injustices of life in the coal camps when they are pointed out to him by Abe. When Abe starts to bring up the idea of unionization, Tommy cuts him off, saying "Don't say nothin'. Don't tell me nothin'. I don't wanna know" (Schenkkan 223). Later, after a coal bump that kills several of Tommy's friends, Abe pushes the issue, and Tommy responds, angrily, saying "You son of a bitch! What do you know? You ain't from around here! You don't know nothin' about here! Leave me alone!" (Schenkkan 245). Tommy's refusal of Abe does not stem from any ideological grounds, rather, it stems from Tommy's fear of the uncertainty that would come into his life with a union. The mountaineer has traditionally been able to sustain himself in a terrible lifestyle because he has believed that whatever the situation he was in, it could always be worse (Weller 37). The uncertainty of the mountaineer's life has lead him to be courageous when confronted with disasters, yet it has also made him incapable to

change his life outside of those rare occasions when he is forced to. This is clearly seen in the character of Tommy Jackson in Fire in the Hole.

Schenkkan has also incorporated the mountaineer's individualism into The Kentucky Cycle. This trait has been an important force in the history of the mountains, and, because of this, it plays a prominent part of the characters in Kentucky Cycle. In almost all nine of the plays, one can find some traces of individualistic thinking. This type of thinking mixes a strong sense of independence with personal gain in order to improve the life of the mountaineer. In the first two plays, Michael Rowen kills an entire tribe of Cherokee Indians in order to secure land for himself. He then kidnaps a Cherokee to be his bride so that he can have children who will carry on his legacy. With these actions, Michael Rowan is not only asserting independence, but is also being very individualistic. In the third play, Patrick kills his father when it becomes apparent that he will no longer inherit the family land. With the fourth play, the Rowan family indebted to Jeremiah Talbert, first plans to attack the circuit court if necessary, and then pleads with him to be allowed to stay on the land and work for him. The fifth play, however, shows the Rowans at their most individualistic. When Jed returns from the war, having killed Richard Talbert, he no longer wants to fight. His father, Ezekial, reminds him of why they fight, saying "I

just this mornin' laid my daddy in the cold ground, his back bent and heart broke by them people, and you stand there and you tell me 'they ain't got nothin' we need!' They breathin' our air, ain't they?! *They walkin on our land, ain't they?!*" (Schenkkan 157). In order for the Rowens to assert the individualism, the entire Talbert family is killed with the exception of two young girls. The Rowen family needed to do this to assure their family of prosperity for future generations, and thought nothing of the consequences of their actions.

These individualistic traits also continue in the second half of The Kentucky Cycle. Jed Rowen sells the mineral rights to his land so that he and his wife would have something to fall back on. In Fire in the Hole, the seventh play, Tommy Jackson betrays his entire community and asks for their jobs back. He does this not out of maliciousness, but out of the individualistic belief that he has a right to help and support himself and his family. When confronted with what he has done by the miners, Jackson defends his action by saying "I gotta right to protect my family. Cain't nobody tell me different" (Schenkkan 259). Tommy's assertion that a man's first responsibility is to his family is noble, even though it is misguided. He believes that that is the only responsibility that a man has, and otherwise a man is independent of the community in which he lives. Because of this belief he has no problems making a deal with Andrew behind everyone's back. This is a clear example of

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the mountaineer's individualistic philosophy.

This philosophy continues with the rise of Joshua Rowen to a position of power in the eighth play. Joshua is more concerned with promoting himself and the union than listening to the problems and grievances brought before him. In the end he pays the price for his individualism as his son is killed in a mine he knew was unsafe. Joshua, because of his powerful position, could have had the mine shut down and cleaned out. However, because he was fixated on maintaining his power and keeping his agreements with James Winston, he let the mine operate even though he knew it was unsafe. This is a clear example of individualism, as Joshua placed his own desires for power above the needs of the community. Even in the final play of the cycle, both James Talbert Winston and Franklin Biggs almost come to blows over who has the right to the body of the dead Cherokee baby. They both want possession of her so that they can sell her and make money. However, Joshua, having learned about the folly of individualistic thinking, breaks up the discussion and returns her to her place in the earth.

It is clear that Robert Schenkkan has incorporated all of these elements in the characters in The Kentucky Cycle. He studied the people and the landscape of Kentucky while crafting this work and the result shows in the accurate portrayal of the mountaineer character.

However, there are still a few problems with the piece in regards to the mountaineer's views. In the final play, Joshua breaks away from the standard mountain psyche when he demands that they look over the land that is to be strip mined. In addition, he is not resigned to selling the land to the strip mine company as many mountaineers would be. However, although this is a break in the mountaineer's belief in fatalism, it is acceptable because of the love and strong attachment that the Rowen family has always held for the land. When he forces Franklin and James to put down the baby, he can only defend his actions by saying "It makes a difference" (Schenkkan 330). Perhaps, in some metaphysical way, Joshua Rowan feels the psychic connection his family has held with this land, and knows he cannot desecrate it by letting Morning Star's daughter be removed. Perhaps, in this segment, Joshua is speaking for those mountaineers who are just now discovering the tremendous resource that they have lived on all their lives.

Chapter 4

Conclusions

A. Summary

The mountaineer has been a part of the United States' cultural heritage since the founding of the country. His experiences have embraced such national issues as labor versus management, rural versus urban, and upper versus lower class citizens. The mountaineer, as a result of his history and geography, has evolved several stock characteristics which now define his persona. Jack Weller, an American sociologist, defined those elements which were a part of the archetypal mountaineer. These include traditionalism, fatalism, action-seeking, people orientation, a unique relationship with fear and a strong sense of individualism. These are the characteristics which have made the archetypal mountaineer the unique American icon that he is. He has been a figure of America mythology, literature, and music. Yet surprisingly, there have only been a few plays that have mountaineers as central characters. These works include Dark of the Moon, the Sand Mountain series, Tennessee, and The Kentucky Cycle. Each of these plays has a mountaineer character in a central role, and each incorporates several of the stock mountaineer characteristics into that role. Yet only The Kentucky Cycle has fully developed mountaineer

characters which incorporate all of Weller's stock elements. The complete and accurate portrayal of the mountaineer on stage is more of an exception than the rule, and only happens in selected plays.

B. Conclusions

Aside from The Kentucky Cycle, there are very few plays that portray the mountaineer accurately. Plays such as Dark of the Moon and The Sand Mountain Series are mere adaptations of old mountain stories or ballads, and the mountaineer characters in them are stereotypical and one dimensional. The mountain characters in these plays are trapped in the "Jed Clampett/Snuffy Smith" misconception of the mountaineer. The full range of the mountaineer's basic archetypal character traits has yet to be fully explored on stage in one character. In Dark of the Moon, the primary characters, John and Barbara, are both too alien and different from the mountain society that they are a part of. Both of them have dreams and want to change their lives for the better. More importantly, both John and Barbara are willing to risk everything they have, including their lives, for a chance at a better life. In contrast, the mountain characters in the play continue their daily routines, accepting with resignation the lives that they have. The mountaineers in this play are seen as laconic and average, and are not portrayed as being in any way heroic or dynamic.

The same view of the mountaineer extends to Linney's plays that are set in the mountains. Linney also plays heavily on the mountaineer's fatalism, never showing them trying to change their

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lives for the better. The Old Woman in Tennessee accepts her fate, just as the three mountaineer suitors in Sand Mountain Matchmaking believe that Rebecca will eventually break down and choose one of them. Again, with these characters, the mountaineer is not seen as a fully developed dramatic character, but is viewed as one dimensional and seen in a generally negative or pathetic light. Again, in these plays the characters with ambition and uniqueness are those from slightly outside traditional mountaineer society, such as Rebecca and Sam in Matchmaking. These two characters, although they live in the mountains, have very few of the characteristics of the traditional mountaineer. Instead they are presented as independent, interesting, and vibrant characters who are willing to take chances in life. In the plays of Romulus Linney the mountaineer characters are not developed beyond a stereotypical portrayal.

The Kentucky Cycle portrays the mountaineer most completely, incorporating all of Weller's basic characteristics. However, it takes Robert Schenkkan some three hundred years and six generations of mountaineers to show all of these traits. There is no one single mountaineer character in The Kentucky Cycle who is fully portrayed and fleshed out. Schenkkan's mountaineers are not particularly heroic people either. There are some instances of them taking heroic stands, such as Mary Anne's fight for unionization, or Joshua's defense of the

dead baby, these are exceptional. For the most part, The Kentucky Cycle shows the Rowen family lying, fighting and killing in order to gain an advantage over the rest of their world. When they fail and are trapped in a coal camp, it takes a betrayal by one member of the family and the death of several friends before Mary Anne is finally motivated to act. The actions of the Rowen family are not seen as particularly heroic, and Schenkkan's portrayal of these mountaineers, while accurate, is also extremely unflattering.

The mountaineer has not been shown to be a heroic and noble figure in dramatic literature. The much vaunted independence of the mountaineer is really greedy and manipulative individualism, where the mountaineer is willing to sacrifice his community in order to get ahead in life. The mountaineer is not portrayed as the Daniel Boone/Davy Crockett explorer/frontiersman of American mythology, but is instead seen as the drunken backwoodsman of such cartoons and stereotypes as "Snuffy Smith." In addition, relatively little credit is given to the mountaineer for those things which he has established and for those acts which require bravery and skill. The mountaineer has made a living in what was sometimes extremely inhospitable land, and has given this nation much of its fuel through his mining skills. He is hospitable to a fault and open and honest in his dealings. The mountaineer has carved out his own culture in the mountains, creating

his own musical styles, dances, folklore, art, and other forms of artistic expression. Yet none of this has been explored by American playwrights. Because these facets on the mountaineer's life and culture have yet to be examined in contemporary dramatic literature, it can be said that the mountaineer has yet to be fully and accurately presented in American drama.

There are several reasons why there is this lack of verisimilitude in the plays dealing with this American icon. The first is that the mountaineer has always been isolationist and, for the greater part of two hundred years, has been ignored by the country at large. This has begun to change slowly since the 1960s, when the mountains and their people were "re-discovered" by the nation as a result of Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty." Yet for most of the nation, exposure to mountain culture came in the form of jokes or in television productions such as The Beverly Hillbillies. With the influx of television, radio, and highways into the mountains, the true stories and people of the Southern Appalachians are beginning to be known. As more of these stories and people become known, more plays will be written about them.

However, this influx of outside influences, while having a positive effect by bringing the mountaineer into the twentieth century, is also causing the mountaineer to lose his unique identity. Jack Weller writes

"One of my co-workers says, with some truth, that TV has done more to change the ideas of mountain people in ten years than the church has done in generations" (Weller 57). As the mountaineer witnesses more of the country, and vice versa, that unique geographical sense of isolation that has given the mountaineer many of his identifiable and unique character traits is disappearing. Therefore the question is whether playwrights and authors will take note of the mountain culture before the last elements of it disappear under the influence of twentieth century media.

Still, the primary reason that the mountaineer has never been developed as a major dramatic American character is his isolation. Unlike traditional American rural icons: the farmer, the cowboy and the 49er, the mountaineer has never affected his own destiny. He has continually been pushed and manipulated by people from outside his geographical region who do not share his purview. The greatest changes in the history of the mountains have not come from the mountaineers or from natural intervention, but have instead been the result of interference from outsiders. The Civil War, the removal of the old growth forests, the coming of the eastern coal companies and the push for unionization are the historical events that have changed the mountains and their people. Yet none of these events was incited by mountaineers. In every case, the mountaineer was manipulated and

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his destiny was controlled by someone else. This is not an inherently dramatic trait, and, while the mountaineer's situation is tragic, it is not a tragedy. The mountaineer, because he has never controlled his own destiny, is not a heroic figure, and therefore is not inherently dramatic.

As the mountain culture becomes increasingly assimilated into mainstream society, the mountaineer's purview will change to match that. However, at least one more generation will still be able to call themselves mountaineers, and their stories and the stories of their relatives will hopefully be put in the theaters. For the mountaineer is too important an American icon to lose and/or ignore. Although there hasn't been a completely accurate portrayal of the mountaineer in dramatic literature yet, one can hope that this unique American icon will become a part of the American literary dramatic canon, and that the mountaineer character will be fully realized on the American stage.

C. Areas of Further Study

This study could be expanded to examine the portrayals of the mountaineer in other art forms, such as dance, music, and the visual arts, and compare those portrayals both to Weller and Caudill and to theatrical presentations. In addition, more research could be done into the incorporation of the mountaineer's "mythology" and superstitions into plays. The role of the storyteller and the oral tradition of the mountains could also be explored. Interviews could be held with the artistic directors and dramaturgs of the regional theaters throughout the Appalachians to gain their opinions on the portrayal of the mountaineer in drama. Another way that this study could be expanded is through a comparison of the folk art forms of the mountains, such as dance, music and storytelling, and the incorporation of these art forms into the mainstream performing arts. The mountaineer has been the subject of many dances and songs, and that study would invariably be extensive.

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