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Darkness, fire, and pain : finding strength through endurance in Mildred Haun's The hawk's done gone and other stories

Viki Dasher Rouse

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Viki Dasher Rouse entitled "Darkness, fire, and pain : finding strength through endurance in Mildred Haun's The hawk's done gone and other stories." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Allison Ensor, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

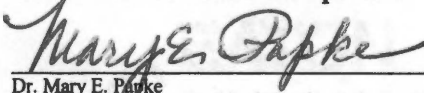
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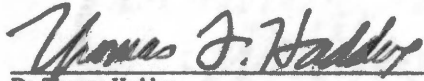


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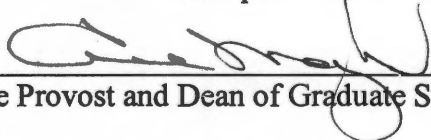


Dr. Mary E. Papke



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Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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**DARKNESS, FIRE, AND PAIN:
FINDING STRENGTH THROUGH ENDURANCE
IN MILDRED HAUN'S *THE HAWK'S DONE GONE AND OTHER
STORIES***

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Viki Dasher Rouse
May 2003

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Bill Rouse, for his unending support of my academic endeavors and for his patience and understanding, qualities that granted me the necessary freedom to invest in research and study on this and other scholastic projects.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank all those who helped me complete my Master of Arts degree in English. I would like to thank Dr. Allison Ensor for his encouragement and wise direction in my pursuit of studies in Appalachian literature. He has been a true friend and mentor for my entire academic career at this university. I would like to thank Dr. Mary Papke and Dr. Thomas Haddox for serving on my thesis committee and for their investment of time and concern in this project.

I especially wish to thank Dr. Herschel Gower, Mildred Haun's literary executor and loyal friend, for providing valuable first-hand information without which this thesis would have been the weaker. He is truly a gentleman and a scholar, and Mildred and I are both fortunate to count him as a friend. I also want to thank Katie Doman for her willingness to participate in my search for Mildred Haun and for including me in significant projects that have enriched my knowledge of the Appalachian culture.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their confidence in me and their pride in my accomplishments. Without their support, none of this would have been possible.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to point out the literary importance of Mildred Eunice Haun, born in 1911 in Hamblen County, Tennessee. Haun provided an authentic depiction of Appalachian life, having lived in the hills of East Tennessee until she moved to the home of her aunt and uncle in Franklin in 1927 for the purpose of attending high school and college.

My research for the thesis included perusing Haun's personal papers located in the Vanderbilt Library Special Collections, interviewing personal acquaintances from the literary world, and searching for criticism of Haun's texts.

During her years at Vanderbilt, Haun gained the attention of John Crowe Ransom and Donald Davidson and wrote a series of short stories that were published in 1940 as *The Hawk's Done Gone*. In addition, her unpublished M. A. thesis on Cocke County ballads is one of the most significant and complete collections of its type, according to Davidson and others.

This thesis examines the life of Mildred Haun in some detail, but it focuses on an analysis of relationships in the 1968 edition of her book *The Hawk's Done Gone and Other Stories*.

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We are a people. A people do not throw their geniuses away. And if they are thrown away, it is our duty as artists and as witnesses for the future to collect them again for the sake of our children, and, if necessary, bone by bone.
Alice Walker, "Zora Neale Hurston: A Cautionary Tale and a Partisan View."

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO MILDRED HAUN: AN OVERLOOKED VOICE IN APPALACHIAN WOMEN'S LITERATURE

Over the past fifty years, scholars have granted Southern Literature its place in the field of American literature. Almost without exception, anthologies now carry work by such distinguished authors as William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, the Fugitive and Agrarian group, Eudora Welty, and Flannery O'Connor.

Now it appears that Appalachian Literature has taken the position vacated by Southern Literature in the past — that of "Other," and currently many scholars are advocating recognition of this subset of Southern literature and its authors. Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, explains that "no group ever sets itself up as the One without at once setting up the Other over against itself" (xvi-xvii). The literary system, much like any cultural system, sets itself up as an infinitely descending order of One versus Other. In her article "Appalachian Women's Writings and Identity Theories," Nancy Carol Joyner sees Appalachian women as the Other, both in their relationship to the primary culture and to men. She sees region and gender factoring into the marginalization of the Other (715).

Part of the mystery of otherness in Appalachian literature stems from the difficulty in identifying and describing Appalachian literature and its authors. Even arriving at a definition of the deceptively simple geographical location of

Appalachia is elusive. Is it the entire geographical area encompassing the Appalachian Mountains in the United States from New York to Alabama? Even if we narrow it to Southern Appalachia, where does it begin and end? Does it include urban dwellers as well as mountaineers? To be considered a true Appalachian, is it necessary for one to have been born in Appalachia? How long should one live in Appalachia? Must one's texts reflect writing *about* Appalachia? Does class play a part in whether one is "truly" Appalachian? In his *Appalachia On Our Mind*, Henry Shapiro maintains that Appalachia is as much an ideological concept as a geographical one. He explains that in some ways, Appalachia was "discovered" by mainstream America, largely through fiction by writers like Mary Noailles Murfree and Charles Fox whose novels and sentimental short stories appearing in popular magazines portrayed the area as both peculiar and quaint, although they never referred to the area as "Appalachia." Shapiro stresses that much of America perceived Appalachia as congruent with Will Wallace Harney's "A Strange Land and Peculiar People," a travelogue of the Cumberland Mountains published in 1873 by *Lippincott's Magazine*. Though used by Horace Kephart in *Our Southern Highlanders* (1913), the name "Appalachia" did not come into general use until the 1960s. Just as women, African Americans, and other cultural groups have had to struggle to make their voices heard above those of the established literary canon, so authors of Appalachian literature, and particularly women's voices within that literature, must be recognized and respected for the contribution they have long made to the arts.

In his article “American Realism and the Case for Appalachian Literature,” Allison Ensor notes a connection between Appalachian authors and the realism of the southern frontier humorists; for example, Davy Crockett (who left East Tennessee at an early age) and George Washington Harris. Mark Twain also has an association with East Tennessee through his parents living in the area for a time (633-34). Although Twain had no personal memory of living in Appalachia, he undoubtedly heard his mother’s and brother’s stories of that place and time, putting that information to use in the opening chapter of *The Gilded Age*. Twain’s treatment of Tennessee has been historically overlooked even here, where we should certainly care about such things.

Hamlin Garland, Bret Harte, and Mark Twain all had specific ideas of what was required of authors attempting to write in the local color literary genre. In his essay “Local Color in Art,” Garland asserts that local color is literature in which “the writer spontaneously reflects the life which goes on around him” (52). Harte describes the secret of success in writing the American short story as “the treatment of characteristic American life, with absolute knowledge of its peculiarities and sympathy with its methods” (33). Twain, outspoken and direct as always, stated that it was only after “years and years of unconscious absorption, years and years of intercourse with the life concerned” (168) that an author could justifiably represent a particular region and its people in literature, a premise that, interestingly, Twain himself did not always follow. The consensus is that good regional literature should be written by authors who know enough of the area to be able to represent the people, the geography, the belief systems, and

the culture realistically, and in this sense an “authentic” Appalachian voice is possible.

The renaissance experienced over the past thirty years in Appalachian studies has kindled an interest in Appalachian life, history, and culture. In his article “The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction, Part IV,” Cratis Williams states that it is the Appalachian women who “bore the burden” (386) of that culture, exhibiting the paradoxical natures of strength and weakness, assuming the roles of victims and, simultaneously, survivors. In his book *Wingless Flights: Appalachian Women in Fiction*, Danny Miller suggests that Appalachian women are at the center of Appalachian culture. The courage and nobility of these women are apparent although they are often uneducated and unrefined. Miller suggests that a close examination of the fictional Appalachian women characters appearing in literature, at the very centers of its novels and stories, is a useful tool in understanding the women of Appalachia, and in understanding its women, one comes to understand the nature of its inhabitants at large. Who is better qualified to present these women than Appalachian women authors?

In searching for a particular female Appalachian author to study, one who has first-hand knowledge of the area and its people, it becomes apparent that a number of women who wrote about Appalachia may not have been immersed as completely in the mountain culture as others. Because education for mountain folk in the early twentieth century was uncommon and because women in particular did not receive the benefit of formal studies, finding her destiny to be that of marriage and motherhood, it is rare to find a woman of that culture with

the necessary skills and advantages necessary to articulate the details of the people who lived in the mountains of Appalachia. Mildred Haun has the advantage of the education and encouragement necessary to write effectively about the Appalachian culture, as well as the clarity and boldness of memory to articulate the East Tennessee mountain people from whose roots she sprang. Like the idea of the existence of many Souths, there are likewise many Appalachian voices, and none should be discounted, but for the purposes of this study, we will examine how Mildred Haun's voice is different from those Appalachian women authors who preceded her.

Mary Noailles Murfree attained a great deal of popular success in the nineteenth century, but she did so under her masculine pen name Charles Egbert Craddock. Critics were astonished and somewhat chagrined to learn that "he" was a "she." Her editor was speechlessly aghast when he learned that his rugged mountaineer was a mountaineeress! (Parks 123-24). Murfree was born into a prominent and well-to-do family in Murfreesboro and received her education at the Chegary Institute in Philadelphia and at the Nashville Female Academy. Although she was a native of Tennessee and an occasional visitor to the hills, she was far from a "mountain woman." Her genteel writing is largely romantic, and she wrote for the *Atlantic Monthly* whose audience was made up almost entirely of cultured northerners interested in the charming quaintness of Appalachia. She published a plethora of novels and stories between the years of 1878 and 1914.

Will Allen Dromgoole was another woman who made important contributions to Appalachian literature. Dromgoole published novels, short

stories, poems, essays, and edited a weekly column in the Nashville *Banner* during the late 1890s and 1900s. A Tennessean, Dromgoole obtained her information through time spent as a houseguest of mountain families. She grew up in Murfreesboro and received an elite education through the Clarksville Female Academy and later the New England School of Expressionism in Boston (Lyday-Lee 9-10). Like Mary Noailles Murfree, Will Allen Dromgoole was not a person who grew up in the mountains but who came from a privileged economic and educational class.

According to Kay Baker Gaston's biography, Emma Bell Miles, born in Evansville, Indiana, in 1879, and raised in Rabbit Hash, Kentucky, is best known for her 1905 ethnographic book *The Spirit of the Mountains*. Her fiction consisted primarily of short stories printed in popular magazines between 1907 and 1917, although she also published poems, editorials and columns, two poetry collections, and two non-fiction books (Brooks 161). Her father was a schoolteacher, and the family moved in 1890 to Walden's Ridge, Tennessee, near Chattanooga. She married Frank Miles, a true mountain man, "an intelligent ne'er-do-well. . . who was the joy and bane of her existence" (160), and most of her knowledge of mountain ways seems to have come through Frank and his family. She was a woman of many interests, an artist and naturalist as well as a writer. Although she experienced life in Appalachia to some extent, especially after her marriage, she was, in some important cultural ways, an outsider.

Born in Michigan, raised in Knoxville, Tennessee, and living much of her life in Abingdon, Virginia, with circumstances similar to Murfree and Dromgoole,

Anne W. Armstrong was likewise anything but a “mountain woman.” This early twentieth-century Appalachian author changed the tone of Appalachian women’s writing. Previous to Armstrong, Victorian sensibilities reigned, and sentimentality was at war with realism in this genre. Armstrong made some enemies with her realistic depiction of Appalachia and her treatment of sexuality and incest. In his introduction to a later edition of Armstrong’s *This Day and Time*, David McClellan relates that his grandmother burned her copy of the book because it was too realistic; in fact, he states that her belief was that “its realism amounted to obscenity” (xvi). This reaction was shared by other readers as well. Much like the earlier work of George Washington Harris, Armstrong dared to speak the unspeakable, although with more forthrightness and without Harris’ humor.

It was at this point in the history of Appalachian literature that Mildred Haun entered the scene. Haun, unlike Murfree, Dromgoole, Miles, and Armstrong, was native to the hills of Appalachia. She was born in 1911 in Hamblen County in East Tennessee, grew up in a rural area nearby, possibly in Cocke County¹, and was buried in 1966 in Hamblen County². She was

¹ Mildred Haun always claimed that she grew up in Cocke County, but an interview that Karen Travis conducted with Alma Haun, Mildred’s sister-in-law, disclosed that Haun never lived in Cocke County, but rather in a house originally used as a two-room log schoolhouse in Hamblen County (52-53).

² Mildred Haun is buried in the Dover Presbyterian Church cemetery in Hamblen County. Her grave is between those of her father James Enzor Haun and brother Fred Haun (to the left of Mildred’s grave) and her brother Greeley’s, on Mildred’s right. Margaret Ellen Haun’s grave is to the left of James Enzor and Fred, so Mildred lies, in fact, not beside her mother, as is erroneously claimed in the introduction to the 1968 edition of *The Hawk’s Done Gone*. The title of “Dr.” is erroneously inscribed upon Mildred’s grave. Gower explains that Greeley heard a Vanderbilt associate mention that Mildred should have received an honorary doctorate degree from that institution, and thus he had the gravestone mistakenly inscribed.

unschooled between the ages of ten and sixteen, and from all we can determine, her family was of the middle class farming status. Her father died when Haun was eleven years old, and the fatherless family no doubt struggled financially. At age sixteen, Haun went to live with her aunt and uncle in Franklin, Tennessee, where she attended high school. It was at this point that Haun's Appalachian background converged with the education that would provide her with the necessary tools to write about life in the mountains of East Tennessee.

She entered Vanderbilt University in 1931 with the intention of studying medicine. Her goal was to return to her rural home in East Tennessee to practice medicine as a modern "granny woman," equipped with a medical education as well as the herbs and folklore upon which previous women had relied. Upon reaching her senior year at Vanderbilt, Haun lacked enough credit hours to graduate due to her poor performance in German and trigonometry. She had by then abandoned the pursuit of medicine due to her abysmal performance in the science classes required in that field. In desperation, she enrolled in English 9, Advanced Composition, taught by John Crowe Ransom. Ransom's encouragement would be the deciding factor that would enable Haun to write the stories that would later become *The Hawk's Done Gone*.

She was taking several English courses during the academic year of 1933-34. Only a few days into another literature course, Dr. Edwin Mims announced that Robert Penn Warren would replace Dr. John Donald Wade in teaching one of her English classes. In her diary, Haun, although cautiously optimistic about Warren, notes that she will miss Dr. Wade, stating that

[his] was the one class that I really loved to go to. Now school will just be drudgery. I always felt like I was going to a party when I went to his classes. They were more enjoyable than a party. He was an inspiring teacher that made me want to be good and do something worthwhile. . . I think I will like Mr. Warren but I do wish his pants were long enough for him.

From the beginning of her college career, Mildred Haun was exposed to some of the most talented writers and critics of the time. She took Freshman Composition with Elizabeth Harris, who continued to encourage Haun in her writing. Haun also took classes under Donald Davidson, who would later supervise her monumental thesis on Cocke County ballads. She held Davidson in high esteem, stating in a letter that he was “the only truly great man I have ever known.” From 1944 to 1946 she was an editorial assistant to Allen Tate on the *Sewanee Review*. Jesse Stuart was a classmate of Haun’s, and her other literary acquaintances were far-reaching. Her close friendship with Brainard and Frances Cheney continued throughout Haun’s lifetime.

John Crowe Ransom, one of the Fugitive Poets whose contribution to American literature is unquestioned, immediately saw the talent Haun displayed in his classroom as a writer of short stories and encouraged her to continue writing and to enroll in his next section of English, one usually devoted to writing poetry. Haun, as Herschel Gower relates, was an excellent storyteller, but she had no desire to write in other genres, so it was only upon Ransom’s promise that he would allow her to continue writing her stories that she agreed to enroll in a

second English class under his tutelage. It is particularly noteworthy that Ransom would find Haun's stories of value since he himself wrote for elite, educated audiences, using sophisticated, complicated language that harkened back to classical rhetoric.

Her stories were darkly compelling, and when she submitted them for publication after spending a year at the University of Iowa on a writing fellowship, D. Lawrence Chambers, President of Bobbs-Merrill, suggested that she tie them together with a single narrator to give the text the form of a novel. Haun then developed Mary Dorthula White Kanipe's character into a central narrator, connecting the stories and brilliantly pulling the reader into a voyage of Mary Dorthula's memory and legacy. In a letter to her dated January 16, 1941, James R. Stokeley, Jr., favorably compares her work to James Still's "starkly beautiful" *River of Earth*, a novel that he believes "might well become the most important novel in American literature." Stokeley states that none of Still's visions "quite measure[s] up to the reminiscences of Grandma Kanipe in Chapter Twelve, 'The Hawk's Done Gone.'" Fred Chappell, upon reading two of Haun's unpublished stories, states that "some of us . . . regard her as one of the very best story writers to take the life of the southern Appalachian mountains as subject matter" (35), believing that she, along with Lee Smith, James Still, Lou Crabtree, and Olive Tilford Dargan, is one of the masters of the Appalachian short story (35). Robert Morgan likens Haun's cycle of stories to those of Chaucer and Boccaccio in their "wit and naturalness" (38).

Unfortunately, *The Hawk's Done Gone* (1940) was the only major work published in Haun's lifetime. After her death, the book was reissued in 1968 along with ten short stories in *The Hawk's Done Gone and Other Stories*. Because of the tremendous critical and popular success of *The Hawk's Done Gone*, Bobbs-Merrill was anxious for a second novel but rejected any attempt on Haun's part to produce a short story collection. After struggling for several years on a manuscript for a second novel, Haun was emotionally shattered when Chambers responded negatively to the manuscript fragment of *Runner Girl*. He seemed to want Haun to lighten up, stating in a letter that

it is as if you'd caught Penelope in one of her most depressed moods – the kind we all have when we think there's nothing left for us and we'd like to die – and have not given us the benefit of Penelope in springtime or with a song in her heart. . . [y]our moods are overpowering – they are that effective – but a long story must have relief from intense emotion. . . [a] long story that is not relieved from time to time with humor, descriptive exposition, developed incident of excitement will be left unread. The reader just can't stand up under the harrowing experience.

He further suggests that she maintain a chronological order in the novel rather than the flashback format she used so well in her short stories. To make her stories less harrowing and to tell them in a linear manner would be to betray her own voice. Haun responded by retreating; she concentrated her efforts on her

career in technical writing, limiting her fiction writing to stories she would file away in her footlocker.

Her response, to retreat passively from Bobbs-Merrill, is in complete agreement with Herschel Gower's explanation of why Haun never published another book. He relates that Haun was a shy, timid individual, and she was devastated by the publisher's response to her novelistic effort. She was also frustrated by the insistence that she write a novel. Her artistic expertise came from her life experiences and her exposure to the folklore and ballads of East Tennessee rather than from scholastic training. Her honest and direct presentation, the sparse and simple economy of her speech, as well as the raw strength of language, are exactly the qualities her readers found so compelling. To write a novel of the sort Chambers wanted was to depart drastically from her narrative style. Had she been granted the sort of nurturing she received under Ransom, and later Donald Davidson, who signed her thesis with Ransom, she might have developed the necessary tools and desire for novel-writing. It is clear that Mr. Chambers was mistaken in his assessment of reader capability: readers are quite able to embrace non-linear novels that embody overpowering moods and intense emotion.

Not entirely guided by her artistic frustration, but also because of national and individual economics, Haun was forced to seek work that provided immediate, secure financial compensation. She was a single woman who provided her own livelihood through various jobs such as teaching school, assisting Allen Tate in the editing of the *Sewanee Review* and, later, in long years

of Civil Service employment with the federal government. She also regularly sent funds to her mother. Mildred Haun could not afford to devote all her time to artistic endeavors that might or might not pay off financially.

Like Zora Neale Hurston, whose writing clashed with the ideological prescriptions of the Harlem Renaissance concerning what black writers should produce, Mildred Haun's writing did not fit the mold of sentimental romanticism that Mr. Chambers thought his readers would buy. He seemed to want the smoothly sentimental style of Mary Noailles Murfree, but he thought a genuine mountain woman as author would make them even more marketable. His letters to Haun are unmerciful – begging, bullying, cajoling, flattering, playing on her guilt. She responded by retreating. Thereafter, she devoted her life to making a living, and the bulk of her writing from that time on consisted of technical writing for government publications. She has consequently been overlooked as a major force in Appalachian literature, but her fiction is noteworthy for its uniqueness and its truth-telling, and should receive attention, not in spite of the fact that it did not fit into the expectations Chambers and others had for Appalachian literature but rather exactly because of this disparity. She was as much a historian as a writer of fiction, and it is this quality that melds her stories and her lifelong immersion in the folklore of Cocke County into a truth of the sort not often seen in fictional texts.

What is it about her stories that is so fascinating? They are so largely because, like Lee Smith's character Ivy Rowe from *Fair and Tender Ladies*, Haun strikes the reader as an honest truth-teller. Mildred Haun sets the standard for

later writers like Lee Smith who will concern themselves with ideas of Appalachian authenticity. Haun does not embellish her work with sentimentality or even much explanation. She simply tells the “truth” as she sees it. Her stories are painfully honest, but this frankness came at great cost. As Herschel Gower says, “She was not appreciated at home. She was a prophet without honor. They said that ‘Mildred was just making all that up.’” The exact inspiration for Haun’s characters is open to speculation. Although at times Haun claimed that none of her characters bore any deliberate resemblance to actual persons, she admitted on other occasions that Mary Dorthula White was based on Eliza Jarnigan, the granny woman who had delivered her brothers and herself. Letters from D. Lawrence Chambers indicate that at least once she had used an actual name – he warns her to get rid of any other actual names appearing in her work to avoid lawsuits.

The dearth of personal information about Mildred Haun is frustrating to those of us who would like to know more. Gower states in his introduction to the 1968 edition of Haun’s book that Haun was quiet and reserved and committed very little about herself to paper. He says that “[she] confronted herself and her personal world almost entirely in fiction” (ix). Dr. Gower, a personal friend of Haun for more than thirty years, knows very little about her family and early years. He states that she wasn’t uncooperative at all, but in speaking with her, one got an idea that there were things in her past that she simply preferred not to discuss, and her reticent nature did not encourage questions of that sort. She wrote in one of her letters to him that her family situation was just “too

complicated to go into.” Thus, for us to know much about the woman who wrote such mesmerizing tales, ranging from the poetically beautiful to the chillingly disturbing to the eerily supernatural, we must seek her in the history of the East Tennessee hills, in her texts, and in the footlocker of personal papers she willed to Vanderbilt University.

This thesis will examine themes of identity and personal relationship in Mildred Haun’s short fiction and published novel within the context of the ambiguity, paradoxes, and stereotypes common to Appalachian fiction. Through careful and close examination of the text, we will see how she represents male/female relationships. We will then concentrate on female/female relationships in the texts with a special emphasis on mother/daughter situations. Finally, we will look at how Haun presents the Appalachian woman in her fiction. What is her identity? How does she view herself? And how do others view her? We will look into Haun’s possible sources, including folklore, ballads, and possibly other texts; and, in turn, this will lead us to ask how Haun’s work could have influenced Appalachian women writers who followed her.

Mildred Haun meets the standards outlined by Hamlin Garland, Bret Harte, and Mark Twain as one who is undeniably qualified to write about Appalachia, the region in which she was born and raised. Her straightforward, yet complex, rendering of fantasy and realism kept her from using the stereotypes that ran rampant with some writers who were determined to capture the quaint peculiarities of the region. She is unselfconsciously charming, and her stories speak for themselves with a haunting truthfulness that is not sentimentalized or

explained away. Haun, as Dr. Gower and others have said, was a talented storyteller.

We are left with more questions than answers regarding the woman, Mildred Haun, but she seems, much like the fictional Ivy Rowe, to be a woman who knows who she is, and the world can take it or leave it. Although *The Hawk's Done Gone* differs in form from *Fair and Tender Ladies*, which is an epistolary novel, the element of first person narration gives the text the sense of bibliotherapy, and Mary Dorthula White Kanipe seems to us the vision of Eric Erikson's "ego integrity," the final mentally healthy life stage.

The questions and ambiguities which arise from Haun's fiction are in perfect harmony with postmodern literature. The complexities of explaining the characteristics of the postmodern age, in either a literary or a cultural context, are evident to anyone who has ever sought to explain postmodern literature to students. Because there are more questions than answers, because information merely leads to a search for more information with never a definitive end, and because postmodernity rejects metanarratives, any assertion that a particular author is a truth-teller becomes tricky indeed. Since "truth" is abstract, the best for which one may hope is to show that the author seems to be forthrightly presenting her version of truth, and even then one must ask, "Isn't this true of any author? Doesn't he or she always tell only one version of the truth?" There is little doubt, however, that Mildred Haun was an insider, a true product of Appalachia, and her genuine portrayal of the truth as she perceives it deserves a closer look.

CHAPTER 2

MARY DORTHULA'S TWO BELOVED MEN IN *THE HAWK'S DONE GONE*

Mildred Haun's *The Hawk's Done Gone*, like Jean Toomer's *Cane* and Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, does not easily fit into a genre classification. Because the chapters are not unified with a central action, and because characters appear in specific chapters and sometimes do not reappear as the book progresses, some critics find its classification as a novel problematic. Haun originally wrote the book as a collection of short stories, but those short stories are mingled with superstition, folklore, and balladry. The central narrator, Mary Dorthula, and the genealogical information displayed as entries in the family Bible are the two elements that weave Haun's stories into a coherent whole. The stories are not fully linear, appearing as Mary Dorthula seems to think of them. Suspense builds as the book progresses, for it is not until the penultimate chapter entitled "The Hawk's Done Gone" that the reader understands Mary Dorthula's motivation and gains a clear vision into her personality. The final chapter, narrated by her daughter Amy, provides a humorous, yet macabre glimpse into Mary Dorthula's interest in her family from beyond the grave. The remaining ten stories are not connected with the chapters of the novel as it originally appeared in 1940, but they are included in the 1968 edition as further evidence of Mildred Haun's unique authorial style. This addition of short stories, unrelated to the body of the book and to one another, further complicates classification of the text.

Very little critical scholarship exists on Mildred Haun. Vanderbilt graduate student Stephen Glenn McLeod's 1973 M. A. thesis "The Bottom of the Night: A Study of Mildred Haun" focuses on determinism and the art of storytelling in *The Hawk's Done Gone and Other Stories*. Herschel Gower, editor of the 1968 edition and Haun's literary executor, has written journal articles on Mildred Haun for the *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin* and *Louisiana Studies*, as well as thoughtful literary criticism of one of Haun's stories in his and Robert L. Welker's *The Sense of Fiction*. Mildred Haun reviewed his introduction to the 1968 edition of her book and considered it the best treatment she had ever received. Book reviews abound for both editions of her book, indicating its popular success. Carson Newman College devoted its spring 1993 issue of the *Mossy Creek Reader* to Mildred Haun. The issue contains two of Haun's previously unpublished stories, as well as photographs of her, a letter from James Stokely recognizing her genius (this from the Vanderbilt Special Collections Library), and critical articles by Fred Chappel, Robert Morgan, Amy Tipton Gray, and Karen Travis.

Although some women Appalachian authors received a great deal of criticism for their negative portrayals of Appalachian men, Mildred Haun devotes much of her attention to two men in *The Hawk's Done Gone* who exhibit positive qualities: her first love Charles Williams and their illegitimate son Joe White. "The Pit of Death" is the chapter in which Haun depicts Joe, from boyhood to death, and his love affair with Tiny Brock, a love affair that ends with Joe's tragic death and Tiny's death soon after giving birth to their child. In "The Hawk's

Done Gone,” the penultimate chapter of the book, one learns the story of the book’s protagonist, Mary Dorthula White, an East Tennessee mountain girl, and her romantic encounter with a Rebel soldier during the Civil War who promises to return to her but never does. Left pregnant as a result, she and her son live alone for a number of years before she marries Ad Kanipe, and the chapter encapsulates a stream of consciousness technique whereby Mary Dorthula deals with the harsh reality of life with her husband Ad and his son Linus, as they sell off the possessions that she associates with the only sweet memories of her life.

Charles appears in the defining chapter of *The Hawk’s Done Gone* as Mary Dorthula White Kanipe’s one true love, and the reader understands almost immediately how important he is in the story of her life. One recognizes right away, for instance, that the chapter bears the same title as the book, clearly signaling to the reader its significance within the collection. Haun then describes Charles in terms not only different from those used for the other men who appear in her book, but also her images relating to Charles are not those typically associated with masculinity. Until Charles appears, Haun’s men, with one notable exception, are varying shades of evil.

The stories that comprise the novel do not come together in a linear manner. Haun uses an ingenious mixture of flashbacks and memories, and her narrator travels over time effortlessly. The entries in the family Bible serve as a reference to the reader in keeping track of family members and time sequence. The Bible is also important as a framing device for the entire book, a symbol that the family lives on even after individuals die. Although he appears later in time,

Joe, the illegitimate son of Mary Dorthula and Charles, by his early appearance in the book, foreshadows the depiction of Charles whose name appears only in the penultimate chapter. Although Joe treats his mother and his sweetheart kindly, there are still some troublesome aspects to his character. Early on, Mary Dorthula notes that of all the possessions she loses to the antiquers who profit by her husband Ad's greed, only the Family Bible is left, and it is marred by a square hole on its cover that Joe had cut out with a case knife. Joe represents a complex reality and unresolvable conflicts. His very existence is a threat to the family, and his presence scars the family but does not destroy it, much as his boyish destructiveness damages but does not annihilate the Bible.

She remarks of Joe, "He liked to cut on things" (6), and this rather ominous observation leads the reader to expect that some damage will later occur because of Joe's tendencies. Yet, he was also as "pleasant as a flower" (10) and "had a way with him that made [Mary Dorthula] do everything he wanted [her] to do" (10). She further relates that this same charismatic quality affects Tiny, Joe's childhood sweetheart, in the same way. The first time Joe and Tiny play together, he takes the biggest apple which Mary Dorthula has given Tiny and exchanges it for his smaller one. Tiny "looked at him like she thought it was right. Then handed him her spool" (10) which Joe takes but soon hands back to her. Tiny's response is laughter. So, at an early age, Joe establishes his leadership over Tiny, but it is given and received in a spirit of good will. He manipulates both his mother and his sweetheart, but they are not unaware of his manipulation, and they do not object.

In this early chapter, "The Pit of Death," which tells Joe's story, his dark complexion is merely mentioned. In Charles' chapter, "The Hawk's Done Gone," we learn that Charles is also dark. Joe has as well "eyes that were smiling all the time like his pa's did" (11). Joe, here, is compared to both a dove and a flower, yet he clearly rules over his mother and his sweetheart. Even as a baby, Joe is as "different from other youngons as a dove is from a buzzard" (10). First, Mary Dorthula tells us, Joe is dark – "nigh as black as night" (10), and "[s]ome folks thought [he] was queer" (10). Joe is clearly a misfit, both in terms of his appearance and in terms of his personality which, although dominant over the women in his life, is not mean-spirited.

Even though Joe establishes his dominance over Tiny, it is Tiny who pursues the relationship, coming to see Joe "nigh every day" (11) as soon as she "got big enough to come by herself" (11); "She would come before breakfast and stay till almost dark" (11). Although both Tiny and Joe meet tragic ends, it is Tiny who seems to have a premonition of ill fortune. She has "sad-looking blue eyes, always seeming like something sorrowful was going to happen to her" (11). Furthermore, Tiny has a dream about a certain nearby cave. When Joe wants to go "holler into the cave" (11), "Tiny looked at him with her sad eyes like she was afeared of something. 'I dreamt about that cave one night'" (11), and "something in the way she said it made [Mary Dorthula] take note" (11). When Mary Dorthula presses Tiny for the details of the dream, Tiny relates that

Hit was scary. My pa and another man, a stranger man to me, they caught us throwing rocks into the cave. They grabbed Joe and

threw him in. Just like he was a rock too. I heard the echo.

When I woke up I thought Pa was whipping me and I was crying.

(11)

Mary Dorthula is afraid that Tiny has told the dream before she ate breakfast, in which case the dream is sure to come true. She does not ask because she is afraid of Tiny's answer. From that time, Mary Dorthula is uneasy about the cave and makes Joe promise that he will never go back into it.

Joe and Tiny share a relationship that is paradoxical in nature. Although Joe establishes himself as subject, in some ways their personal dynamics deviate from the subject/object or master/slave one that might be expected and that often occurs between Haun's men and women. For example, the children play at building mud houses, but it is Joe who builds them. Tiny stands and watches. This is a clear departure from the woman as servant and "homemaker." Joe performs all the labor involved, from gathering up the sticks to making the structure and then decorating it. However, "Tiny never did offer to make the house any different from what Joe said. And he always named what they would play" (12).

Mary Dorthula relates that they always end their play by making mud cakes, and, again, Joe performs the labor. He would say to Tiny, "'You will get dirt under your fingernails'" (12) or "'You will get mud on your dress.'" Joe never did like to see womenfolks go dirty" (12). When their play becomes more traditionally male/female, with Joe going off to work with a stick over his shoulder, he directs Tiny, "Be sure and have an early dinner" (12). Tiny's task is

to decorate the mud cakes that Joe has already formed. Joe's favorite decoration is a black-eyed daisy. Mary Dorthula relates, "Tiny seemed to know nigh everything he liked. At times I wished she didn't. I wished I was the only one that knowed. I ought not to have had them thoughts" (12). Joe has filled the gap in Mary Dorthula's life, and she realizes her inappropriately jealous thoughts about him border on the incestuous.

When the children's play turns to Joe's playing dead and then walking around stiffly as though he were a ghost, Mary Dorthula chastens them. Tiny pretends to cry when Joe is "dead," but when he arises as a ghost, both children collapse with laughter. This incident builds upon the earlier dream that Tiny had, foretelling Joe's tragic end.

Not only does Joe take on roles considered to be feminine, but he introduces Tiny to the world of masculinity. He makes smaller versions of his own fishing and hunting gear for Tiny. Mary Dorthula tells us, "They liked to fish and hunt, him and her did." By restating that both individuals enjoyed these activities, the reader understands that Tiny is not merely accommodating Joe in these activities. It is Joe who catches the big fish, and Tiny's role is apparently to brag to others about it. Here occurs a bit of a disjunction of how the two view the shared activity. Mary Dorthula says that Joe "just wanted her to go along to watch. 'Girls hain't much good at fishing,' he would say" (13). "Tiny would look at him and not say anything." In Tiny's silence is perhaps an argument to the contrary.

As Joe grows to manhood, he becomes more successful in his fishing and trapping, confounding the neighbors with his good fortune. He never shares his secrets, and rumor has it that he has found a secret passage through the cave. He typically checks his traps at two o'clock in the morning, and one day he comes home to tell his mother that the icy patches of weeds had appeared as soldiers. Joe had enjoyed hearing stories about soldiers from his mother and from his stepfather. Mary Dorthula wished, in fact, that "there had been a war Joe could have gone to." Like W. D. Howells' Editha, it seems that Mary Dorthula is more in love with the romantic idea of soldiering than with the grim reality. She wistfully constructs the scenario:

He would have looked good dressed up in soldier's clothes. So tall and straight. Tan. Tan would have made his brown eyes show up. Joe would have looked like his pa. For all the world like his pa. And maybe come marching by Tiny's house and kept the soldier men from harming her things. All the other soldiers would have minded what Joe said. (15)

Mary Dorthula imagines Joe and Tiny in the same roles filled years earlier by herself and Charles. Playing "Soldier Boy and Fair Lady" is, in fact, another childhood favorite of Joe and Tiny. They act out the words of the song, and Joe "would take Tiny's hand and play like he was running off with her." This, then, is a reenactment of the fantasy Mary Dorthula holds concerning herself and Charles. In addition to her romanticizing the idea of war, it is possible that Mary Dorthula feels that Joe's fate would be more favorable facing the mortality odds

of war than in staying home moving ceaselessly toward certain death as seems augured by Tiny's dream.

Mary Dorthula further describes the relationship between Joe and Tiny:

He was always mannerable toward Tiny. I couldn't help but take note of it. I don't reckon there was a day that they didn't go on to school together of a morning and come back together of an evening. Joe led the way – mashed down the briars and held back the bushes for her. I never did take time to teach him that. He did it of his own accord. And helped her across the gullies. . . It was funny the way he looked on Tiny. He wanted her to do everything he did. But he wanted to be the one that showed her how. And he wanted to act like he was stronger than her. (15)

As mentioned earlier, Joe makes “masculine” things for Tiny: “flips and shotguns and things like that” (15). In addition, “He had her climbing trees and throwing rocks and doing all sorts of things like that” (15), activities usually considered masculine. Always, though, Joe takes a leading role, and Tiny only participates to the extent that he allows her. The one time Tiny climbs a tree higher than Joe instructs her to, she falls, frightening Joe so that he is as “white as a young buzzard” (16).

From this moment of Joe's vulnerability, the two seem to draw closer and close the gap in role expectations. When the two school children are plagued by the taunts of schoolmates over Tiny's homemade clothes, Joe's bastardy, and their affection for one another, Tiny finally speaks up, “the first time she ever did”

(17), and points out the jealousy that was the root of the teasing. This escalates into a fight between Joe and Shorty Shipley and an incident in which Joe and Tiny are punished for writing love notes in class, and further tensions arise between the two and their classmates. The two then become partners in revenge and draw closer to one another in their private Eden, shutting out all others.

When they turn eighteen, Joe asks for Tiny's hand in marriage. Old Man Brock, her father, refuses because Joe is a bastard: "He said he was a Christian man, a member of the Holiways church house, and he couldn't afford to have the name of his girl marrying a bastard, and he wouldn't have" (22).

Joe's stepfather Ad and Old Man Brock are "thick as two in a bed" (22). When Joe and Tiny continue to meet in secret, the two fathers make it their business to keep the two apart. We aren't given an explanation for Ad's treatment of Joe. It is during Ad's courtship of Mary Dorthula that he tells Joe soldier stories, but now she relates that "Ad had a grudgment against Joe from the start, seemed like" (19). If Old Man Brock misses an opportunity to thwart the lovers' intentions, Ad brings it to his attention. In fact, Mary Dorthula suspects that it is Ad who encourages and perhaps even ignites Old Man Brock's determination that Tiny will not be allowed to continue to see Joe. After finding the two at a cake walk, Old Man Brock whips Tiny and tells her he will kill her and Joe "if she ever slipped off and went with him again" (20).

In an effort to direct Joe away from his cruel destiny, Mary Dorthula tries to make him promise that he will not ask Tiny to go against her father's decision: "I didn't want him to do anything to make the dream come true" (23). Joe,

however, refuses to promise, but relates to his mother his own dream, that of a black snake trying to wrap itself around Tiny's neck. Mary Dorthula's response is telling: "I didn't tell him dreaming of a snake meant he would be killed. I didn't think I ought" (23).

Twelve years later, Tiny is "called to straw" (becomes pregnant), and Old Man Brock is sure that Joe is the father. He vows to kill Joe, and "it was talked around that [he] tried to beat the youngon out of Tiny" (23). Sadie Brock, Tiny's mother, tries to get Tiny to abort the child, but Tiny refuses, saying that she and Joe will marry and that she will keep the baby: "Said she was old enough to have a mind of her own" (23). Old Man Brock plans, however, never to allow Tiny out of the house again. Modern readers may wonder why Tiny does not act on her declaration of independence, and yet we also know that when Joe takes action, it ends badly. When Joe leaves to collect Tiny and bring her back to Mary Dorthula so that she can assist with the birth, he never returns. Ad had left earlier that day with his gun, having heard the plans from Joe and having heard Joe declare that "he didn't care what Old Man Brock said and he didn't care what Ad said" (24). Joe, in turn, has not taken a gun with him. Mary Dorthula has a strong feeling that Joe has met his end in the cave. Like his father, Charles, Joe is too good to live in a world of evil.

She has already used the metaphor of a dove to compare Joe favorably to others, but it is in the next-to-last chapter of the book that the reader hears Mary Dorthula's story of Charles, her one true love. Here Haun's gender-bending metaphors are clear and vivid with regard to both Charles and Joe. Mary

Dorthula begins this chapter's narrative wondering how she has managed to survive Ad's and Linus' greed. Her husband and his son have sold all her old belongings to the antiquers, and she is less than satisfied with the "new-fangled things" that have replaced the originals, stating that they are weak and that they "make [her] feel weak too" (163). She nevertheless pulls herself out of the mire of self-pity and calls herself to action: "I ought to get out and pick some sallet for supper" (163).

Her description of William Wayne and Miss Robinson, the antique hunters, includes a reference to Miss Robinson's "old hawk eyes" (164) that see everything that Mary Dorthula has. Ad allows Linus to make decisions about selling the household furnishings, and thus, according to Mary Dorthula, the antiquers "got nigh everything I wanted to keep" (164). The only prized possession left to her is her family Bible. Thus begins a lament as Mary Dorthula relinquishes the furnishings one by one as links to her past. She resists Miss Robinson's attempts to take either one or both of the corded bedsteads. The bedsteads brought back memories of Mary Dorthula's father who had made them both. Mary Dorthula and all her children were born in one of the beds.

When Mary Dorthula voices her indignation over Miss Robinson's interest in the beds, she sees compassion in the eyes of William Wayne, the only decent person of all the antique hunters. She tells us that he looked at her in a way "almost like the soldier boy looked at me that day – that first day" (164). He, like Charles, has smiling brown eyes and a gentle voice. The resemblance is striking enough that Mary Dorthula considers the possibility that William Wayne might be

Charles' son, but she quickly rejects that notion, believing that Charles did not survive long enough to father a son after Joe. If he had lived, he would certainly have kept his promise to return to her. She refuses to consider the idea that Charles could have lived and that he could have entered into an intimate relationship with any other woman.

Matter of factly, then, Mary Dorthula relates that “[i]t didn’t matter who had pity, though, for Linus and Miss Robinson made the bargain” (164). Miss Robinson also takes all Mary Dorthula’s quilts, even the “Harp of Columbia” that she was piecing together when Charles appeared. The mention of the quilt recalls to Mary Dorthula the place in time when she first met Charles, the Rebel soldier. He values the quilt in a different way: “He took hold of it and fingered it like it was a piece of gold. ‘I never could handle them little squares and three-cornered pieces with my big fingers,’ he said” (165). He recognizes the skill required for quilting and sees the beauty in the object and in the labor required to craft it. He values Mary Dorthula in much the same way: “I could tell from the way he kept looking at me he thought I was pretty too” (165). When he learns her name, he pronounces it “pretty too” (165) and continues to caress the quilt. He then asks about the red and tan checked homespun shawl she wears around her shoulders, a shawl that had once belonged to her mother.

Here Mary Dorthula departs from her linear narration of the story of their courtship to link the quilt to another important phase of her life. She tells us that she always held the “Harp of Columbia” quilt in her lap while she was pregnant with Joe to hide her pregnancy for as long as possible. The quilt becomes an icon

as she tells its story to young Joe, and, not surprisingly, “Joe thought a heap of that quilt” (165). One has to believe that it is not the quilt itself that Joe cherishes but rather the connection between his father, his mother, and himself. The quilt, in fact, contains some of Joe’s stitches. His long and crooked stitches are distinct from his mother’s short and straight ones. She is convinced that when the quilt left her possession, someone removed Joe’s awkward stitches and replaced them with more perfect ones

before they hung it up for folks to look at. Nobody else would care. But I would rather had the hair pulled out of my head than had Joe’s stitches pulled out of that quilt. The way he looked up at me with them eyes he had – Charles’s eyes – and begged me to let him quilt. I couldn’t help but let him do it. ‘And you won’t pull mine out, will you, Ma?’ I promised him his stitches never would be pulled out. (165)

Mary Dorthula is haunted not only by the loss of the quilt but by the breach of promise, a promise that she is unable to keep to her beloved, lost son. The description of her last goodbye to the quilt is poignant indeed:

That night, after Miss Robinson and William Wayne left, while Ad and Linus were both out of the room, I set there on the bed and run my fingers over Joe’s stitches. I reckon they wouldn’t be counted pretty stitches by anybody else. I felt like getting inside the feather tick and being took off too. I couldn’t sleep that night. I laid awake and squeezed that quilt in my hand. (166)

This is as close as Mary Dorthula ever comes to giving up, but once again she resists depression and self-pity with action. The next day she is called to assist with a neighbor's childbirth, and when she returns, nearly everything she has owned is gone, even the gold and green mug that holds childhood memories of her mother's care and later memories of Charles drinking from it. All that keeps her from giving up is that she is needed in the capacity of rural medicine woman. There is always a neighbor who is near the end of her term of pregnancy or who is facing imminent death.

It is now that Mary Dorthula begins her physical description of Charles. He is big and tall with smiling dark eyes and a deep but gentle voice. She particularly remarks on his hands which are "big, but they weren't rough. They didn't have any big old knotty veins showing under the skin. They had nigh the strength of Letitia Edes's." It is interesting that it is the legendary woman Letitia Edes whose strength serves as a gauge against which to measure that of Charles. Mary Dorthula states that she feels strong when she stands beside Charles, when she touches his hand. Rather than feeling herself dwarfed and intimidated by Charles's size and strength, she draws from it and grows, just as Letitia Edes grows as she draws her strength from the earth.

On a second trip to the Kanipe home, Miss Robinson's "eye took to the trundle bed." Mary Dorthula reacts badly to the sale: "It made me hurt inside when I seed Miss Robinson hand Linus the money. My eyes and nose stung like they had pepper in them. Seemed like my heart was trying to swell up and bust" (168). We then learn of the connections Mary Dorthula has to the trundle bed.

Her grandmother had slept on it when she was small, then Mary Dorthula's mother, and finally Mary Dorthula herself until she was fifteen. Joe slept on the bed until Mary Dorthula married Ad Kanipe. As Mary Dorthula remarks, "That little old bed seemed like it was just as much a part of me as my own right hand" (168). She remembers her mother tucking her in the little bed where she would "[l]ay there and watch the witches make tea. Lay there good and warm and think about princes that would come riding by someday" (168).

From that thought Mary Dorthula moves to the most important memory of all associated with the trundle bed: "It was the trundle bed that me and the soldier boy piled down on – Joe's pa" (168). While Ad and Linus protect neither Mary Dorthula nor her possessions but, rather, serve as the perpetrators of her loss, Charles stood between Mary Dorthula and loss. He kept the other Rebel soldiers from taking Old Kate, the only horse on the farm, and the two hams in the smokehouse, and he forced them to temper their speech in Mary Dorthula's presence. As Mary Dorthula recalls, "Somehow or nother I didn't feel afeared of the Rebels with Charles in the bunch. Even if I was here by myself" (169).

On the evening the Rebel soldiers come by, Mary Dorthula is indeed alone. At their approach, she is initially stricken with fright. Her aunt had instructed her to give them whatever they wanted should they come. They ask for water, and she is headed for the spring with a bucket when she first sees Charles. He takes the bucket from her and offers to draw the water himself, a task usually reserved for women and children.

In his conversation with her, Charles runs his fingers through her hair and pronounces it the “softest hair he had ever seed” (170). From that moment Mary Dorthula takes special pains with her hair. Because Charles values it, she learns to value it as well. Charles seems to forget about the other men and stays on the back porch talking with Mary Dorthula. He comments on her shawl, that ““Little Red Ridinghood wore a shawl like that”” (170), a remark that reminds us of young Mary Dorthula’s innocence and the predatory nature of the pursuer, and yet neither the reader nor Mary Dorthula assigns malevolence to Charles. Mary Dorthula adds, “That shawl come in handy to wrap Joe up in too” (170). The shawl, then, like the quilt, is a tangible link holding the separated family together across time.

In addition to depicting his gentle voice and his appreciation for feminine art, Haun turns gender expectation on its ear by using metaphors relating to the female tradition in describing Charles’s masculinity. For instance, she writes, “He did everything easy – just like a red bird. It wasn’t any trouble for him to move around from one place to another. I didn’t know anybody could ever be that big without being gawlky” (170). So here is a man of gentle speech, graceful motion, compared to a red bird, much as Mary Dorthula had earlier compared Joe to a dove among buzzards. When Charles learns that Mary Dorthula will be alone that night, he asks if she will be afraid. “I’m not afraid of you” (171), she answers. She expects Charles to return that night but finally lies down in the trundle bed to sleep: “I laid there waiting. I just had a feeling. Directly it come. ‘Mary Dorthula,’ and then, ‘Hello’” (171). As he speaks to her in the dark, Mary

Dorthula describes his voice as sounding “like a hen clucking to her little chickens” (171), not a traditionally masculine image, although it calls to mind Jesus Christ’s lament of Matthew 23:37, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” In a very real sense, Mary Dorthula sees Charles as her savior, although his protection is only temporary.

Here Mary Dorthula brings us back to Joe, stating that she was never ashamed of having him out of wedlock but that she also never told the community who his father was because Charles was a Rebel and both of her brothers supported the northern cause, as did most of the neighbors. She is certain that “Folks around would have hated Joe sure enough” (171). It was bad enough that he was a bastard, but the knowledge of his having been the issue of a Rebel soldier would have made matters worse. Mary Dorthula again reiterates the resemblance between Joe and Charles: “he had his eyes and pert nigh his voice – and his protecting ways. Always trying to save me from something. Like the mammy hen saying, ‘Hide in the weeds. I’ll fight the hawk’” (171-72). Although Charles indeed protected Mary Dorthula from the other Rebel soldiers, he was unable to fulfill his promise of coming back to her. She is convinced he must have been killed in the war. He promised to come back to her, and because “[h]e didn’t talk with just his tongue” (172), Mary Dorthula trusted him completely. She read compassion and sincerity in his manner. Joe, in turn, failed completely

as a protector, unable to protect even himself, much less his mother or his sweetheart.

As I mentioned earlier, Mary Dorthula makes much of Charles's dark complexion. He compliments her on her yellow curly hair and blue eyes, but she "liked [his] brown hair and eyes and his dark skin better. His skin was dark as a piece of fresh sod. I liked to run my hands over it. It was natural dark. It wasn't made that way by the sun" (172). One wonders if there is some racial identification that Haun can only hint at. She mentions the dark-skinned Melungeons throughout the book with more fascination than repulsion, although the dominant culture in the Hoot Owl district appears to despise the Melungeons.

Although Richard Gray asserts in *Southern Aberrations* that Joe is a Melungeon and is hated and feared by the community for that reason, I do not believe the reader can draw that assumption from the text. He is different, as Mary Dorthula notes, and his skin is dark, but as we later learn, his father is a Rebel soldier, passing through the area from elsewhere, and we cannot assume that their dark complexions automatically categorize them as Melungeons. Furthermore, the text shows that only two people in the area truly hated Joe, and their reasons were Old Man Brock's aversion to Joe's illegitimacy and Ad Kanipe's implicit meanness and/or jealousy over the love that Mary Dorthula bore for Joe. The disagreements Joe had with the school children stem from the romance with Tiny and the teasing it evoked. The issue of his darkness remains an intriguing mystery.

Emphasizing Charles' difference, Mary Dorthula refers to his having protective, motherly characteristics. When he would come to her in the evenings, she would listen for him to call for her: "I liked to hear him holler [Mary Dorthula, hello]. Like an old hen calling to her little chickens. 'Come on here now, so the hawk won't get you'" (172). During their time together, Mary Dorthula feels safe. During their nights together, Charles converses with her, telling stories, reciting poetry, and singing, although Mary Dorthula admits that he could not sing as well as he could talk. She reciprocates by singing songs of her own, singing a particular one over and over until Charles arrives to hear it. He asks her to sing it over and over until he has learned it, and it is a song about a soldier going to war, serving his king for seven years, and taking with him the love of a woman. It is on that occasion that Charles makes Mary Dorthula talk all night. She is the teller of stories that night, and he is the listener. Here they have switched roles, and he takes on the traditionally more passive, or feminine, one.

Although the trundle bed is a symbol of all that Mary Dorthula held precious of her one true love, to Ad and Linus, it is a mere commodity:

the trundle bed was just a trundle bed to them. Ad knowed Joe had slept on it up till he was a great big hulk of a boy. But that didn't bother Ad any more than a flea bite. It made me feel numb all over when I seed what Linus was doing. I went back in the kitchen and hid my face in my coattail till Ad and Linus come back from carrying it out to the wagon. . . That trundle bed had been a part of every speck of bliss I had ever had. (175)

As we see here, Mary Dorthula's consciousness continues to flow between the past and the present. She remembers more details from her initial encounter with Charles. She relates his saying to her, "'I'll go. . . here, you hold the dipper.' Like a hen saying, 'Let me kill the bee before you swallow it'" (176). Haun thus foregrounds the motherly, protective quality that marks Charles as special.

As Ad and Linus build a new house to replace the old one, crowds congregate on the grounds. Mary Dorthula listens to the women talk instead of watching the men work on the house. She says, "I like to hear womenfolks talk. After hearing Charles talk all other menfolks sound harsh and hateful" (176). Here again, she relates Charles to the gentler speech of women. She recollects various pieces of female conversation. The women tell her of various women in the community who will need her medical services. They validate the move into the new house, but they question what has become of some of her old furnishings. It is a hodgepodge of gossip, and it sounds for all the world like a group of hens clucking. Somewhere in this *mélange* of chatter appears the phrase "Like a hen saying, "Come on out of the weeds now, the hawk's done gone" (176). Whether the women speak these words or whether this is Mary Dorthula's stream of consciousness, the close association of protective images indicates that she feels as safe in the midst of this sisterhood as she did in Charles's presence. There is no doubt that Mary Dorthula is remembering Charles in the phrase "This trundle bed, it lays so good" (177). Mary Dorthula receives some comfort from these women, but she finds her reason for living in being needed by the sick and it is her work that sustains her. She does say, though, "I wish I had some gumption in

me” (177). Perhaps she has more “gumption” than is at first apparent. In her circumstances, a certain amount of “gumption” is needed merely to survive sorrow and to remember the tiny strands of happiness she has known.

The women reappear on the day the old house is being torn down, and this time they make no mention of Mary Dorthula’s losses. Their agenda is to keep her mind away from her present circumstances, and they sing funny songs, ask riddles, and tell stories for two entire days. With the disappearance of the old house goes Mary Dorthula’s last connection to Charles. He had said that “when he come back he wanted to live up here at the end of the hollow in that house forever, ‘. . . [r]aise hogs and boys’” (178). As the chimney falls, Mary Dorthula again remembers Joe’s fascination as they used to stand and watch the smoke rising from it: ““We help make the sky, don’t we, Ma?”” (178). Finally, the men find some old love notes between Joe and Tiny, and they read them aloud to the amused crowd. Secret sweethearts – Joe and Tiny – except that everyone knew about their love. Mary Dorthula has kept Charles as her secret sweetheart all those years. She remembers the way he said her name, “And the way he looked at me and didn’t say anything. Words don’t mean much anyhow. You’re safe as long as you stay under my wing” (178).

At the end, Mary Dorthula’s thoughts begin to run together, and she keeps coming back to images of Charles as protector. She weakens, falls, drops her bucket, sits down for the last time in a new rocking chair, and her dying thought is “This trundle bed, Charles, it lays so good” (181). She associates Charles with all the possessions that have comforted her up until the time the “hawk” got them,

but there is no protection finally except perhaps in death where she, Charles, and Joe can be one with the cosmos.

CHAPTER 3

FAMILIAL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS AMONG MILDRED HAUN'S WOMEN

As the previous chapter points out, the relationships among Mildred Haun's women serve various purposes. It is, for instance, the community of women that helps Mary Dorthula to endure and withstand the heartache of losing every material possession she has ever held dear. Haun also devotes much attention to relationships between mothers and daughters or between grandmothers and granddaughters, but these relationships appear to be neutral at best, destructive at worst. These close familial relationships between women are particularly troublesome in the conflict that occurs when a mother's desire to protect, preserve, and nurture her daughter cannot be reconciled with the inability or refusal to act in the daughter's behalf in critical situations. Yet Haun seems to hold these maternal relationships in high esteem, as evidenced by the fact that when she wishes to describe desirable traits in men, she does so with the language of the feminine in general and the maternal in particular. Haun's worthy men are gentle in demeanor, appreciative of beauty, willing to share domestic tasks, protective as mother hens, and strong in the same way that the legendary woman Letitia Edes is strong.

Since the legend of Letitia Edes appears on the first page of Haun's book and is alluded to in the opening sentence, the reader understands that the importance of this woman, larger than life, is paramount. The mark of a truly gifted storyteller may well be her ability to present fantasy to her audience in such

a way that it is altogether believable. For an author to accomplish that feat in the opening paragraphs, before she even establishes her ethos or credibility, is nothing less than masterful. As Robert L. Welker and Herschel Gower point out in *The Sense of Fiction*, fiction involves a truth comprised of qualities that go beyond the mere depiction of literal fact (207). If fiction is, as Henry James points out, a “direct impression of life,” then it is a kind of truth that is comprised of insight, and the representation of this kind of truth may reveal reality by means of the gifted author’s use of the fantastic.

Mildred Haun’s opening sentence in *The Hawk’s Done Gone* has the protagonist musing, “Puts me in mind of Letitia Edes Mountain, this page of names in the Family Bible does” (5). Mary Dorthula continues to explain that the page of names – that is, Mary Dorthula’s family – has grown rather quickly so that it has taken up most of the space in the family Bible’s date registry. The growth of the family, like that of Letitia Edes, has no end. Further, Mary Dorthula sees the legendary mountain in adjacent Hancock County from several vantage points within her house, the highest peak as far as the eye can see. She is surrounded by the mountains, icons of immortality.

The legend of Letitia Edes is that she had wanted, “worse than a hungry dog wants a rabbit” (5), to grow bigger than any mountain she ever saw. In fact, she grew so large that, at her death, Letitia was too large to be removed from her house. Friends, neighbors, and kinsfolk had to shovel dirt in on the entire house in order to bury her. The Melungeon woman then continued to grow after death, and the mountain grew with her, expanding its base until former residents of the

hollow found themselves living on the hillside. Mary Dorthula, in turn, draws her security from the mountains surrounding her. She states that they keep her safe from all the world – all, that is, except the antique hunters, and because of their close association with the woman Letitia Edes, the mountains themselves take on a feminine connotation. Letitia Edes draws her literal sustenance from them in death, and Mary Dorthula receives spiritual and emotional succor from the land, specifically the mountains.

Letitia Edes is also considered immortal because she was born on January 6, Old Christmas. Children born on that date, according to legend, never die: “The breath may go out sometime. But the body goes on doing the same thing it did while it was breathing” (6).

Much of the rest of the Letitia Edes story may have come from stories told about Mahala Mullins, a Melungeon who lived in Hancock County, Tennessee, in the nineteenth century. Mahala lived in a house high on Newman’s Ridge and is said to have weighed anywhere between 400 and 600 pounds. She openly sold moonshine in her log house, but when authorities attempted to arrest her, they returned empty-handed, stating, “She’s catchable, but not fetchable” (Mahala). Reportedly, when she died, Mahala had to be carried through an opening left in the wall of her house for a chimney and was buried in either a piano crate (Mahala) or her own bed with boards added to form a coffin (Kennedy 19), the details differing according to particular oral versions.

Whatever the source of her story, Haun establishes the strength and centrality of the Appalachian woman from the outset when she presents Letitia

Edes who may be considered an image of the collective women of the mountains, women who are best characterized by their enduring honesty and lack of pretension, as well as their active concern for one another. The relationships among Haun's women are shaped in several ways. The network of emotional support among women in the community is then interwoven among all the stories.

Traditionally, mothers and daughters enjoy one of the strongest bonds within the family of women, but Haun's mothers and daughters are, at best, off center, and, at worst, terrifying in their relationships. Mary Dorthula has three daughters and four granddaughters, and while she is fond of them, she is unable, perhaps even unwilling, to protect them. She seems to understand her role as that of preparing them for their various destinies, and those destinies are seldom pleasant ones. She is fond of her female offspring, but it is a fondness one might reserve for a favorite dog – nothing like the adoration she shows for Joe and Charles. Further, she seems to be powerless to protect her daughters and granddaughters in any meaningful way.

Mary Dorthula's treatment of her granddaughter Bessie is perhaps the closest she comes to nurturing and attempting to protect her female offspring. Bessie is the illegitimate child of Tiny and Joe, and Mary Dorthula makes an effort to save Bessie's life but finally yields to fate and ushers her out of the land of the living. She resigns herself thus: "But I reckon it was best that she be took. Reckon it was meant that way" (25). When Mary Dorthula removes her from the home of Bessie's maternal grandparents after Tiny dies, she does so over the protests of her husband Ad. Mary Dorthula's motivation is clear: "Joe never did

get to see Bessie while he was alive. But afterward, well, I reckon he did.” Old Man Brock is unconcerned when Tiny falls ill, but Sadie Brock (Tiny’s mother) asks Mary Dorthula for help, recognizing that Tiny is critically ill. Tiny’s fatal illness has been approaching ever since the child’s birth, but Sadie asks for help only when she believes that Tiny is near death. Tiny’s father “wished the damned bastard baby would die too” (25). Sadie weeps over Tiny, but rather than feeling a sense of loss of a beloved daughter, she weeps because she believes Tiny has gone to hell, “that awful place where whores and bastards go” (26). Mary Dorthula silently adds “and liars and hypocrites and killers” (26), and the reader understands that she has deemed the Brocks guilty of sins worse than fornication.

As Bessie grows older, Mary Dorthula takes care of her and also makes sure that she passes along the story of Bessie’s parents. At an early age, Bessie is fascinated with the idea of heaven and asks numerous questions about it – whether her mother and father are there, whether she will go there, whether her kitten will go there, when she can expect to go there. Mary Dorthula recognizes that Bessie is not strong, and she doses her on herbs and takes care to see that Bessie gets out in the fresh air and sunlight as much as possible. Together Mary Dorthula and Amy pay special attention to this frail child. Amy recognizes, along with Mary Dorthula, that Bessie may not be long for this world. When Bessie does fall fatally ill, she begs Mary Dorthula to tell her stories, and Mary Dorthula does her best, but she is lacking in the skills she once had. She wishes she had more stories to tell Bessie, but she admits that after her marriage she never felt like singing, asking riddles, or telling stories like she used to do for Joe. “I forgot

all pretty things,” (34) she says. The loss of Joe and the hard life with Ad have taken away that kind of joy. After Mary Dorthula has tried everything she knows to cure Bessie, she finally takes her to the cave where Joe was murdered. Joe’s ghost appears and takes the child into its arms, relieving Mary Dorthula of her burden. When Bessie is returned to Mary Dorthula, she is full of stories about the moon which she describes in terms of heaven. Mary Dorthula is unable to save Bessie’s life, but she cradles and comforts her in her dying moments. When Bessie takes her last breath in Mary Dorthula’s arms, Mary Dorthula is strangely at peace.

Although Mary Dorthula also values her eldest daughter, she provides no protection to Amy in her time of need. When twenty-five-year-old Amy is courted by Enzor Courtney and Eloyd Fawver, she receives a sign in the still water of the spring that it is Enzor whom she will marry. Amy has expressed her desire to marry no man, but the community is set astir, and Amy feels pressure from her father and the neighbors to marry. Although Enzor “bosses Amy about like a slut dog” (60) and tells her she is “ugly as a mud fence dabbed with tadpoles” (62), she chooses him over Eloyd who treats her kindly. Mary Dorthula does not interfere, determining that Amy is old enough to make her own decisions, although she is convinced that the marriage will not be a happy one.

Mary Dorthula and Ad’s second daughter Effena fares much worse than Amy, and while Mary Dorthula attempts to intervene in her affairs, she is too late to make much difference. When Effena expresses her desire to marry Murf Owens, her half-brother Linus objects on the basis of Murf’s Melungeon heritage

and his religious connections with the New Jerusalem church. Mary Dorthula wants to believe that Linus is merely concerned with Effena's well-being when he first raises his objections; however, she eventually decides that it should not be his concern. Mary Dorthula also does not see any reason why Murf's Melungeon heritage should make a difference. She rejects Linus's suggestion that the Melungeons have Negro blood in them, and she praises Murf's industry and his appreciation for Effena. He already has a crop rented and a house ready for his new bride, and Mary Dorthula approves of Effena's choice.

Some time after the marriage takes place and Effena is pregnant with their first child, Murf disappears. Linus, Effena's half-brother, states his intention to stay with Effena until Murf is found. Since Effena continues to believe that Murf will return, she refuses to leave their home. She does, however, begin to sleep out in the fields or in the lean-to at night, and she tells Mary Dorthula that Linus is the reason she has vacated her bed. Her home is no longer safe for Effena, and by telling her mother, she issues a call for aid. Mary Dorthula, however, takes no action, and when Linus follows Effena to the lean-to and crawls into bed beside her, she merely moves over against the wall, apparently unable to act on her own behalf. One wonders why Effena continues to allow Linus to stay with her and why she even tolerates his presence in her bed. She appears to be afraid to be alone, and Linus and his advances are the compromise that she is willing to make in order to stay in her home. When she is late to arrive in the kitchen to cook his breakfast and relates having visions of heaven and a message about Murf, Linus becomes extremely angry and hits her. Effena relates these occurrences to her

mother but cautions Mary Dorthula not to mention any of it to Linus, so while she seeks some kind of help from her mother, she simultaneously restricts her actions.

When she learns of Linus' violence, Mary Dorthula does attempt to intervene. She asks Effena to leave that place and return to her childhood home, and when Effena refuses, Mary Dorthula sends Amy to stay with Effena, substituting a sister for a mother. Mary Dorthula continues to visit often to check on her daughter. Effena begins to read the Bible and is obsessed with the idea of going to the New Jerusalem church once the baby is delivered as Murf has instructed her in a dream. She begins to express hatred for Linus, but he remains in her home, and, presumably, in her bed. She determines that it wasn't really the fact that Murf was a Melungeon that Linus had objected to, but rather that he had wanted to keep her for himself. She speaks of the Melungeons and says she is proud that Murf was a Melungeon, "proud he was black" (88). She regrets that Murf disappeared before he was able to tell her about his ancestors' history. Living for the day her baby will be born, Effena hopes her baby's skin will be smooth and black like Murf's. She also voices concern that she is about to lose her sanity and says "she hope[s] she [can] keep herself together till little Murf [gets] born into this world" (88).

Effena's concern over her sanity causes Mary Dorthula to recollect the time when she was pregnant with Effena and "old crazy" (89) Malinda Adds claimed to have marked the baby, stating she would be "birthmarked to go crazy" (89). She fears the prophecy is coming to pass. Here Effena breaks down and tells her mother the entire story of Linus and his sexual use of her. Mary Dorthula

had suspected it, but now there is no question. Effena further states that she confessed to Murf on their wedding night that she was not pure and that he had taken this well, affirming the reader's suspicion that Linus had begun his activities with Effena much earlier.

As she awaits the birth and continues to hope that Murf will return, Effena's mental state deteriorates, and Mary Dorthula moves in with her daughter, sleeping with her to keep Linus away and to watch over Effena. It is here that she is most proactive with regard to protecting her daughter, although by the time this occurs, Effena is well on her way to insanity. Of course, the incest has occurred repeatedly; and Murf is dead.

Meady Kanipe is Mary Dorthula's and Ad's third daughter, and Mary Dorthula suspects that Linus is also showing far too much interest in her. Here she attempts to intervene, knowing the history of Linus and Effena. Ad warns her to "keep [her] mouth shut" (112) and states that he will run his own family. Meady then states that she will not put up with it and leaves home to marry Burt Hurst. Their courtship begins when Meady is wading in the branch, picking watercress. When Meady invites Burt into the water, he refuses, stating that the water is "pyore as it is" with Meady in it, but his presence would contaminate it. Meady is, of course, not pure, but Burt does not know this. There is hatred between Linus and Burt, partly because of Linus's jealousy over Meady and his interference in Burt's attempts to spend time with her. Furthermore, Burt is a Melungeon, and this is grounds for enmity because of Ad's and Linus's prejudices. Initially Meady's interest in Burt is only for the purpose of spite

against Linus and Ad. She realizes that in marrying Burt she is pitting him against her male relatives, but she reasons that “if Linus killed Burt she wouldn’t worry any more over it than she would over a pized rat. Or if Burt killed Linus she wouldn’t either. She thought she didn’t like either one of them well enough to care if they killed one another” (116). Her marriage to Burt is, then, merely an act of escape and rebellion.

She soon changes her ideas, however. Shortly after the marriage, Burt and Linus have an altercation, and although Burt is wounded, he leaves Linus for dead. Meady immediately rushes to Linus’s aid. “She had been his dog so long she still wanted to do for him” (117), comments Mary Dorthula. Meady is upset with Burt, believing that Linus will die. She is two months pregnant. She rages against Burt and tells him that she hates him and does not want to have his children, so Burt leaves. Linus remains in Meady’s care, and Ad forbids Mary Dorthula to visit her daughter. Linus heals over time and is supposed to let Mary Dorthula know when Meady goes into labor. Over the course of the winter, Linus burns up all the furniture for heat and then sends Meady out into the sleet day after day for more firewood. Mary Dorthula comments, “I don’t know why Meady put up with it. She never has give me any reason. Just because she had been used to Linus’s treatment, I reckon. I don’t know” (117). What an ironic observation from a woman who “put up” with so much in her own life!

When Meady is ready to deliver, Linus takes the bed and lets her lie on the kitchen floor to have her twins unassisted. Linus is enraged in the morning when he sees that Meady has had not one baby but two. He states that he refuses to

raise more than one of Burt Hurst's babies and promptly throws one of the little girls into the fire onto the very firewood that Meady has provided. Haun tells us that Meady

tried to snatch it out of his hands. She couldn't. She was too weak. She couldn't raise her body up. She was wore out from having to get up and wash both of them. And not knowing whether she fixed their bellies right or not. She just laid there and held the other one. (118)

Thus the cycle of violence continues. A mother is again unable to protect her daughter. It is Meady's hard choice to protect the one baby she has in her arms rather than to risk that child's life as well as the other. Linus does eventually go insane over the incident, replaying the details and fearing that he will be consumed in flames. By that point, the reader sincerely hopes that he will burn in hell. In time Linus confesses his deed, although there is no record that he suffers any legal consequences for this offense.

Less than a year later, Meady loses the surviving child when she develops an illness and Burt refuses to provide the cure. He is angry with Meady and Linus for killing the twin, and after his outburst, Mary Dorthula relates that Meady says "it did her good to know he had some spunk in him. She wished he had showed it that day when she got mad at him because he had the fight with Linus. If he had, him and her never would have separated" (121). But where was Meady's spunk when she chose her incestuous, wicked brother over a husband who loved her?

Effena's daughter Cordia, like Joe and Tiny's Bessie, is raised by her grandparents, but she never knows that they are not her parents. Mary Dorthula had made a deathbed promise to Effena that she would never tell Cordia that her father was a Melungeon, which is an odd departure from Effena's earlier assertion that she was proud of his heritage. She believes that although she herself is not prejudiced, a number of people within the dominant community would, in fact, hold this against Cordia. Effena also expresses a desire that Cordia should never be allowed to marry. She is concerned that any children, especially boys, might be "Melungeon-colored" (98) and that Cordia's white husband might not understand and would think that she had been unfaithful. Because of Mary Dorthula's promise to Effena, she and Ad make every attempt to keep Cordia at home and to discourage social interaction, especially with males.

At age seventeen, Cordia spends two weeks in Hamblen County with her sister Amy, and when she returns home, she has married Mos Arwood. Mary Dorthula cautions Cordia about the signs of pregnancy and asks her to let her know the moment she thinks she might be expecting a baby. Mary Dorthula relates that

In all the years that I have been a Granny-woman I never have give anybody a thing to knock a youngon. Heaps of women have begged me to. It is just one of the things I always said no to. But with Cordia it was different. What I aimed on doing was to give her a quart of hot pennyroyal tea. (99-100)

Mary Dorthula is prepared, then, to take rather drastic action to prevent the birth of children whose very existence would jeopardize Cordia's safety. Mary Dorthula also gives Cordia instructions about preventing pregnancy. Since Cordia knows nothing of her heritage or her grandmother's fears for her, she refuses to consider not having children. Mary Dorthula then starts to notice all the mothers in nature and how they protect their babies. Her intentions to abort Cordia's baby weigh heavily upon her conscience. She justifies her motivations, however, by the fact that Cordia is her child, and that in getting rid of any potential problems that a Melungeon-colored baby would cause, she is indeed protecting her own.

When Cordia does tell Mary Dorthula that she is pregnant, she is too far along for the pennyroyal tea to do its work. Mary Dorthula can only hope that the child will be a girl, believing that it will not inherit the Melungeon complexion in that case. She tries to wish that Cordia will die before giving birth, but she is finally unable to entertain that wish. Although Mary Dorthula hopes the child will be a girl, she has an idea that it is a boy. She remembers that Mos had a Melungeon handyman staying with him during the winter, and she believes that will only help build a case against Cordia should she deliver a dark baby. Ad had related that the Melungeon boy was "mighty talky around Cordia" (105), an observation that would only fuel the hostility should Cordia be suspected of infidelity.

While Mary Dorthula receives many omens which she takes to bode evil against Cordia, she takes no action. Perhaps there is nothing she can do. Yet she

muses that “I had almost been warned but I hadn’t done anything about it. I thought the Lord would understand” (105), leaving one to wonder whether Mary Dorthula could have altered the outcome if she had chosen to do so. During a storm just before Cordia’s child is due, Mary Dorthula wishes that the world would end “so Cordia wouldn’t have any trouble” (105). Cordia’s labor commences in the midst of the storm, and Mos comes for Mary Dorthula. When they arrive, the baby has already been born, and Mary Dorthula remarks, “Its skin. . . A Melungeon! I knowed it” (108). She regrets her words immediately, and Mos assumes the worst. Cordia is having convulsions, having taken too much gunpowder, and Mos kills her in one blow with a stick of firewood. It is too late for Mary Dorthula to save Cordia, but she believes she would have died anyway. Mos promises to bury her the next morning in his family cemetery, and Mary Dorthula is glad that at least Cordia’s name and reputation will be intact. As the two build the coffin, Mary Dorthula prays that the baby will also die before morning:

But it didn’t. It kept on whimpering and gasping. I never could have stood it if I had been in my right mind. I was scared out of my right senses. Scared Mos would hit me in the head with that hammer. Somehow, I wasn’t willing to die, even if I did think I wanted to. (109)

So self-preservation wins out over any thoughts of saving the baby that Mary Dorthula might have entertained. Upon completion of the coffin, Mos puts the living baby in with its dead mother, and Mary Dorthula just watches him: “I had

to stay there in the room while Mos went to dig a grave. And the baby alive” (109). She watches the rain continue to pour down and notes that although it is day, it is as dark as night outside the window. She then relates, “And that cat. That cat kept on clawing at the window. It meowed and screamed and went on. Then I heard that panther scream right out there in the yard. It sounded like a woman’s screaming” (109). Did the baby’s cries intermingle with those of the panther? Was there a panther at all? Was the woman’s screaming really her own? The cat that was clawing at the window follows the two to the cemetery and jumps on the coffin, fighting Mos as he tries to push it away. All of nature seems to protest their actions, but Mary Dorthula aids Mos in the burial, apparently numb to the horror they have committed.

Although they bury Cordia immediately, seven months elapse before her funeral is held. Mary Dorthula wishes she could explain the baby’s appearance to Mos, but she will not break the promise she made to Effena. The preacher speaks of evildoers suffering an eternal fate of “biling molasses” (111) and “burning sulphur” (111), and Mary Dorthula believes she can smell sulphur burning as they leave the church. At the cemetery the crowd sings of darkness, fire, and pain, and Mary Dorthula reflects that she has been through darkness, fire, and pain but that “God said he understood” (111). As she leaves the cemetery, she relates that she “felt peaceful as a kitten” (111), apparently believing she had done what she must to protect her own, and that dying was a better fate for Cordia and the baby than the ostracism they would have suffered had they lived.

Of all the mother/daughter relationships portrayed by Mildred Haun, the most chilling occurs in “The Look,” found in the *Other Stories* portion of the book. Here the mother goes beyond the failure to protect her daughter and is instead a source of deplorable evil, both in her direct treatment of her daughter and in her aiding and abetting her sons in their wickedness against their sister.

It becomes apparent early in this story that the mother is a witch and that the daughter is the object of the witch’s hatred. Stephen Glenn McLeod explains that some women “repudiate their own femininity and resort to witchcraft as a means of acquiring power over men” (98). Although folklore claims that women may choose to become witches by performing certain rituals, one gets a clear sense that other women are witches from birth, so we may be unable to ascertain clearly that this mother makes a deliberate choice. Furthermore, the power over men here accorded to witches is somewhat limited and may be short-lived, as it disappears with the birth of a daughter. Although this witch-mother terrorizes her daughter and stands in the way of any happiness for which the daughter could otherwise hope, the mother is herself the object of ill treatment, although she appears to be a participant in her own and her daughter’s torture.

This mother controls her daughter by a mere look even when she is on her deathbed, physically helpless. Haun again uses avian imagery, likening the look to that of a “cat looking at a bird” (310), which ties in with the book’s title and the idea of people as predatory beasts with rescue possible only rarely. The daughter feels that she must obey the mother’s unspoken commands even though she has, by the time her mother is dying, established a life elsewhere.

The daughter, nicknamed Rabbit by Howard, has been residing with him and his small son Jamie, but as soon as she knows her mother has fallen ill, she packs up to leave. Although Rabbit loves Howard, she refuses to enter into a sexual relationship with him because she has been sexually abused by her brother and is ashamed to tell Howard. She believes from remarks he has made about other women that he would no longer love her if he knew. She senses that he may suspect her past, but she will not voice it to him. In addition, her brother Hubert has threatened her life and her husband's life if she should ever marry. She adds a final reason for her silence: "And the look" (311). The reader is to understand that those three words are powerful, that "the look" is reason enough to comply.

The mother, in fact, shapes her daughter's self-perception from her birth:

Ma said I was the ugliest youngon she ever seed in her born days when I was little. 'Ugly as homemade sin,' she said I was when I was born. . . she was forever and eternally a-telling me I was ugly and awkward. . . blundersome as a blind buzzard. (112)

At the same time, the mother emphasizes how beautiful the boys are. She even speaks of the boys with reverence, "humble-like – like Old Man Simkins does when he is praying in meeting and calls the name of God" (313). The daughter states that she fully believes, "for I thought everwhat Ma said was so" (312). She describes her mother, in turn, as beautiful, "pretty as a pink flower" (312), and praises her beautiful long curly hair, ending the description with "And her eyes" (312), eyes that are at once beautiful and terrible.

In addition to proclaiming that her daughter is ugly, the mother further informs her that she was unwanted by her father as well as by herself. The father had ten boys by his first wife and two by this one. The mother adds that she likes boys and had not wanted a daughter. The folks in the community remark that the mother could make men do what she wanted them to from an early age, at least until she gave birth to her daughter. After the daughter is born and begins to toddle around, her father becomes fond of her, and his affection enrages the mother. She states that she hates all womenfolk “like dogs [hate] snakes” (313), demonstrating her deviance from the standard alliance normally seen among women. Unfortunately, the father dies when his daughter is three years old. One wonders if the mother has something to do with his final illness. The daughter, in any case, is completely brainwashed by the mother and believes that the boys are indeed “pretty” and that she is ugly. She reads much into her mother’s disturbing look, believing that the mother wants to like her and simply can’t, that her mother actually fears her in some way, fears perhaps that the boys will hold the daughter in higher regard than they hold her and so blames the daughter. Yet instead of taking advantage of her mother’s fears, the daughter simply obeys the look, whatever the cost.

Although the daughter receives horrific treatment from her mother and brothers, the mother also shares in the hard work, beatings, and verbal abuse heaped on them from Lom and Hubert. Selling off the land, equipment, and livestock, the boys place the family in penury as they spend the cash on liquor and prostitutes. Lom, after selling everything that he can, even begins to give away

the household necessities to his favorite whore. When the boys sell the mother's favorite cow, the mother falls to the floor unable to move or speak. Instead of showing anger to Lom and Hubert, however, the mother hates her daughter even more, continuing to blame her for their ill fortune. Even when the boys swap the only remaining bed for a still, and an aunt brings a bed to the house for the women to sleep on, the mother immediately reserves it for Lom and Hubert.

Besides enduring the boys' bad management, the mother and daughter serve their every whim, scratching their heads on demand and fetching glasses of water. Hubert has a particularly nasty streak and often throws objects at the women. Whenever the daughter begins to take up for herself, the mother stops her with the look. The boys are completely self-centered, and the mother encourages their selfishness. When Lom is rejected by his prostitute, the mother again blames the daughter. When she looks at her, "there [is] knowing in her eyes" (318).

When the paternal grandmother dies and leaves everything to her granddaughter, the boys intervene and make sure that she never sees any of it, selling most of it before the grandmother is in the ground. She is not even allowed to attend the funeral, and the mother chooses not to go: "[I]T seemed like she didn't care to ever see anybody save the boys" (318-19). The only possession the daughter receives is the little calf Rose who can't be sold because Hubert damaged her, breaking her leg with a rock. The daughter relates, "Rose loved me better than she loved clover" (319). This is the only love she has seen from anyone or anything, but the brothers make short work of it, torturing the creature

in front of their sister and finally beating her to death a few years later. They then frequently use a whip made from the calf's hide to beat their sister.

As the family's condition worsens and food becomes scarce, the boys' treatment of the women also becomes more severe. Once the boys come home drunk and threaten to kill their mother. Hubert begins to beat her with the butt end of a pistol, and Lom begins to kick her. When the daughter attempts to intervene, the mother begins clawing at her and gives her the look, causing her daughter to back away. Apparently the mother prefers to receive ill treatment from her sons rather than no recognition at all.

Lom and Hubert then begin to invite men in, and while Haun does not specify the reason, the reader makes an assumption about the men's intentions toward the protagonist and the brothers' part in it. When the family approaches starvation, the mother tells her daughter that it was the Lord's punishment for "[y]our many sins" (322). When there is a bit of food, the mother, of course, insists that the sons have it. The daughter refrains from partaking, stopped short, again, by the look, except on those occasions that "[she] was so hungry [she] swallowed it before [she] looked up" (322).

When the neighbors finally refuse to give the family more food, telling the women that, while they are willing to help out, they cannot continue to "uphold the boys any longer in their shifty ways and devilment" (322), the mother changes the story when she gets home, telling the boys that the neighbors are refusing "to help anybody that kept a whore like [the daughter] laying around the house" (323). This instigates a violent onslaught of abuse from the boys.

Finally, while working in the fields, a neighbor and cousin, Howard, begins to notice the protagonist, but Lom and Hubert punish their sister when the mother reports Howard's attentions, and they keep their sister home to prevent any escalation in the relationship. In spite of the obstacles, however, Howard continues to court Rabbit when he can. The mother falls ill, and that event provides some freedom to the daughter. Howard does what he can to provide for his beloved and entreats her to marry him. When the brothers learn that Howard has been seeing their sister, they react as they have in the past – with physical abuse toward her.

Here, the reader is gratified to see that the protagonist attempts to take some kind of action. She states that she “took to getting contrarious with the boys” (329) and threatens Lom with a shotgun even though she admits that she has poor aim. Her action serves the purpose, however, of frightening Lom and causing the brothers to relent somewhat in their ill treatment of her. The boys and the mother nevertheless resent every success that Rabbit has, no matter how small. When she successfully grows a garden with some seeds and equipment that she obtains from her aunt and from Howard, “the boys kicked” (329) and “Ma, she looked at me” (329). By this point, the protagonist has become somewhat hardened. She claims that she “got to the place where I didn't care any more for a beating than a balky ox does” (329). She develops a beast's mentality to match the family's perception of her as a beast.

It is Howard who begins to urge her to leave home, and he broadly hints that her mother may be a witch. When the brothers perceive that their sister is on

the verge of leaving with Howard, they forbid her to speak to him, and they keep them apart. Howard, in time, gives up and marries another woman, and the brothers then hire their sister out to him to care for his pregnant wife who has fallen ill with consumption. The brothers also insist that she spend the weekends at home where they collect from her their due, in terms of money and flesh.

When he learns that Rabbit is upset over the fact that her mother's home is about to be sold for taxes, Howard buys it and gives the deed to her. Instead of showing gratitude when she informs her brothers and mother, the boys began to curse and to demand their share of the homeplace. The daughter states that her mother stood mute and "just looked at me" (336). She quickly responds that the deed is in Howard's name (a lie), at which point the boys demand that Howard repair the roof and keep the taxes paid. She then allows her temper to flare and reminds them that if it had not been for Howard's intervention, they might well be "thrown out into the middle of the big road" (336). Hubert immediately kicks his mother's shin, causing her to double over in pain, apparently considering punishment to mother and daughter as interchangeable. As her daughter helps her to bed, the mother instructs her to prepare food for the boys and then stares at her "like a snake trying to charm a gopher" (336). When the mother falls quite ill, the daughter remains at home to care for her, although Howard continues to send her wages to her, wages that Lom and Hubert claim as their own.

Somewhat ironically, considering the complications of their relationship, Rabbit's relationship with Howard and Sarah is the best she has ever known, and she becomes fond of Sarah, who provides affection and concern much as one

might expect from a mother. Paradoxically, Rabbit substitutes the nurturing of a neighbor woman who could be looked upon as a rival for that of a mother.

Although it is clear that Howard and the protagonist still have feelings for one another, they never betray Sarah, and their relationship remains platonic. Sarah perceives that the protagonist is ill-treated at home, but the two never speak of the matter in any significant way. The protagonist refuses to divulge any information about either her brothers or her mother, remaining loyal to her despicable family, or perhaps just too proud to admit the severity of her situation.

After Sarah dies in childbirth and Rabbit's mother improves, she moves in with Howard, his father, and the newborn child. She lavishes all her attention on Howard's child and caters to his every wish. Howard continues to ask her to marry him, but she continues to refuse, never giving him a reason. Because of her mother and brothers, the protagonist is not allowed a life or happiness of her own, and it is only through her rare exhibitions of defiance and Howard's intervention that her circumstances show any improvement at all. She must "mother" herself, as her own mother is an instrument of destruction to her rather than one of protection. One wonders if the protagonist's indulgence toward the child Jamie will form the same traits of selfishness and unconcern in that child as are exhibited by her brothers or whether the cycle of violence will be broken.

When she is called home, her mother has died, but the look lives on, and the reader is left to imagine whether the protagonist will ever escape the horror that surrounds her. There is a quality connected to "the look" that, like Letitia Edes, will never completely die.

The witch-mother in this story is Mildred Haun's worst-case scenario: this mother not only fails to protect her daughter, but she is herself dangerous to her female progeny. The daughter at certain moments speaks up and finds power in language to dispel at least a portion of the danger she faces from her brothers, but she is never able to withstand "the look" of her mother, even after her mother's death. The damage is done: the daughter has suffered physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, and she is denied any kind of happiness in life. Furthermore, one may surmise that in her overindulgence towards Jamie, she may possibly be perpetuating the system of male domination.

At times the roles of women overlap in Haun's stories. Mary Dorthula serves Tiny and Bessie as friend, grandmother, granny-woman, and neighbor. She answers the call from Sadie when Tiny dies. Sadie is either unable or unwilling to act on behalf of her daughter and granddaughter. It is thus up to Mary Dorthula to prepare Tiny's body for burial. She carries her from the lean-to where she has died into the big house where she finds the baby, Bessie, lying in her own filth. At this point Mary Dorthula recognizes that her duty is to the living and not the dead. She says of her treatment of Tiny, "I pert nigh throwed her body down and picked Bessie up" (26). Mary Dorthula gazes into the child's face, recognizing features of both Joe and Tiny. Her maternal instincts are stirred, and she is willing to care for Bessie as she would have cared for Joe had he lived. She has not seen the baby since she delivered her. She suggests to Old Man Brock and Sadie that Bessie should be changed, and Sadie sullenly answers that if Mary Dorthula wants "it" changed, she can change "it" herself. Sadie not only

distances herself from her granddaughter, but she relegates “her” to the realm of “it,” a non-person.

Realizing she cannot count on Tiny’s parents for assistance, Mary Dorthula turns to the women of the community. Together they construct a respectable burial for Tiny, washing the body after bringing in their own clean sheets and towels, dressing Tiny in clean clothes, and wrapping her in a clean, beautiful, multicolored quilt. The ceremony is one of purification and beautification as well as a rite of passage from one world to another. The patchwork quilt may well represent the composite community of various women, beauty made from leftover scraps.

The burial is held the following morning, and it is the women who decide that Bessie should attend her mother’s funeral. They orchestrate the ceremony and, to some extent, the behavior of the participants. They do not consult the maternal grandparents but merely “put the clothes on Bessie and [tote] her” (28). No one in the audience, including Tiny’s parents, makes a move to walk up to the coffin and view the corpse. The people of the community wait for Old Man Brock and Sadie to lead the way. Old Man Brock doesn’t budge, but Sadie is clearly uncomfortable and emotionally torn over whether she should look at her daughter one final time or support Old Man Brock in his decision to remain apart. She begins “twisting and turning like there was a cockle-burr in her seat” (28). Mary Dorthula, with Bessie in her arms, leads the procession, and Old Man Brock and Sadie finally follow her. There is no question that Mary Dorthula will raise

Bessie. Old Man Brock tells her he isn't "used to raising bastards" (29). He rejects his granddaughter, and Sadie passively acquiesces.

Although Mary Dorthula cares for her daughters more than Sadie cared for Tiny, there are some instances in which unrelated but caring women fulfill a supporting role that a mother cannot. Mary Dorthula recollects the important role the community women had in preparing Effena for her wedding night. She states that Effena was "scared nigh to death" (89) and that she had not let herself think about the wedding night until that moment. This is hardly likely, however, because Effena had sewn her bridal nightgown of pink and white and had refused to let Linus see it. She constructs for herself the innocence she cannot recover and is determined not to let the usurper destroy it. The women strip away Effena's clothing, symbolizing the removal of Effena's sexual impurity, and slip the gown over her head, lifting her onto the bed against the wall. As Effena "[wads] herself up into a knot and [shakes] with sobs" (89), the women attempt to lighten her mood with giggles and recollections of their own wedding nights. The community of women attempt to ease a difficult situation for one of their own, providing support for her, much as we have seen in an earlier chapter that depicts the community women coming to Mary Dorthula's aid at the end of her life as she gives up all she has held dear in her life.

At best, Haun's mothers only partially protect their daughters and granddaughters, and by far the most effective female system at work in these stories is the network of community women who, although Haun devotes far less space and attention to their role, lend physical and emotional help to their spiritual

sisters during difficult times in a greater way than do Haun's mothers. In such a violent story, the smallest act of kindness is noteworthy.

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BOSTON
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1854

CHAPTER 4

THE SELF: DEFENSE AGAINST THE HAWK

As we seek to examine issues of “identity” in this chapter, we must first acknowledge the difficulties the term presents. In “Appalachian Women’s Writings and Identity Theories,” Nancy Carol Joyner notes that there are at least three different interpretations of the term. Sociology, psychology, and literary criticism all offer definitions that differ slightly.

The sociological view of “identity” is perhaps best articulated in Erving Goffman’s *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* when he explains that identity dictates that we are merely actors performing roles that have been socially prescribed (121-22). Lung-chang Young articulates the sociological truism in this way: “I am not what I think I am. I am not what you think I am. I am what I think you think I am” (22). According to this sociological concept, identity is formed by external considerations such as race, class, culture, gender, and region. The self is largely formed by the time period, location, and condition of one’s place in society. Mary Dorthula White Kanipe surely forms her ideas of “self” largely from her role in her society, as this chapter discovers.

The psychological treatment of the term “identity” focuses primarily on the interior view of one’s life rather than exterior forces that sociologists see as shaping one’s identity. It is the interior focus of finding oneself upon which Erik Erikson concentrates in his classification of life stages, and he sees this as a necessity because past social structures are continually crumbling, and new generations must look inward for identity answers. Mary Dorthula demonstrates

the fully functioning personality that Carl Rogers describes in *On Becoming a Person*. She maintains internal integrity even when she is maligned by the community at large or by individuals within that community. She is at peace with herself from beginning to end, even though she often poses questions to herself. She considers herself a success and reminds the reader of Edgar Lee Masters' "Lucinda Matlock" who certainly knew heartache, having lost eight of her twelve children, but at age ninety-six had "lived enough, that is all" (16). Lucinda accuses the "degenerate sons and daughters" (20), stating that "Life is too strong for you — / It takes life to love Life" (21-22). Lucinda and Mary Dorthula have strength of character that exists in spite of, not because of, external circumstances.

In the sense that some literary critics use the term "identity," one might consider the reader-response theory that identity involves relationship of characters with each other, of characters with their past and present selves, of characters with their method of presentation, the words on the page. Heidegger's *Identity and Difference* and Derrida's "differance" insist that identity is dependent upon its relationship to something else and involves philosophical, linguistic, and political approaches to both the work and the reader. In other words, the critic/reader's identity is an integral part of the identification of the character. In considering identity in this regard, the ambiguity and paradoxical nature of the various interpretations of Mary Dorthula's sense of self become apparent.

As the earlier chapters point out, Mildred Haun's women are at risk, with virtually nowhere to turn for protection. Her admirable men are unable to protect fully their sweethearts, wives, and daughters. Often resorting to murder, the

villainous men pose a clear threat to Haun's women as well as to the men who try to intervene. Women typically look to their mothers and grandmothers for protection, but as was shown previously, Haun's mothers and grandmothers range from inadequate protectors to active participants in their female children's destruction. The community of women is somewhat helpful in easing the pains of suffering women, but those actions come after the damage is done: preparing Haun's women to accept the inevitable or performing death rituals, giving the victims as much dignity as possible, and providing support to the survivors. To whom then, if anyone, can these women turn for protection? In this chapter, we will analyze Mary Dorthula White Kanipe, the woman who most exemplifies the qualities necessary to survive in Haun's rather harsh world, and we will see that she turns inward for her strength, relying on the belief that there is a force beyond this life through which true respite is possible.

Haun's title *The Hawk's Done Gone* lends itself to several interpretations. The "hawk," of course, represents danger of a predatory nature, and Miss Robinson, the antique hunter in the penultimate chapter of the book has "hawk" eyes, so she is Haun's tangible representation of danger. Nothing protects Mary Dorthula from this "hawk," and her escape comes only in death, but not before the "hawk" has taken everything but her memories.

The encounter with Miss Robinson and her "hawk" eyes and the loss of possessions that are connected with her childhood, her relationship with Charles, and her lost child Joe carry Mary Dorthula back to her time with Charles which was "the only speck of bliss" (175) she ever had. For a brief time, while Charles

was with her, Mary Dorthula felt that she was safe. She continually refers to Charles' protective qualities, as though he is a mother hen and she is his chick, hiding under the security of his wings, until the "hawk" is gone, the "hawk" in this case being the Rebel soldiers. The reader questions, however, whether this safety was as absolute as Mary Dorthula feels that it was. After all, Charles comes through with a band of Rebel soldiers, and he does take advantage of a young, innocent girl who is alone on her family farm. Haun's depiction of Charles in a predatory manner alerts the reader that the relationship was perhaps not quite as innocent as Mary Dorthula believes. He runs his fingers through her hair on their first meeting and comments upon its softness, a liberty one would not expect a stranger to take with a young woman. He comments on her red and tan checked homespun shawl that had belonged to Mary Dorthula's mother: "Little Red Ridinghood wore a shawl like that" (170), and this evokes an uneasiness that Charles' gentle voice and manners may cover some big teeth and claws. Haun's use of the mother's shawl further illustrates the inability of Mary Dorthula's mother to provide any protection in this instance. Since she is not there, her absence is made more notable by the presence of the shawl, a "protective" covering that does not protect.

Mary Dorthula was not raped; she was a willing participant, but she did not invite Charles to share her bed. He simply appeared, apparently sure of his reception. He provided some safety from the soldiers who would have taken all of the food and livestock from the farm, but that protection was in exchange for sex. One may well argue that Charles would have provided the protection even if

Mary Dorthula had refused him; in fact, the protection occurs before the seduction, but ultimately, since she does not refuse him, that is a moot point.

Charles' protection falls short, however, because he leaves Mary Dorthula pregnant, leaves her, that is, to fend for herself and to explain the situation as best she can. He promises to return to her, and when he does not, she is certain that he must have been killed in the war. She refuses to consider the possibility that he might have lived and simply chosen not to return. She cannot even consider the possibility that he has lived and returned to marry and bear children with any woman other than herself.

One reason that Mary Dorthula is vulnerable to Charles' seduction and the invasion of the Rebel soldiers is that there is a lack of protection from her mother or mother-figure. One surmises that Mary Dorthula's mother has died because she states that her Aunt Cindy was staying with her while her brothers were away fighting in the Union Army. Until they leave to fight in the war, the brothers appear to have been the only other occupants of the homeplace, and based upon Haun's depictions of other brothers, that in itself could have been a situation that placed Mary Dorthula at risk as well. Aunt Cindy is aware of the possibility of soldiers coming through and finding Mary Dorthula alone, but she leaves in spite of that possibility to attend to a neighbor woman's corpse. She leaves Mary Dorthula with instructions to "let them have everwhat they wanted" (169) should the soldiers appear. On other occasions, Mildred Haun's women make choices that privilege the living over the dead, but in this case, Aunt Cindy privileges the dead, placing the living at risk – a risk not as drastic, perhaps, as the risk at which

Mary Dorthula will later place Cordia's newborn baby when she privileges the dead, her reputation, and her own life over the survival of the child. Neither Charles, Mary Dorthula's mother, nor Aunt Cindy adequately protects Mary Dorthula from danger, even though in the end, Mary Dorthula is a willing participant in her relationship with Charles.

Ad Kanipe, Mary Dorthula's husband, is the only man other than Charles, as far as we know, with whom Mary Dorthula has a physical relationship, and the memory of this time in her life seems to sustain her in more difficult times. She is thirty-four years old when she marries Ad, a widower with two sons, ages sixteen and nineteen. The reason Mary Dorthula chooses to marry Ad is a mystery; it seems that he and his sons continually abuse Mary Dorthula and her children. She has four children with Ad, but he appears to care little for their emotional or physical security and, in fact, often interferes with Mary Dorthula's attempts to intervene in their favor. Ad is a murderer and a racist, and blood relationships mean little to him. He is a danger to Mary Dorthula and her children and never a sanctuary.

If Ad Kanipe provides no protection and Mary Dorthula's family and sweetheart provide only limited protection, it is noteworthy that the women of the community come to Mary Dorthula's aid on more than one occasion and in a variety of ways. First of all, Mary Dorthula's role as "granny woman" and midwife provides some diversion from her heartaches and gives her a reason to live. In "Maidens, Mothers, and Grannies: Appalachian Women in Literature," Jack Welch notes that in these regional texts, the granny prototype is more

respected and powerful than either the maiden or the mother. She is valued by the community, and she has skills that are necessary for survival – her own and that of others (43-44). Her career appears to define Mary Dorthula more than her role as wife or mother. She cannot give up on life because there are too many people who depend upon her medical services. It is in this role that she can often make a difference in the outcomes of crises, using her medical skills and knowledge of folk remedies to avert catastrophic illnesses. She begins to serve the community in this way when she is quite young, and she plans to continue as long as she is able. The importance she assigns to her vocation is clear in her statement that “I don’t want to think about not being any more use. It is my place, seems like to doctor sick folks and bring babies into the world, and lay out the dead” (7) She trains her daughter Amy to take her place but does not voluntarily relinquish the role. She values her role for a number of reasons, not the least of which is its social value: “If it got so I couldn’t doctor folks I might not ever see anybody. The end of this hollow is so far from the road” (7). Often, her depression is lifted only by her realization that an elderly woman is near death or that a pregnant woman is nearing her delivery date. She thus redirects her energies from a situation in which she is helpless to a situation in which she can actively participate to alter tragic outcomes, enable favorable ones, or at least provide some comfort to suffering patients.

The second way in which the Appalachian community of women seeks to protect its own is by using the presence of women as a diversion when circumstances become unbearable. As was covered in the previous chapters, they

sometimes provide group support in talking through difficult situations, offering their own experiences as a touchstone upon which the anxious woman may anchor herself. At other times, they get busy and engage the victim in activities and discussions of matters far removed from the issue at hand, a distraction technique.

Since all of these outside protectors are inadequate or incomplete protectors, one must examine the qualities within Mary Dorthula that enable her to survive and even to cherish her life, as filled as it is with disappointment and sorrow. Herschel Gower notes in his introduction to the 1968 edition of Haun's novel that

Mary Dorthula White reacts to Chance as if the real world were governed by a higher order of dark forces which she cannot ignore and can seldom placate. For her there is no gap between the natural and supernatural worlds; interaction between them is constant; the lines of communication are always open. (xix)

Perhaps because of this acceptance, because she does appear to be completely attuned to the "real" world and the supernatural world, Mary Dorthula never appears to question the events that occur to herself and her family. She is rarely able to avert catastrophes, but she does make choices, at times, in an effort to redirect the inevitable. When the outcome is as Fate seems to have preordained, however, Mary Dorthula accepts the inevitable and even attains a remarkable degree of peace within herself. She rationalizes, after she has made her choices, that the result was preordained by some greater force – God or Fate.

In “The Perfect Hell of *The Hawk’s Done Gone*,” Amy Tipton Gray takes umbrage at Mary Dorthula’s passivity and believes that readers “can’t see anything being born, any affirmation, any overriding purpose to this endless, grueling round of misery” (43). There is no doubt that there is a degree of contradiction in the extent to which Mary Dorthula is able to direct her own destiny. She reflects on her life and her role in it: “I’ve been like a checker on a checker board. I’ve just moved when pushed. And there I’ve set till I was pushed again” (30). Yet, on occasion Mary Dorthula makes decisions to act or remain passive in an attempt to shape outcomes. For example, when all the omens suggest that Joe will come to a bad end, Mary Dorthula tries to intervene by asking him to avoid the cave and by forcing young Tiny and Joe to end their play-acting when it involves Joe’s pretend-dying. She begs him to take precautions, to avoid dangerous situations, to stay away from Tiny when Old Man Brock threatens him.

Mary Dorthula also makes a conscious choice to remain passive in allowing Mos Arwood to bury his living newborn baby with Cordia whom he has murdered. She does this not only to protect Cordia’s reputation by allowing the Melungeon-colored child to die but also because she states that “Somehow, I wasn’t willing to die, even if I did think I wanted to” (109). Here Mary Dorthula realizes that in order to survive, she must not attempt to rescue the baby from Mos. Lest the reader judge her too harshly for her passivity in this situation, let us remind ourselves that Mary Dorthula remarks, upon hearing the baby “whimpering and gasping” (109), that she “never could have stood it if I had been

in my right mind” (109). She is consumed with horror over Mos’ murdering her granddaughter, shame over the baby’s dark skin, and driven by loyalty to her deathbed promise to Effena that she will never disclose the fact that Cordia’s father was a Melungeon, her desire to protect Cordia’s reputation in the community, and finally the oldest instinct known to humankind – that of survival. It is no wonder that she is at the point of insanity in this moment when all of nature is raging in a storm that reflects her inner turmoil. Yet, several months later, at Cordia’s funeral, waging her own inward battle with guilt and fearing that she smells the fires of hell burning in preparation for her, she finally reconciles herself, believing that God understands. The impending storm subsides, and the air becomes cool and calm. Mary Dorthula finds therapy in the routine task of gathering “poke sallet” (111) for supper. She notes the activity of a honey bee and some butterflies, and as nature resumes its natural order, Mary Dorthula comments, “I felt peaceful as a kitten” (111).

The prologue of *The Hawk’s Done Gone* provides some insight into Mary Dorthula’s survival strategies. The legendary Letitia Edes who continues to grow even after her death seems to be Mary Dorthula’s ideal and hope that life does not end when the breath leaves the mortal body. Granted, Letitia Edes is believed to live on because of her birthday falling on Old Christmas, January 6, but Mary Dorthula shares that birthday and has reason to believe that if the superstition holds true for Letitia Edes, then it also assures her that somehow her essence will continue after death. In some ways, this may seem to be an opiate for Mary Dorthula, much as the white man’s religion may be seen as an opiate for slaves,

and Mary Dorthula seems to make little difference between the superstition of the Appalachians and religious doctrine, mixing, as Herschel Gower points out, the Christian and the pagan. In *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland*, John C. Campbell points out that for the mountaineers, the idea of self-preservation is extremely important as they determine their ethical standards and becomes, in effect, “a part of [their] religion” (177). He also notes the strange mixture of superstition and religious doctrine, giving several examples of visions, dreams, and omens serving to “prove” doctrinal issues, such as whether one is saved or lost (180-81). Mary Dorthula’s relationship to God is a personal one, circumventing any involvement of earthly clergy. She states that although certain people talk to God through elements of nature such as bluebirds and apple trees, she prefers to “do my own praying. Then I’d know that it was done” (77). Furthermore, she does not trust earthly interventions, believing it is best for the Lord to deal directly with her sins because He “wouldn’t tell everybody in the whole country” (77) as Preacher Jarvin would. References to the Family Bible follow closely on Mary Dorthula’s observations about Letitia Edes. Like Letitia, the family, shown to be sacred by its association with the Bible, is a force that cannot be destroyed and will grow even after its matriarch is gone. Significantly, the Family Bible is the only possession of importance that the antique hunters do not buy. The family survives every attack. Mary Dorthula can always count on feeling “peacable as a full kitten” (6) when she looks at the family record and thinks of her family.

In addition to serving as a reminder of the family that can be scarred but not destroyed, Mary Dorthula depends upon the Family Bible to remind her of her own identity. She recalls, "Seems like half of Forever since I heard the name spoke" (6). She has become "Granny" to the entire community, family and friends alike. "Granny" connotes not only her familial relationship but her role as granny-woman, or medical caregiver. Since one of her primary roles as granny woman is that of midwife, she is, in a very real way, a matriarch to the entire community, but in the family Bible her name appears, and she is reminded that she is Mary Dorthula White Kanipe.

Mary Dorthula also depends upon nature for sustenance and strength. She claims that she can never feel lonesome as long as she is surrounded by the natural world. The domestic landscape, like her human patients, gives her a reason to exist. She cannot give up on life as long as there are chickens depending upon her for their care, as long as the earth must be tended. Furthermore, she receives joy from observing the wonders of her natural world. She feels a close communion with them. In speaking of feeling "naturalized to the place" (7), she likens herself to an old red oak by the spring. It does not get lonely, and she does not either. She seems to feel one with the elements of nature. She mentions the calico bushes with their "white, closed-up blossoms that open when they feel a bee light on them" (7). Surely, during the brief period of happiness with Charles, Mary Dorthula must have experienced that same feeling so that she knows that it is a universal and natural occurrence. Zora Neale Hurston uses this same type of imagistic correlation in *Their Eyes Were Watching*

God when Janie understands the very palpable kinship of her own blossoming body with the little pear blossoms she observes in the spring. Nature provides Mary Dorthula with physical remedies for herself and her patients, and it also provides a remedy for her spiritual ills.

As incongruent as it may seem, given the overwhelming darkness that often surrounds her, another coping mechanism for Mary Dorthula is her sharp mind and her sense of humor. Throughout the book the reader sees examples of her ready wit even when it goes unspoken. A prime example of Mary Dorthula's relying on her sense of humor to see her through a potentially difficult situation is her relating the community's suspicions at times that she might be a witch. The local gossip was that Mary Dorthula had killed Jake's and Tessie's baby; and, in fact, one man put her to a test by placing a broom across his door, knowing that witches are unable to step over brooms. Mary Dorthula was tempted to play along and pick up the broom, leading Elzie to believe that she was indeed a witch. She does, however, go ahead and step over the broom, dispelling Elzie's fears. It is enough for her, though, to know that she saw his ploy, and she played out the practical joke in her mind. She does not dwell on the unpleasantness that goes along with her position as granny woman, stating that

I just scour them things off my mind. It is not hard to. Not when I can set here by the fire and look out at Letitia Edes Mountain there, then down at this page of names that grew fast too. And think on them. (7)

Here Mary Dorthula reiterates that through the powers of her mind, memory, and the strength she receives from her family and from all of nature, she can dwell on matters that bring joy to her. Above all, she does not believe that physical death is the end of all things.

As mentioned earlier, Mary Dorthula's actions present something of a paradox concerning her view of Fate, or determinism, in shaping events. For instance, in "Darkness Coming Deep," the very chapter in which she claims that she is something of a game piece being moved upon a playing board by forces outside her control, Mary Dorthula makes some very deliberate choices. This is the chapter in which Haun relates the story of Bessie, Joe and Tiny's illegitimate daughter. Early on, Mary Dorthula rescues the baby from her maternal grandparents, and this is against the wishes of Ad. She makes every effort to nurse the child through illnesses, and the reader may be certain that, without Mary Dorthula's intervention, Bessie would have died long before she did. Her death is, however, ultimately inevitable. Once death is imminent, Mary Dorthula can only ease Bessie's passage into the next world, a world that is an odd mixture of superstition and religion. The Christ child story occurs side-by-side with the story of the Man in the Moon. The outcome is that Bessie will die, no matter what actions Mary Dorthula takes, but her passage is more peaceful because of steps Mary Dorthula takes to introduce the child to the world beyond. Once Mary Dorthula decides to take Bessie to the cave where Joe's ghost resides, she states that "an easy feeling come over me" (37). The peace that Mary Dorthula feels

clearly comes from her clear conscience that she has made the right choice: “I was sure I had done my part” (38).

In “Melungeon-Colored,” certainly one of the most chilling narratives in *The Hawk’s Done Gone*, Mary Dorthula realizes that she is not certain whether “God’s plans” (105), or Fate, can be altered. As night falls and the lightning commences, Mary Dorthula remembers signs of foreboding she has seen over the past twenty-four hours. She knows that this is the appointed time for the birth of Cordia’s baby. She so dreads the approaching events that she wishes that the world would end. She reasons to herself, stating that “I thought there wasn’t any use in trying to stop God’s plans,” but then in the next sentence, the reader understands that on some level Mary Dorthula believes that perhaps there had been actions she could have taken. She says, “I had almost been warned but I hadn’t done anything about it” (105), leaving the reader to understand that she could have taken some action. She then rationalizes, “I thought the Lord would understand” (105), a thought that comes back to her on the day of Cordia’s funeral seven months later. She hears the storm raging outside, and she makes her choice: “I made up my mind to go. I never had done any harm to anybody that I could think of” (105). Does this mean that she understood at this point that in going to Cordia she would be involved in “doing harm?” She is still thinking along the lines of God and His Will when she hears a voice calling her name. Her immediate response is to answer “Yes, Lord” (105) as young Samuel does in the Bible when he is summoned by the Lord to act as His servant. The voice, of course, was “Mos instead of the Lord” (105), and the call is an unholy one, as it

turns out. As the two set out so that Mary Dorthula can assist with the childbirth, the storm intensifies, and Mary Dorthula fluctuates between fearing that she will be killed and wishing that she would. She says, "I had never been in such a shape before" (107). Yet, by the time of Cordia's funeral, Mary Dorthula believes she has made peace with God, that He understands, and her guilt and fears are put to rest.

In the book's final chapter, "Pa Went A-Courting," one sees something of the complexity of Ad's and Mary Dorthula's relationship. Haun does not explain or justify Ad's despicable actions heretofore, and when Mary Dorthula's ghost appears in the bed with Ad and his new woman, the reader believes that Mary Dorthula is engaging her wicked sense of humor to inflict revenge upon Ad and terrify him. As the story progresses, however, Mary Dorthula's true motives emerge. She says that she "get[s] so tired of Spirits" (195). Mary Dorthula cannot relinquish her concern for her family and for the few possessions not taken by the antique hunters. She believes that Ad's new woman plans to take every material possession that he has. Mary Dorthula, even in death, cannot assume a passive role: "I want to come back once in a while and straighten out things. I see what goes on and I want to help. . . But I am at peace" (195).

Initially terrified, Ad begins his journey of self-examination, and Mary Dorthula's supernatural appearance steers him toward repentance for all his evil acts. He finds redemption through Mary Dorthula's ghost, and this too seems to be part of her plan. He remembers his ill treatment of Mary Dorthula over the years, and he cannot run away from her ghostly presence. He believes that he can

smell the sulphuric hell fires burning, and he knows that he is headed toward them. For the first time in his life, Ad falls to his knees and prays, thinking of all the “low-down things he had done” (196) and burning with shame. He promises the Lord that he will never again do “ne’er another thing wrong” (196), and he finds peace even though he still believes he will spend eternity in hell. The book ends with Mary Dorthula’s ghost kissing Ad’s lips “like you do a child before you give him a good dose of medicine” (197), granting him redemption.

In the end, Mary Dorthula lives on, true to the Old Christmas superstition, and she continues to make choices regarding her family that are in accord with her conscience. Perhaps the truest test of her character is her concern over Ad, and yet the reader is still uncertain of his eternal destiny. Like some of the other evil men in Haun’s book, Ad ends his story by an admission of his guilt, and he finds his peace only at that moment, whereas Mary Dorthula has managed to be at peace throughout her lifetime and beyond. Finally, it is the experience of living, of enduring, of remembering, of accepting that enables Mary Dorthula to triumph over the “hawk” of adversity.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: A VIEW OF MILDRED HAUN

One of the marks of a gifted author is his or her resistance to classification and explication. Although Mildred Haun's narrative voice is stark, plain, and unpretentious, her work defies efforts at placing it into neat categories of genre and interpretation. Because one cannot unequivocally place Haun's work in a particular genre, because one cannot reduce her themes down to one simple message, because one cannot easily define her narrative style, Haun's work is difficult to dismiss. With some trepidation, I set out to examine Haun as an "authentic" Appalachian author, realizing that the term is loaded with pitfalls. There is no doubt that her first sixteen years were spent in the heart of Appalachia, in the Hoot Owl District in or near Cocke County, Tennessee. Yet, she left the area to live with her educated aunt and uncle in Franklin, Tennessee, attending first high school and later Vanderbilt University. Thereafter, Haun never again lived in the hills of East Tennessee. She wrote her stories under the tutelage of Vanderbilt's Agrarians, published one novel, and made a career of technical writing for the U. S. government, providing at least a portion of her mother's financial support as well as all of her own. She returned to East Tennessee only for brief visits, and her stories aroused indignation, scorn, and dismissal from the neighbors of her youth.

In *Resisting Regionalism*, Donna M. Campbell quotes Frank Norris as expressing contempt for those writers of "realism" who, either through lack of experience or through willfully shutting themselves away from life, create inferior

literature. He offers this lack as an explanation of why women write inferior novels to those of men, although they are more suited by nature – i.e. more “impressionable, emotional, and communicative” (1) – to write the best novels. Campbell defends Norris by stating that he is not really a misogynist, but noting that he believes only males have access to a larger world and that women should not be held responsible since they have no choice in the matter. The conclusion is that “real life” is equal to “men’s lives,” and only those who experience this “real life” are able to write “real literature” – i.e., naturalistic male authors.

Certainly, Mildred Haun cannot be said to have lacked experience in real life. For sixteen years she heard stories, ballads, and experienced life as real as it gets on a mountain farm. Her family was from the working class, relying on farming for their livelihood. Mildred Haun’s father died when she was only eleven, leaving only Mildred, two teenaged brothers, and her mother to make ends meet. Soon after Mildred moved to Franklin with her aunt and uncle, an economic depression, the likes of which had never before been seen, ravaged the nation. A. J. Haun, Mildred’s uncle, was an educator, so his income was steady, if not plentiful. A. J. and Mattie had no children of their own, so for all practical purposes they provided for Mildred from age sixteen. She had been unschooled since the age of ten, and her immediate family was not particularly supportive of her educational goals. Initially, when Mildred began her schooling in Middle Tennessee, her plans were to return to East Tennessee to practice medicine as a modern-day granny woman: one who treated the sick, delivered babies, and prepared corpses for burial. Mildred no doubt had a close acquaintance with Eliza

Jarnigan, the granny woman who delivered her and her brothers in Hamblen County. In fact, she admitted later that she had modeled Mary Dorthula White Kanipe after Jarnigan.

Her early years provided Haun with the experience and the immersion in Appalachian culture that is necessary, according to Mark Twain and others, for writing effectively in the local color or realistic genre. Yet her education at Vanderbilt and beyond – she spent one year at the University of Iowa in a Writers' Workshop – equipped her with the tools and the sophistication to write very complex literature. Her M. A. thesis on Cocke County ballads has been hailed as “one of the most valuable collections of southern folk songs ever compiled” (Young 79). Herschel Gower has stated that Mildred Haun was quiet, timid, unpretentious, and demure, and yet her literature explodes with horror that, at times, borders on the unspeakable. She cannot merely be relegated to the genre of “local colorist” because her work goes beyond “mere decoration. . . or as a vehicle for sentimentality” (Murfin 191). It is true that the use of local color often ranges from “picturesque scenes of unusual charm” (191) to “depict[ing] the tawdry-to-sordid breeding grounds of vice and temptation. . . help[ing] the reader to envision and understand the moral dilemmas faced by ordinary people” (191), yet Haun’s writing lacks the flowery sentimentalism of Mary Noailles Murfree, and she does not moralize or present clear-cut moral dilemmas. In fact, the dilemmas faced by Haun’s characters are usually quite complex.

Neither can Mildred Haun be easily classified as a pure “realist” because her characters are not always easy to read in terms of motivation. The reader

rarely receives any insight concerning the motivation of the evil men in the book, for instance. There is little or no reason given for the actions of some of the women characters who are unable or unwilling to act on behalf of themselves or their daughters/granddaughters. Further, in the final chapter, no clear motivation is given regarding why Mary Dorthula should care to provide the opportunity for some type of redemption for Ad. Some of her characters are well developed; others seem to be only types.

In addition to the lack of consistently clear motives for her characters and unmistakable moral choices offered, Haun's fiction further defies categorical description. If realism is understood to focus on objective portrayals of events rather than subjective ones, then *The Hawk's Done Gone* is not realistic. Everything we see in the novel is from Mary Dorthula's viewpoint and is filtered through her own subjectivity. In the penultimate chapter, Haun uses a psychological realism, or stream of consciousness, technique, taking the reader on a tour of Mary Dorthula's remembrance of a better time interwoven with the difficulties of the present. Realism also often portrays the lower class as more noble than the upper crust, but this is not true for all of Haun's characters. There seems to be a wide range of characterization, and hardly any character is portrayed as either wholly good or wholly evil. Further, realists usually embrace freedom of choice and concrete details. Haun's characters seem to have some degree of choice in some matters, but determinism is readily apparent as well, causing some conflicting ideas about the degree to which Haun's characters are able to shape events.

Haun's supernatural elements are especially troublesome. Her artistry is such that she is able to present these fabulous events as ordinary, a notable trait of magic realism. Even the most pragmatic reader finds herself accepting "signs" as precursors, embracing the ghosts with as much enthusiasm as the flesh-and-blood characters. The presence of folklore and superstition is at odds with naturalism, yet the determinism it reflects aligns itself with that genre. Haun, like the naturalists, does not comment on the morality or the fairness of situations in which characters find themselves. Nevertheless, as dark as some of Haun's events are, the overall tone of the book is one of optimism. Somehow Mary Dorthula manages not to give up on life, not to give up on herself, even, paradoxically, in death.

Haun, without a doubt, then, displays certain elements that are consistent with naturalism at its best. Eric Sundquist describes naturalism as "reveling in the extraordinary, the excessive, and the grotesque in order to reveal the immutable bestiality of Man in Nature" (13). Certainly this is an apt description of Mildred Haun's gripping stories. Only her presentation of supernatural elements and a Supreme Being who somehow understands when wrong choices are made for the right reasons keeps her from entering fully into the genre of naturalism. Lee Clark Mitchell claims that the primary difference between realism and naturalism is in the distinction in the portrayal of realist "selves" with claims to agency and naturalistic "characters" inescapably inscribed within the text. The "triumph of naturalism," he states, is its estrangement from the "very notion of a self" (32). Whether Haun's characters manage to keep the self intact or whether they suffer

refraction and ultimately cultural absorption is debatable. Her fiction is, in any case, distinctive: it is not entirely sentimental romanticism, realism, local color, or naturalism, although it has commonalities with them all.

Welker, like others who have read Haun's book, automatically identified the author with the description of Mary Dorthula White Kanipe, "big and motley and rough-looking" (*Hawk* 163). Herschel Gower relates that after meeting Mildred Haun at a cocktail party, Welker expressed surprise over her quiet demeanor and petite appearance, stating that

I imagined her all these years a big woman, a brusque woman, a woman with a deep laugh and an occasional whine, and when I saw that petite woman there, I couldn't believe it was she who had created the characters, wielded the pen, consorted with the world of spirits and still looked the way she did, sitting there on the love seat in front of the fireplace. . . in Nashville. (Audiotapes)

Mildred Haun's federal employment application gives her height as 5'2", and her weight as 107 pounds. She had brown eyes and dark brown hair, whereas Mary Dorthula is described as having curly blonde hair and blue eyes. Since there are no shared physical characteristics, one may well question why the reader assumes that Haun identifies, at least in part, with Mary Dorthula.

The similarities between Mildred Haun and Mary Dorthula White Kanipe are, however, considerable. Certainly, they share a similar cultural background. Mary Dorthula has the occupation of granny-woman to which Haun once aspired. Perhaps the most noteworthy similarity between the author and her character is

one that they share with the mythical Letitia Edes. All three women were born on January 6, Old Christmas, and thus they are subject, if one believes in such things, to the superstition that children born on that day never truly die. This is the case for Letitia Edes and Mary Dorthula, the one continuing to grow physically after death and throughout the book, a symbol of enduring strength; and the other having the ability to appear after her death and to wield more power than she ever could in life. We cannot know for certain whether Haun herself subscribed to these beliefs. She writes in her diary of certain eerie occurrences, but she does not attempt to explain them. She merely relates them as events that occur too often to believe they are merely the effects of coincidence or imagination.

Also, like Mary Dorthula, Haun appears to have a certain fascination with race. She mentions the Melungeons in several stories, and prejudice against them is always a male characteristic. Haun knew Melungeons and knew the lore surrounding them, but she, like Louisa May Alcott,³ appears both sympathetic to people of color as well as somewhat attracted to them. She rejects the notion that Melungeons have any trace of Negro or Indian heritage, but she does not offer an explanation for their dark complexions. Haun had the opportunity to work with people of color, and she was in and around Washington, D. C., during the 1960s, the era of the Civil Rights movement and the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. In her diary, she notes these events with interest and some sympathy, but she appears not to have invested herself actively in the cause of civil rights.

Since this thesis deals specifically with relationships between women and men, women and women, and women and themselves in Haun's stories, one may well question Haun's life experiences in each of these areas. With regard to men, Haun was never married, although Herschel Gower states that she liked men. Her letters from women friends make mention of their mutual hope that each will find her own male partner, and these letters celebrate those women who have successfully made a match. Mildred Haun had an opportunity, relates Gower, to spend a weekend at Allen and Caroline Gordon Tate's famous residence Benfolly, with hopes of meeting Peter Taylor. Unfortunately, Haun was taken ill, and Eleanor Ross took Haun's place. Taylor and Ross fell in love and married, and later Haun wistfully observed to Gower, "Just think, if I hadn't fallen down with the flu, things might have been different" (Audiotapes).

Further, having lost her father when she was eleven years old, Haun appears to have been seeking parental, and particularly paternal, affirmation, both personally and in her fiction. Her artistic abilities flourished under the encouragement of John Crowe Ransom and Donald Davidson at Vanderbilt, and she mentions in a letter⁴ to Herschel Gower that Donald Davidson was the "only truly great man I have ever known." Haun appeared to have no further contact with Ransom after he left Vanderbilt in 1937, the same year that Haun received her M. A. degree. Although he does not know the particulars of Davidson's relationship with her, Herschel Gower relates a disturbing incident near the end of

³ "My Contraband," short story by Louisa May Alcott, appears in the *Heath Anthology*, Vol. 2.

⁴ The letter is dated April 25, 1966, eight months before Haun's death.

Haun's life. Mildred Haun became seriously ill with ovarian cancer and entered Vanderbilt University Hospital for tests and treatment. Upon learning that she was there, Gower contacted Donald Davidson, believing that he would be concerned about his former student for whose thesis and stories he had such high regard. Davidson, inexplicably, replied rather brusquely that he did not have a pencil and thus could not take down her telephone number. Gower could only speculate that perhaps Davidson's dismissal of Haun arose from his staunch support of Allen Tate, for whom Haun had worked as editorial assistant on the *Sewanee Review* for two years. During that time, Haun reported to Alexander Guerry, vice-chancellor of the University of the South at Sewanee, that Tate had seduced her. In *Close Connections*, her biography of Caroline Gordon, Ann Waldron states that "nobody believed [Haun]" (240), and Walter Sullivan states in his biography of Allen Tate that Haun did not possess the physical attributes or the personality traits that Tate usually sought in his women, and thus "no one who had known her and Allen could possibly believe that romance had ever blossomed between them (87). Herschel Gower, on the other hand, was emphatic in his conclusion that Haun was telling the truth. He believes that politics at work within the community served to squelch the claim and dismiss it as rumor. He points to evidence that Tate was a notorious womanizer, and while Haun was neither glamorous or glitzy, he states that she was not, as Waldron claims, "far from [beautiful]" (240). Davidson's support of Tate throughout his lifetime is yet another mystery, for Davidson's reputation as a puritan is well established.

As basis for his claim, Gower points to Haun's unpublished story "The Spot on the Sofa" as congruent with her own experience with Allen Tate. In that story, the protagonist is plagued by the knowledge that she is impure because she has succumbed to the advances of her employer Mr. Raft, and so she seeks to drive away that realization by immersing herself in white in preparation for her wedding to a man who thinks she is a virgin. This bears similarity to Effena in *The Hawk's Done Gone* who crafts for herself a bridal nightgown in white and pink that she refuses to allow Linus, her incestuous brother, to view. The protagonist in "The Look" cannot escape her soiled status, and she simply refuses to marry her beloved, believing that he would never understand her moral stain. Gower remarks that if "The Look" is in the least autobiographical, it is understandable that Haun would have been "put off of men" for life (Audiotapes).

Gower also referred to "The Look" in our telephone interview on December 20, 2002, as proof of Haun's fear of her mother. He states that throughout her life, her mother held a strong influence over Haun, and that Haun went to great lengths to avoid displeasing her, formulating an elaborate scheme, for instance, to keep her mother ignorant of her travels abroad in conjunction with her career. As long as her mother lived, Haun sent her a weekly check from her earnings. One cannot assume that "The Look" is autobiographical, but the protagonist, like Haun herself, was the youngest and only female child, having two older brothers and living in a fatherless household. It is entirely possible that much of Haun's life was spent in seeking some type of father figure, and it is indeed unfortunate that she was disappointed by Allen Tate and Donald Davidson,

at least two men she held in high esteem. She never mentioned her father to Herschel Gower, and she rarely spoke of her early life at all. Her diaries frequently mention Mattie Haun, the aunt with whom she lived in Franklin, but she never mentions her uncle. Finally, Lawrence Chambers, president of Bobbs-Merrill Publishing Company, positions himself as a caring father/uncle figure in his letters to Haun, but these same letters display his attempts to use and manipulate her, although in a psychological and economic way rather than in a physical manner.

Since Mildred Haun apparently had little satisfaction in her relationships with men, and since her relationship with her mother may not have been entirely pleasant, one may wonder about Haun's relationships with other women. Her personal papers show no evidence of any close female friendships back home in East Tennessee, and, as was mentioned, much of the community rejected Haun and her work, resenting the fact that "Mildred just made all that stuff up" (Gower). She maintained a close friendship with Frances Cheney, but Haun seems to have quarreled with some of the other women she befriended during her years in Middle Tennessee, for she frequently notes in her diary her resolutions to have nothing further to do with one or another of them. Her tactic, as with Lawrence Chambers, was retreat. She simply withdrew herself from the situation when circumstances became unbearable for her. Perhaps the reason she writes at length of mother/daughter relationships and less of the community of women is that she herself experienced very little in the way of that community. Since there is not a single incident in Haun's texts in which a mother is completely able to

support and protect her daughter, one may argue that Mildred Haun experienced some difficulties in that area as well.

We may now return to Letitia Edes as the central image in Haun's book who embodies some of the qualities that Haun values. She is self-sufficient although marginalized with regard to both gender and race. She is literally large in life, as Mildred Haun was not, and death only gives her the freedom to grow for all eternity. Haun equates Letitia's size with strength, and she compares Mary Dorthula to her in significant ways, the shared birthday and folklore surrounding it serving to emphasize the similarity. It seems that Mildred Haun wasn't entirely sure that there may not be, after all, "more things in heaven and earth . . . / Than are dreamt of in [our] philosophy" (*Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 5). If so, then she had to speculate on the meaning of her own January 6 birthdate.

Some debate exists over determinism in Haun's texts. That is, in fact, the subject of Stephen Glen McLeod's Vanderbilt thesis. Clearly, determinism plays a role in directing people's lives, but occasionally characters make choices or choose not to make choices that also alter the eventual outcomes. In *A History of Appalachia*, Richard B. Drake builds a case on Loyal Jones' claim that Appalachian people are

closer to Calvinism than are other people. He claims that the Calvinistic assertion that human beings are cursed by original sin enables the Appalachian Calvinist not to be astounded at the human capacity for evil, thus giving him the means to overcome adversity that comes his way. (225-6)

Certainly, Mary Dorthula's stoicism in the face of tragedy and hardship lends credibility to Drake's contention that "fatalism was a basic regional characteristic" (226). However, Mildred Haun, unlike Mary Dorthula, declared her independence and was able to provide for her own financial needs as a modern career woman. She was certainly a woman who made choices that directed her life. In spite of that, her life, like her fiction, was marked by at least some degree of determinism. In spite of all that Haun could do, all the choices she could make, she lost her final battle to ovarian cancer on December 20, 1966, but like Letitia Edes who lives on after death and continues to grow, Mildred Haun lives on in her fiction. I hope that this thesis will, in turn, help her critical reputation grow.

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