Abstract

This research seeks to understand Appalachian women's rights movements through country music artists from the region. Appalachian women's rights movements are distinct from urban middle-class feminist movements. For one, urban feminists were often less racially integrated than rural Appalachian feminists, particularly from the 1930s-1960s. Whereas many white urban feminists did not place welfare access as central to their platform and focused instead on women's integration into the workforce, Appalachian mothers with several children, husbands dead or disabled from the mines, and dismal job prospects knew that simply getting a job was not enough; they needed the support of social services. Black middle-class urban feminists sought mainly to improve white people's perception of Black people and viewed the blues culture, songs, and protests of many Black women from poor rural backgrounds as primitive and shameful. Appalachian ideals of resistance and persistence were passed down from mothers and grandmothers to produce an intergenerational tapestry of evolving women's rights issues in song. "Coal Miner's Daughter" by Loretta Lynn and "Daughter's Lament" by the Carolina Chocolate Drops speak out against the disastrous effects of coal mining on women and their families and illustrate the interracial characteristic of many Appalachian women's and worker's rights movements. For poor Appalachian feminists, women's and workers' rights were inseparable. Bessie Smith's "Send Me to the 'Lectric Chair" and Loretta Lynn's "The Pill" are examples of the work many Appalachian women did to rewrite cultural narratives of the violence perpetrated by men towards women preserved in murder ballads such as "Knoxville Girl" and "Cruel Ship's Carpenter". The backgrounds and convictions of female country music artists from

Appalachia have given birth to a multitude of songs whose messages tell not only of suffering and tragedy, but of resiliency and power.

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Understanding Appalachian Women's Rights Movements Through Country Music

Defining Appalachia

GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES

Drawing the geographic borders of Appalachia has never been an easy task. The Appalachian mountain range stretches from Maine to Georgia. The Appalachian Regional Commission, run by politicians, currently divides Appalachia into five regions made up of counties: Northern, which includes counties in Ohio, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York; North Central, which includes counties in Ohio, West Virginia, and Virginia; Central which includes counties in Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Virginia; South Central which includes counties in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia; and Southern, which includes counties in Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Georgia (Appalachian Regional Commission). The only state with every county included in the Appalachian Regional Commission is West Virginia. The Appalachian Regional Commission has redrawn boundaries to exclude certain counties from Appalachia and is largely subject to the whims of politicians, making it a less reliable definition (Wilkerson 32). The ARC definition is nonetheless important because the organization collects data and distributes grant money to those counties included in the region (Appalachian Regional Commission). Researchers who collect data on the subject tend to stay within the bounds of the ARC definition because of the availability of statistical data

from the ARC. For the purpose of this paper, Appalachia is defined according to the Appalachian mountain range, with information and singers drawn specifically from Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Kentucky.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

The rolling mountains are Appalachia's most notable environmental feature. A hiking trail stretches across the entire mountain range, which is dotted with the occasional resort town for outdoorsy tourists. The entire region usually receives a fair amount of humidity, and their northern regions are temperate. The region has been home to a wealth of natural resources, such as coal, shale, timber, and zinc. These resources led to a boom of extractive industries in the region, which has been slowly dying as a result of resource depletion and environmental political decisions (Appalachian Regional Commission). Rural mountain roads can be in poor condition, winding, steep, and unlit. Some may even be unpaved. In the winter months, this can make travel dangerous. As is typical with rural regions, a car is necessary to get most places and many things are miles apart. Some Appalachian communities formed in hollows, or hollers, which are valleys along the side of the mountain somewhat more protected from the elements and usually with a central body of water (MacAvoy 221). The nature of the mountains have led some to characterize Appalachian communities as isolated. Many homes do not have internet or cell service. Even heating and indoor plumbing did not reach this region as fast as other areas. These mountains are what distinguishes Appalachia from other rural communities and contributes to it being even less accessible (MacAvoy 221). In bad weather without the proper vehicle, many mountain roads are impassable, and some are prone to washing out (Gagné 395). Despite the geographical isolation

created by the decreased accessibility of the region, Appalachia is not as removed from the rest of the world as one might believe.

CULTURE

Appalachian culture is generally thought of as incorporating elements of traditionalism, fatalism, Christianity, familism, personalism, and individualism (MacAvoy 222). Some argue the notion that Appalachia has a separate culture, Appalachian individualism, is a flawed concept rooted in stereotype, which is to say that Appalachia is not meaningfully distinguishable from the rest of the rural US. **S**cholars, however, tend to distinguish between the general characteristics of Appalachian culture and stereotypes of the region which include male chauvinism, conservatism, intellectual inferiority, squalor, white supremacy, and incest (Latimer and Oberhauser 270, MacAvoy and Lippman 223, and Swank et al 125). These qualities, epitomized in the film *Deliverance*, are thought to be a result of the region's geographic isolation. When identifying characteristics of any culture it is important to acknowledge the large area and amount of people these characteristics are meant to represent. By identifying these characteristics as part of Appalachian culture, the goal is not to say that every Appalachian believes in these tenets, but that these tenets are so much a part of the society that they influence communities and individuals within it who may either subscribe to or reject them.

Racial relations vary across Appalachia. In the northern regions, white and Black Appalachians farmed, worked in the mines, and eventually protested together (Wilkerson 106). In this respect, some of Appalachia and its feminism has been uniquely biracial. In the more southern regions however, where slavery and lynchings endured much longer, race relations were much more strained (Wilson "Harlem Wisdom" 107).

Distinguishing Between Feminist Movements

It is important to understand that there are many different kinds of feminists who bring their own backgrounds to the way they construct their feminist ideas. For the sake of this paper, feminism will be defined as a belief and movement that seeks to empower and uplift women while rejecting the belief that men are inherently superior. This paper covers feminism in the United States roughly between the 1930s and the present day, though some songs can be traced back centuries earlier. By the 1930s in the United States, distinct feminist movements had formed both among the rural poor in Appalachia and the middle class, often those who dwelled in cities and eventually the suburbs (Wilkerson 103). Appalachian feminism grew out of the labor rights protests and women's auxiliary movements in connection with unions for extractive industries in the region, most commonly mining (Rinaldo Seitz 165). The newfound purpose and autonomy women found outside the home through their actions with the women's auxiliary enabled them to begin advocating for gender rights in addition to labor rights (Waldron Merithew 63). Many of these labor protests, particularly in the north, were biracial, with Black and white people together on the picket lines (Wilkerson 104). It was not unusual for this integration to carry over into feminist actions, which focused on getting women jobs and fair treatment in the mines, improving social services like disability and welfare, and addressing issues of domestic abuse (Rinaldo Seitz 39). Middle class feminism differed from Appalachian feminism because middle class feminism focused primarily on getting women into the workplace (Wilkerson 102). For these more privileged women, work outside the home was the pathway to liberation.

Appalachian women, however, had to contest with transportation difficulties and poor pay among the few work opportunities that did exist (Latimer and Oberhauser 273). When

radical feminism arose in the 1970s and many urban women began rejecting men, Appalachian women felt alienated from this movement because they had seen the men in their lives abused by capitalism and then take it out on them (Willis 257). Appalachian women understood that part of women's liberation from men was men's liberation from capitalist exploitation. This is not to say that they believed women's liberation was entirely dependent on improved conditions for men, as many women also directly challenged the social acceptability of male violence. They merely understood this as one of many components toward women's empowerment. When feminism became primarily associated with the Democratic Party, this further alienated Appalachian women who had witnessed Democratic politicians leave them out of promises to the poor and shut down extractive industries (Latimer and Oberhauser 273), which were the primary source of a livable income in the region.

This paper seeks to explore Appalachian feminism through the music of women from this region. The songs are organized according to the main focuses of Appalachian feminism: workers' rights and class, family life, domestic abuse, and resistance. These areas are interconnected, but, for this paper, are separated into different sections for the sake of readability. Workers' rights and class focuses on coal mining and poverty in the region, specifically how women responded to exploitative and physically trying conditions that affected both men and women. Family life focuses on unwanted pregnancy and infidelity, which were common themes in the songs and accounts of Appalachian women. This section details how women navigate both issues, which partially result from male chauvinism. The domestic abuse section discusses women's economic dependency on men and men's abuse of women. The paper finishes with a discussion of Appalachian women's resistance, particularly with regard to domestic abuse, and

the efforts of these Appalachian singers to change common narratives glorifying male chauvinism. These singers are all from working class backgrounds. While many of the white singers remained in or near Appalachia for most of their lives, the Black singers in this paper spent significant time away from Appalachia as traveling blues singers to escape the racist violence which was more severe in the south than in northern cities like Chicago and New York City. Despite these differences in race, many themes among the songs are consistent between the Black and white singers, which reflect the uniquely integrated nature of women's and worker's rights movements in Appalachia.

Workers' Rights and Class

COAL MINING

"Coal Miner's Daughter" by Loretta Lynn At first glance, Loretta Lynn's "Coal Miner's Daughter" seems to be a common country song: a romantic provincial lifestyle and a nostalgia for the past. In this song, the father figure is hardworking and loving. The vocals and instruments are slow, but Lynn's voice is more romantically nostalgic than melancholy when she sings, "We were poor but we had love/That's the one thing Daddy made sure of/He shoveled coal to make a poor man's dollar" (Lynn "Coal Miner's Daughter" 0:22-0:33). The mother figure in "Coal Miner's Daughter" is devoted to her maternal and spiritual roles, "Mommy rocked the babies all night/And read the Bible by the coal oil light" (Lynn "Coal Miner's Daughter" 0:50-0:55). The plural form, babies, hints at the common occurrence of multiple pregnancies among Appalachian women, something that often earned them the distinction of being white trash. In this song, however, under the context of marriage, the babies are connected to the mother's holiness as she reads the Bible while rocking them. Coal here is also connected to the holy, as it provides the

light by which she reads the Bible. In many Appalachian company towns, coal permeated every aspect of life. Families used their "scrip", which they were paid by the coal company instead of cash, to buy materials for their homes from the company-owned store (Wagner and Obermiller 1928). Pastors were also hired and paid by the coal company after a vetting process to ensure they had no union sympathies (Wagner and Obermiller 1930). In a company town, even the domestic and religious spheres operated under the thumb of the coal company.

Lynn also sings about having just enough money, a theme common among nostalgic country songs, "In the summertime we didn't have shoes to wear/But in the wintertime we'd all get a brand new pair…Daddy always managed to find the money somewhere" (Lynn "Coal Miner's Daughter" 1:32-1:58). These lines convey the sentiment that while the family might not have been rich, they had just enough to meet their material needs, and always had an abundance of love.

On the album cover, Lynn is wears a floor-length white dress, elbows and collarbones chastely covered, smiling innocently with her eyes turned just above the camera. The classic quality of the dress and the country-style fonts on the cover create an image of nostalgia for old fashioned country values. Lynn's critiques of the created past lie just underneath her veneer of reverence. Lynn sings, "My daddy worked all night in the Van Lear coal mines/All day long in the field a hoin' corn," (Lynn "Coal Miner's Daughter" 0:35-0:46). Working in a coal mine was both a blessing and a curse.

In many Appalachian towns, including Butcher Hollow, KY, where Lynn was raised and where the song takes place, coal mining (or some other extractive industry such as zinc) was the primary industry (Latimer and Oberhauser 273). Jobs in the primary industry afforded the

highest pay and the most benefits. In many towns, a job in the mines was a ticket to a living wage, a scant company house rental, and healthcare (Wilkerson 204). Jobs in secondary or periphery industries such as service work or home-sewing were often part time, did not pay as well, and did not provide healthcare (Rinaldo Seitz 91). A job in the mines meant the ability to provide for the family, but it also carried with it the risk of death and debilitation. Many miners died or were debilitated from accidents in the mines, while others survived long enough to contract black lung disease, also known as coal worker's pneumoconiosis (CWP), which could be deadly (Wilkerson 152). Even though the father in the song was able to work in the mines, the family still relied on sustenance farming to survive, doubling the physical toll on his body.

Lynn says that the father was able to work the fields during the day and work in the mines at night, which suggests he may have worked the swing shift, usually from four PM to midnight. This shift was taxing on the body and coal mining companies were known to assign it to workers so that they would be unable to attend union organizing (Wilkerson 173). Amidst her praise of the father's hard work to support the family, Lynn slips in the reminder that this work was long, back-breaking, and left her father with no time for leisure or enjoyment.

True to her feminist nature (Rogers 42), Lynn also acknowledges the hard unpaid labor of the mother. She sings, "Mommy scrubbed our clothes on a washboard every day/Why, I've seen her fingers bleed" (Lynn "Coal Miner's Daughter" 1:10-1:20). Limited money and a poor country lifestyle with hard work for every walking member of the family meant few sets of clothes which dirtied quickly, requiring daily manual washing by the mother. Especially in the Kentucky mountain winters, this would cause her hands to dry, crack, and bleed. She likely also experienced chronic pain in the wrists from the repetitive scrubbing motion and back/neck pain

from the stooped position such labor requires. Though the mother's apparent occupation as a housewife indicates that the family is comparatively financially well-off, even she must complete hard and painful work for the family.

This song stands out among those discussed in this paper because it features a marriage that does not mention abuse or mistreatment of any sort. Nonetheless, while there is mention of Daddy's love for the children and Mommy smiling in her, "understanding way" (Lynn "Coal Miner's Daughter" 1:27-1:29), there is no mention of love between Daddy and Mommy. Both in pain, overworked, and underpaid, there was likely little time, money, or energy for a lasting romance between the two outside of the sex acts that led to the babies the mother was responsible to sit up all night with rocking and spend all day washing diapers for.

When Lynn sings, "Yeah, I'm proud to be a coal miner's daughter," (Lynn "Coal Miner's Daughter" 1:59-2:04), she likely means that she is proud of her cultural heritage and the place she came from, which were often ridiculed by outsiders. Lynn is probably more proud of her family's virtues than of the literal coal mining industry which overworked and underpaid her father. In a set of lines that noticeably stand out from the rest of the song, Lynn sings, "And it's so good to be back home again/Not much left but the floor/Nothing lives here anymore" (Lynn "Coal Miner's Daughter" 2:35-2:48). Lynn states that she is glad to be back home and then immediately remarks on the emptiness of her childhood home. She seems glad that her family has left the company town. It seems to Lynn the home she's proud of has more to do with the region itself and her upbringing than it does for the more concrete aspects of the place such as the mining industry and its company town. Though she is proud of her background, Lynn seems

to be content with just the memory of being a coal miner's daughter rather than continuing to live in that reality.

"Daughter's Lament" by the Carolina Chocolate Drops A more recent song, released in 2012 as part of a soundtrack for *The Hunger Games Movie*, The Carolina Chocolate Drops's "Daughter's Lament" is much less subtle than Lynn's "Coal Miner's Daughter" in its critique of the mining industry. District 12, where the protagonist in *The Hunger Games* is from, is a mountainous region in the dystopian eastern United States whose main export is coal, is meant to be Appalachia. The song is haunting, with lead singer Rhiannon Giddens' voice nearly cracking on some notes as if on the verge of tears while she hypnotically chants, creating most of the song's rhythm herself, accompanied only by siren-like strings and soft percussion that bring to mind rain on a tin roof or quick footsteps. Giddens creates a tone similar to the blues singers before her whose singing consisted of strong rhythms about sorrow, loss, and suffering (Hay 9). The song begins with a daughter's supplication to her father, asking him to stay for the meal she prepared. The father replies, "…I ain't comin' in/To spend this hour with thee/For I have to go down in the mines" (Giddens 0:35-0:42). The song begins with the father being separated from his family by the mining industry.

In *The Hunger Games*, mockingjays were originally tools of the oppressor for spying on the resistance, and throughout the course of the trilogy they become the symbol of the resistance itself. When the daughter learns from a mockingjay that her father has been killed in the mines, she at first responds with a desire to kill the mockingjay for bringing the news to her. The mockingjay responds, "Don't waste your time with me/Go home and mind that pretty little girl/ Her father no more to see" (Carolina Chocolate Drops "Daugther's" 1:49-1:57). In this song, the

mockingjay may symbolize the coal company, who, in reality, would have been the one most likely to deliver the official news of the father's death.

The unsympathetic nature of the mockingjay's communication and its mocking confidence sending the daughter away, knowing she would not be able to hurt him is reminiscent of coal companies who treated the families of their workers similarly, knowing that in many cases the company was too powerful and the women left behind were often too overworked and undereducated to meaningfully resist (Rinaldo Seitz 76). The daughter in the song returns home to, "That house so cold and mean," likely a company house that she was now at risk of losing, "And she held her sister close to her side/And never more did sing" (Carolina Chocolate Drops "Daughter's" 2:07-2:15). In a region with scarce housing, company houses comprised most of the suitable living conditions in Appalachia: walls, a foundation, and a roof with a bathroom nearby (Wagner and Obermiller 1926). Company town inhabitants did not own their houses; they rented them from the coal company (Wagner and Obermiller 1931). When male workers were killed or disabled in the mines, their families suddenly found themselves at risk of eviction and homelessness in the mountains (Wagner and Obermiller 1930). With her father gone and no mother mentioned, the daughter finds herself in the position of not only needing to continue the domestic labor she was doing before but to also find outside income or a husband in order to financially provide for herself and her younger sister.

"Daughter's Lament" illuminates why coal miners' union work was as much a feminist issue as it was a worker's issue. Women knew that the men in their lives were at risk of death and disability, and that this would mean significant economic hardship in addition to profound grief (Wilkerson 141). Assuming roles with drastically increased power in the union movement was a

way for women not only to fight on behalf of the men in their lives but on behalf of themselves and their families for protection should death, sickness, or injury occur. Though by 2012 when "Daughter's Lament" was released, many extractive industries had waned and begun to be replaced by shipping and distribution centers (Appalachian Regional Commission), Giddens sorrowful words backed by resonant conviction are a reminder that the suffering of mining families and the sins of the companies are not to be forgotten.

POVERTY

"Coat of Many Colors" by Dolly Parton Beginning with the lines, "Back through the years, I go wandering once again/Back to the seasons of my youth" (Parton "Coat" 0:05-0:15) Dolly Parton's "Coat of Many Colors" is unmistakably a song of nostalgia. Parton's sweet voice accompanied by homey instrumentals almost seem out of place considering the hardship it describes. Similarly to Loretta Lynn, on Parton's 1971 album *Coat of Many Colors*, Parton has crafted an image of herself that appeals to mainstream as well as Appalachian values of traditionalism, familism, and Christianity. Inspired by an event in her own life (Edwards 78, Wilson "Mountains of Contradictions" 109), Parton's mother makes her the coat and elevates it to a holy level by associating it with the biblical story of Joseph's multicolored coat. To Parton, this familial and religious significance makes the coat "worth more than all their clothes" (Parton "Coat" 2:27-2:30) despite her classmates' jeers.

"Coat of Many Colors," composed by Parton, also contains the line, "…one is only poor only if they choose to be" (Parton "Coat" 2:37-2:42). While some may interpret this line as appealing to the conservative country music industry by positing the belief that it is possible for individuals to escape systemically imposed poverty through bootstraps theory, applying a

feminist lens allows for a different interpretation. “Coat of Many Colors” emphasizes familial and Christian values, and it does so exclusively through women. Parton’s father, who she describes as being a half-mean half-uselesss drunk (Edwards 94), is left out of the song entirely. It is Parton’s mother whose creativity, resourcefulness, and practical skill allow her to provide for her family. This song is a feminist work partly because it values skills and labor traditionally relegated to women. Not only is Mrs. Parton’s work valuable because of its material worth, but Parton also gives her mother great Christian religious power because it is Mrs. Parton’s biblical teachings that elevate the coat to a divine status as she “blessed it with a kiss” (Parton “Coat” 0:11-0:14). “Coat of Many Colors” is a song in which a wife and mother holds both material and religious power, and then uses this power to increase the confidence of another woman, her daughter, who is able to stand up to school bullies with the lessons of her mother. “Coat of Many Colors” is about women’s ability to stand up for themselves. Interpreted this way, the line, “… one is only poor only if they choose to be” (Parton “Coat” 2:37-2:42), is an affirmation of women’s ability to stand up for themselves and provide for each other, and the necessity that they do so. In this song, Parton uses comfortable nostalgia to gain a platform and then uses this platform to share stories of women’s empowerment.

“Hard Time Blues” by Ida Cox Ida Cox was born in Toccoa and raised in Cedartown, Georgia before leaving to tour the blues circuit. During her career she lived in Chicago and spent significant time in New York City. True to her Appalachian roots, Cox retired in Knoxville, Tennessee (Freeman). In her life, Cox would have seen both the rural and urban poor, and the interlocked class and gender struggle described in “Hard Time Blues” would have been relatable to both rural and urban listeners. Cox’s drawling voice in the song seems to convey more misery

at the speaker's economic circumstance than at her husband's abandonment. The song also mentions being stalked by wolves, "They howl all night, and they moan till the break of day/ They seem to know my good man's gone away" (Cox "Hard" 1:07-1:30). These wolves might symbolize the vicious capitalist system that frequently caused suffering to those at the bottom of the ladder, which included Black people, particularly single Black women. If the singer's man walked out on her, rather than died or divorced her, this would have increased her economic hardship.

The wolves could also symbolize other predatory men, who saw a single woman as a potential target, or people to whom the woman or her husband was indebted. Indeed, Cox sings, "I can't go outside to my grocery store/I ain't got no money, and my credit don't go no more" (Cox "Hard" 1:23-1:42). In the economic structures of the 1960s when Cox released a recording of the song, a man's abandonment could leave a woman and her family in significant financial deprivation. Cox sings, "Won't you please try and find my man for me?/Tell him I'm broke and hungry, lonely as I can be" (Cox "Hard" 1:46-2:08), which emphasizes female economic dependency on male partners. Still, "Hard Time Blues" is more than just a woman bemoaning her male dependency.

The singer is not heartbroken because she was not emotionally dependent on the man; her devastation is financial rather than sentimental. The song is not just a sob story but rather a critique of the patriarchal capitalist system that resulted in her being treated this way. Blues songs were created to be performed live by a Black singer to a Black audience, which participated in the performance by calling out responses to the singer (Wilson "Harlem Wisdom" 98). Cox's "Hard Time Blues" would've received responses of affirmation and mutual disdain

for the systems that oppressed both the song's speaker and the audience. Secondly, the latter half of the song actually works to affirm female strength. Cox sings, "I may be old and up in years/ But I can climb a hill without shifting my gears" (Cox "Hard" 2:26-2:48). An older woman left behind is not represented as pathetic and pitiable but rather stronger for her life experience. Age is presented as an asset rather than a cripple. The final lines of the song are a firm rejection of the victim position her former man attempted to put her in. Cox sings "I''m a big fat mama, got the meat shaking on my bones/And every time I shake, some skinny gal loses her home" (Cox "Hard" 3:42-4:04). This line not only serves as a direct counter to white beauty standards which praised thinness as key to desirability, but also gives the singer the ability to use her sexual power under patriarchy to undermine it's traditional institution of marriage in order to ensure that she can be provided for. In this instance, Cox, like Lynn and Parton, speaks to the ways some Appalachian feminists worked within patriarchal structures to undermine them by manipulating these structures to serve their own needs.

Family Life

UNWANTED PREGNANCY

"Down from Dover" by Dolly Parton Dolly Parton's voice is almost tearful as she sings, "Down From Dover," capturing the profound loneliness and grief of the woman. Even in a song about unwanted pregnancy, Parton positions the song in nature, "When he left he promised me that he'd be back/By the time it was revealing/The sun behind a cloud just casts the crawling shadow/ Over the fields of clover" (Parton "Down" 0:15-0:32). This pathetic fallacy serves not only to accentuate the meaning of the song but to connect the woman with the natural world of

Tennessee. Parton continues this connection by using seasonal changes to show the pregnancy's progression.

In "Down From Dover", Appalachian cultural values are at odds with one another. When the woman's parents disown her as a result of her extramarital pregnancy they undermine the value of familism in the name of traditionalism and Christianity, which discourage extramarital sex and pregnancy. The song also portrays the woman as quite dependent on the father, who she insists will return to support her and his child, even as it becomes increasingly clear that he will not return. This denial represents just how dependent women were on the men who got them pregnant for the sake of their reputation and financial stability.

Furthermore, for this particular woman, the denial occurs not only because to raise the baby without the father was virtually impossible but because she loved him. Parton sings, "I could not refuse him when he needed me/He was the only one I'd loved/And I just can't believe that he was using me" (Parton "Down" 2:07-2:21). The woman sacrifices her virginity, her reputation, and her family for the man and bears the burden of the pregnancy which resulted from her acquiescing to his desire. Having made all these sacrifices for him, the woman believed that there would be some small attempt at equality, that the man would return just one sacrifice for her and his child by returning to support the family.

Parton, who wrote the song, had seen similar situations around her (Edwards 86) and crafted a narrative that showed just how deplorable it was for the man to abandon the woman and child. In 1970, Parton's "Down From Dover" elicited sympathy for women in similar situations; in this song it is not the woman who has committed the grave sin by doing what the man wanted, but the man who has sinned by using and abandoning woman and child. The song ends with the

baby's still birth, which, to the woman, seems fitting, "I guess in some strange way she knew/ She'd never have a father's arms to hold her" (Parton "Down" 3:02-3:08). The baby resulting from the unwanted pregnancy did not live after the pregnancy had wreaked emotional and financial havoc on the mother. Given this ending, it is possible that this song is also hinting at support for abortion. One cannot help but wonder if this all might have been avoided with an abortion. To produce a country song explicitly supporting abortion would have cost Parton significant listenership and her record label. With a still birth, Parton was able to hint at a pro-choice narrative from a safe distance.

Whether Parton intended the pro-choice undertones at the end does not change the fact that in much of rural Appalachia it was and still is exceedingly difficult to access safe and affordable abortion (O'Donnell et al 98). The first obstacle to obtaining an abortion in Appalachia is the geography: mountain ranges that create a barrier around the region and have contributed to disproportionate and prolonged economic depression (O'Donnell et al 99). This has resulted not just in inequitable access to abortion, but has also resulted in a slower development, as the region lags behind much of the country in regards to technological developments such as broadband and even more socially accepted medical services such as hospitals are scare in the mountains (Appalachian Regional Commission). If a woman is unable to access the internet, she misses a relatively confidential way to find accurate information about abortions and where to access them. Without the internet, she is restricted to word of mouth and, possibly, books and pamphlets.

Values such as traditionalism and Christianity combined with tight-knit communities create a fear of gossip and stigmatization that are enough to scare women out of an abortion and

into a hasty marriage. Even for women who would rather take the social risks to obtain an abortion, the economic depression of the area also means that for many women abortion is simply too expensive to be possible, especially considering the time-sensitive nature. There's also the issue of transportation. There are no abortion clinics within walking distance and no public transportation (O'Donnell et al 100). Even if a woman can afford the abortion, she must also either have a car she can use or have the ability to get a ride from someone else, which might compromise her privacy.

There is also a wealth of misinformation about abortion propagated by churches, community members and pregnancy crisis centers. These sources may attempt to scare women away from abortions by falsely exaggerating the complexity or risks of abortion procedures, claiming that obtaining an abortion will interfere with future pregnancies, or result in germane damage (O'Donnell et al 106). Many women may have also had negative experiences with other healthcare providers (MacAvoy and Troth Lippman 224). Outsider healthcare providers may bring with them negative stereotypes about Appalachian people and women, treating them as if they were stupid. Insiders, who are part of the tight-knit communities, may cause women apprehension for fear that their care will not be as confidential as it should be.

There is also the simple fact that many women in Appalachia struggle under patriarchy. Especially with high rates of both domestic violence and pregnancy, many may exhibit learned helplessness and lack the self-efficacy to obtain an abortion. In Appalachia, keeping unwanted pregnancies has been normalized, while getting an abortion has been stigmatized (O'Donnell et al 105). In many cases, women who want an abortion are forced to continue the pregnancy and

keep the baby, for better or worse, a fate the woman in “Down from Dover” was spared from, though she was not spared the emotional distress of losing her family, lover, and child.

The notion that Appalachian women are too conservative to want abortions is false. Many women who continue pregnancies choose to do so because abortion is socially, economically, or practically prohibited to them (O’Donnell et al 110). Furthermore, a 2018 study showed that Appalachian women who were able to access accurate information and safe abortions were more likely to terminate unwanted pregnancies (O’Donnell et al 106). Abortion is a valuable and desired service for Appalachian women.

“The Pill” by Loretta Lynn and “Cruel Ship’s Carpenter” Appalachian murder ballads are actually British murder ballads brought over by immigrants to the United States and preserved, sometimes with altered names, in Appalachian communities (Waltz and Engle). The songs are retellings of actual murders committed (Waltz and Engle), written by songwriters from the point of view of the murderer. The murderer is a man who murders his helpless female lover. “The Cruel Ship’s Carpenter” is one such murder ballad, brought from England (Waltz and Engle). Before Billy buries her alive, the damsel Polly pleads with him, “pardon my baby and me” (“Cruel Ships’ Carpenter") revealing the motive for the murder: Polly has become pregnant and Billy does not want to marry her. The continued inclusion of murder ballads into Appalachian culture reinforces violent patriarchal norms, even though the songs end with murderers facing the consequences of their actions.

“The Cruel Ship’s Carpenter” is notable among murder ballads because in the final stanza of the song Polly’s ghost gets revenge, “She tore him in three/Because that he murdered her baby and she” (“Cruel Ship’s Carpenter”). These last lines prevent this song from being entirely an

ode to male hegemony, but still present a story in which a woman's power only comes after she dies. There is no pathway for the woman to protect herself from men, only to seek retribution after they harm her. Murder ballads also center around domestic abuse. Combined with Appalachia's traditional Christian values, this sets up women's romantic and sexual involvement with men as both dangerous and dutiful. Women should endeavor to create good Christian families and hope that the man they end up with is nonviolent.

In "The Cruel Ship's Carpenter", like "Down from Dover," it is the man who initiates the relationship which eventually results in pregnancy. "The Cruel Ship's Carpenter" begins, "A young man he courted her all for to be his dear" ("Cruel Ship's Carpenter"). Like the woman in "Down from Dover," Polly has received every reassurance from Billy that he loves her and that she can expect him to marry and take care of her, only to have him brutally betray her. Murder ballads also present women as passive victims upon which violence and sexual desires are enacted without thought to the woman's desires or ability to resist. In "Down from Dover," the unwanted pregnancy's natural end was in the death of the baby. In "The Cruel Ship's Carpenter," the unwanted pregnancy was the catalyst for the death of the mother.

Loretta Lynn's "The Pill" offers a different narrative to the death in "The Cruel Ship's Carpenter" and "Down from Dover". "The Pill", released in 1975, was one of Lynn's most controversial songs and was banned from radio play (Rogers 43). Lynn begins with presenting marriage not as a holy union but rather as an act of deception on the part of the groom, "You wined me and dined me when I was your girl/Promised if I'd be your wife/You'd show me the world" (Lynn "Pill" 0:05-0:17). Women in Appalachia were lured into marriage by men who promised them a bigger, brighter life than what they had been born into. The economic

depression of Appalachia, however, meant that for many women, the reality of married life looked a lot more like what Lynn sings about next, “But all I’ve seen of this old world is a bed and a doctor bill” (Lynn “Pill” 0:18-0:23). Once married, women were allowed to have sex, which helped to form the stereotype of Appalachian women barefoot at home in a near constant state of pregnancy. In the “The Pill” Lynn sings about how the availability of oral contraception helped Appalachian women to counter this stereotype and take back their autonomy.

Oral contraception, commonly referred to as “the pill” played a key role in ushering in the sexual revolution beginning in the 1960s and were a key component of the feminist women’s health movement of the 1970s (Liao and Dollin 758), which occurred during the time Lynn sang and helped to compose “The Pill.” Lynn references the sexual revolution in her third stanza with, “The clothes I’m wearing from now on/Won’t take up so much yardage/ Miniskirts, hot pants, and a few little fancy frills” (Lynn “Pill” 1:04-1:17). Freed from maternity clothes, Lynn is now able to wear more revealing, fashionable clothes that are not meant to fit a pregnant body. Lynn also mentions yardage, hinting that as an Appalachian woman, she is likely to be making her own clothes and is aware of the extra cost required to buy enough fabric for maternity clothes. Furthermore, without the added economic burden of another baby and more fabric, she is able to indulge in unnecessary purchases to make “a few little fancy frills” and so has the economic flexibility and freedom to buy things for herself that create joyfulness. With the pill, Lynn is able to exercise more control over her gender presentation, indulging in new, sexy fashions, and enjoying having a little more financial flexibility.

Lynn’s message is for all women, even those who have already been pregnant, perhaps against their initial desires, “I’m making up for all those years since I’ve got the pill” (Lynn

"Pill" 1:18-1:23). With this line, the singer affirms both herself and other mothers by saying that it's not too late for women to take control of their bodies and sexuality. This message is distinct from the more urban feminist movements of the time concentrated on and around college campuses. College women who had never married or been mothers were focused more on theory and maintaining independent singlehood rather than reaching women who were already living in traditional domesticity (Rogers 47). These women living in traditional domesticity, however, were still seeking ways to gain what rights and independence they could within their roles as mothers and wives.

Lynn also displays a certain irreverence for the sanctity of marriage and an allyship with other Appalachian women with her extended chicken metaphor. She refers to the home as a "brooder house". She also allows her Appalachian speech to come through clearly, further aligning herself with rural women, both with her syntax "This chicken's done tore up her nest" (Lynn "Pill" 1:40-1:43), and rhyming deal with pill. Lynn also hints at men's infidelity in marriage, "I'm tired of all your crowing/How you and your hens play" (Lynn "Pill" 1:28-1:33). Without safe and effective contraception, husbands were able to cheat on their wives without facing any consequences themselves, but any extramarital sex on women's parts could result in the grave consequence of pregnancy. Lynn, now empowered by the pill, is able to assert herself by following up with, "I'm ready to make a deal/And you can't afford to turn it down/'Cause you know I've got the pill" (Lynn "Pill" 1:44-1:52). Oral contraceptives helped level the playing field in spousal relations.

"The Pill" also works to draw a clear line between procreation and sex. Lynn sings, "The feeling good comes easy now/Since I've got the pill" (Lynn "Pill" 2:00-2:06), and, "It's getting

dark/It's roosting time/Tonight's too good to be real/Aw but Daddy, don't you worry none/'Cause Mama's got the pill" (Lynn "Pill" 2:08-2:20), boldly asserting the still radical ideas in Christian Appalachia that women could have sexual agency and desire, that sex should be pleasurable for the woman, and it need not be solely for the purpose of procreation. To Lynn, birth control was important because it allowed married women to set boundaries with husbands and create a satisfying sexual life without adding the economic, physical, and emotional burden of more children.

INFIDELITY

"A Good Man is Hard to Find" by Bessie Smith Unlike women, men who cheated on their spouses did not face the potential consequence of becoming pregnant. In many cases, husbands knew their wives were financially dependent on them; this meant that a woman could not threaten divorce to counter a husband's unfaithfulness (Gagné 397). The unfaithful husband did not face the consequences of pregnancy or divorce, while an unfaithful wife was at risk of both.

Husbands' infidelity damaged more than just domestic relationships; it also bred mistrust between women. Smith warns, "…when you think he's your pal/You'll look and find him foolin' 'round some old gal" (Smith "Good Man" 1:03-1:13). Both one's own husband and fellow women were untrustworthy. This sentiment is echoed by the women Gagné encountered during her in-depth study of domestic abuse experienced by Appalachian women in their communities, during which she lived in an Appalachian town and interviewed the women there on their experiences with domestic violence. Several of these women explained that rumors of infidelity spread in the tight-knit community by both men and women made women's social circles dramatically smaller, as they feared that even a close female friend might betray her by

sleeping with her husband (Gagné 402). This mistrust of other women reinforced cultural values of familism. Once married, women's social lives were even less likely to extend beyond the domestic sphere. When women do not form friendships with each other, their social lives are damaged, which reduces their happiness, prevents them from community activism and organizing, and shuts off potential escape routes should they need to flee from domestic abuse.

Again, it is important to remember that as a blues singer, Smith's songs were meant to be performed live with responses from a Black audience. In this way, "A Good Man is Hard to Find," is more than just a woman bemoaning patriarchy's influence on spousal relations; it is also advice for younger women. Smith reminds women that the inherent power dynamics of marriage never fade. She advises women not to get too comfortable, to, "think that he's your pal," lest they, "look and find him foolin' 'round with some old gal." The song serves as a cautionary tale, wisdom passed down from an older, suffering woman, "My happiness is less today/My heart is broke" (Smith "Good Man" 0:38-0:47), to protect younger women from the same fate. She also encourages women to think critically about accepting a marriage proposal because, "A good man nowadays sure is hard to find" (Smith "Good Man" 1:44-1:50). Smith also gives advice to new wives of good men, "Hug him in the morning, kiss him at night/Give him plenty lovin'; treat your good man right" (Smith "Good Man" 1:31-1:42). Urban middle class college feminists may have argued that women should not be made to placate their men. From Smith's perspective, if poor women needed to marry, they should know how to manipulate their husbands in order to maintain the highest level of security possible. Smith, like many other Appalachian women, engaged with feminism by using her power to undermine patriarchy from within.

"Mama Goes Where Papa Goes" by Ida Cox While Smith's "A Good Man is Hard to Find" warned women about unfaithful husbands, Ida Cox's "Mama Goes Where Papa Goes" is a song about a woman who exerts dominance over her husband to prevent him from further infidelity. The song begins with an acknowledgment of women's labor that men often take for granted, "You eat my meat, drink my chicken soup/Then I notice you always fly the coop" (Ida Cox & Coleman Hawkins Quintet 0:30-0:39). The wife in the song values her own labor, cooking, and holds the husband accountable for failing to treat her properly. Like Loretta Lynn, Cox also connects her song to the rural while undermining the institution of marriage by linking the domestic sphere with chickens by calling the home a coop.

In Cox's song, the wife asserts her dominance over the husband, saying "But you can't pass through that door, no/Without your mama anymore…. 'cause Mama knows/You can't be trusted outta her sight" (Ida Cox & Coleman Hawkins Quintet 0:40-1:08). Cox pushes back against men who attempted to restrict the movements of their wives by presenting a reversed scenario in which a wife exerts control over her husband's movements. Cox tells her audience that a woman can stand up for herself and restrict the movements of an unfaithful husband. The woman in Cox's song is bold and dominant; she knows her worth and she demands respect out of her husband. Boldness, dominance, and commanding respect from spouses were traits associated with men in the early 60s when Cox performed this song. As part of the feminist movement, however, Cox presents these same characteristics in a wife, letting women know that they can have power in their marriages.

Domestic Abuse

DEPENDENCY

"Barbary Allen (Barbara Allen)" by Jean Ritchie "Barbary Allen," probably originally written as "Barbara Allen", is an old Appalachian folk song sung by Jean Ritchie, Dolly Parton, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, and Simon & Garfunkel among others. Like the Appalachian murder ballads, "Barbara Allen" actually originated in Europe, specifically Scotland, as early as the 1690s. It was brought over to Appalachia by immigrants and cemented itself on both continents as a traditional tragic lover's ballad (Sharp). Unlike the murder ballads, it is common for "Barbara Allen" to be performed by both men and women, and the story is in third person, rather than from the man's point of view.

Like the murder ballads, "Barbara Allen" is about a woman being punished for displeasing her male lover. The narrative places the blame entirely on Barbary from the beginning, "Young William Green on his death bed lay/For the love of Baraby Allen" (Ritchie 0:11-0:21). Loving Barbary Allen was what made William sick. William tells her, "…No better I never will be/If I can't get Barbary Allen" (Ritchie 1:26-1:35), putting the responsibility of his death on Barbara's decision to refuse him. At first, Barbara stands up for herself, reminding him, "You passed your glass all around and around/And you slighted Barbary Allen" (Ritchie 2:14-2:26). If William was unfaithful even before marriage, Barbara has no reason to think that he was a safe match to marry.

Nonetheless, William's dying words weigh on her after his death pushing her either to sudden illness or suicide shortly following his death, "Young William's died for me today/And I'll die for him tomorrow" (Ritchie 3:57-4:09). William died ill, blaming his death on the displeasure Barbara caused him by refusing him after he was unfaithful to her. Barbara either fell extremely ill suddenly due to the emotional distress or killed herself out of guilt because William

said that if she refused him, it would kill him. The narrative sides with William in the end, painting Barbara as the villain. Out of William's grave, "grew a red, red rose/Out of Barbary's grew a green briar" (Ritchie 4:26-4:35). It is William who is immortalized as a red rose, the symbol of love. Barbara becomes a harmful briar. In this version of the song, it is specifically green, which symbolizes her envy resulting from William's infidelity. According to the song, it is not William who sinned by being unfaithful, it is Barbary who sinned by refusing him. This highlights the double bind women often found themselves in. Women are killed in murder ballads as a result of giving in to men's desires.

This song is emblematic of the double standards Appalachian patriarchy enforced and continues to attempt to enforce on women, specifically with regards to a woman's right to refuse and men's infidelity. Because of this, it is difficult to understand why so many women would choose to cover the song. It also begs the question about whether these women were perpetuating patriarchal narratives.

To begin with, "Barbara Allen" is one of the most popular tragic ballads (Sharp). This is probably a result of the ballad lyrics being printed early on and on its enchanting melody which does not require much in the way of accompaniment, making it both feasible and impressive to perform (Sharp). In fact, Ritchie's version is a cappella, allowing listeners to focus exclusively on her mournful, lilting voice as it seamlessly shifts through the song's changing rhythms. Ritchie would have grown up hearing this song and other ballads like it sung by members of her community, just as Patron did. Ritchie made it her life's work to record such traditional Appalachian songs, which moved them from a more performance-oriented repertoire to the stable archive, accessible to outsiders and academics. This helped to solidify Appalachian culture

as a unique entity worthy of scholarship. While Ritchie may have helped to perpetuate patriarchal narratives by recording and performing the song, she also fulfilled one of the positive roles of Appalachian women: preserving and passing down culture. Ritchie not only preserved traditional folk songs for her own community members, but she made them available to the outside world. This helped show another side of Appalachia than the poor, unintelligent, inbreds portrayed in the media even in the 1950s and before. Here was an Appalachia with an artistic culture passed down from ancestors and preserved by women.

"The Only Way Out is to Walk Over Me" by Dolly Parton At first glance, Parton's "The Only Way Out" is a song about a woman desperate to keep her man despite his infidelity. Parton's voice is pleading as she sings, "So you found someone else and you're going to leave" (Parton "Only Way" 0:11-0:18). This is yet another song about the consequences women face for men's infidelity. In this song, the woman is not specified to be a wife or mother, so it is unclear if she stands to have any economic consequences. She is however, clearly experiencing significant emotional distress at the man's betrayal. In the song, Parton again gives a voice to the emotions experienced by Appalachian women that too much of society would rather ignore.

Over and over, Parton repeats, "The only way out is to walk over me" (Parton "Only Way" 0:38-0:45). She tells the man, "…just to prove that I love you, I'll crawl at your feet" (Parton "Only Way" 0:55-1:03). At first glance, this may appear as a pathetic self-deprecative act the woman in the song does in order to attempt to keep her man. The music is slow and a little melancholy, and Parton's voice sounds as if she's pleading. A closer look at the lyrics, however, reveals that the woman never actually begs the man to stay. In fact, from the beginning, she has already accepted his loss, "…you're going to leave" (Parton "Only Way" 0:15-0:18). It is clear

that the woman is hurt, but perhaps the sadness of the instruments and vocals is only a veneer to mask the true emotions of the woman, which might be anger or indignation. Parton sings, “You don’t hear and you don’t feel/But I know you can see….Just look down at the ground/Where your footprints will be/‘Cause the only way out is to walk over me” (Parton “Only Way” 0:46-1:20). She holds the man accountable for ignoring her and disregarding her feelings. When he does not listen to her, she gets through to him by putting her physical body on the line to force him to confront the consequences of his actions. The woman knows the man is going to leave her, but she refuses to let him do so without facing up to the harm he has caused. She refuses to allow the man to leave with a clean conscience, “If you go, then you’ll know/‘Cause you can’t help but see/That the only way out is to walk over me” (Parton “Only Way” 1:39-1:54). With this song, Parton joins a long feminist tradition of women using embodied resistance to stand up for themselves to their oppressors.

The sad musical qualities of the song work to make it more accessible to Parton’s primarily rural audience, who would have likely been put off by the song if it sounded angry. Even though the musical qualities are a little sad, Parton voice is not on the verge of tears like it is in “Down from Dover,” as if to say, of course this kind of infidelity is sad, but not too sad, not sad enough to preclude other emotions. While any men who heard this song were likely to write it off, women who heard it saw someone like them expressing the emotions they were feeling. Parton marries the sadness of the music with the angry indignation of the lyrics, telling women that they could be sad and that they had a right to hold the men in their lives accountable for their actions.

VIOLENCE

Violence against Appalachian women at the hands of men has been well documented. Rural women in general were at a greater risk of domestic abuse due to their isolation (Gagné 390), and Appalachian law enforcement and medical systems specifically were ill equipped to deal with abuse and unhelpful to women in situations of domestic violence (Denham 265 and Willis 261). In Appalachia, partially as a result of extractive industry practices, violent verbal behavior from grandparents and unemployed fathers was common (Denham 265, Gagné 391). Denham notes that 38% of female students studied were victims of incest at the hands of a male relative at least once before the age of 18 (265). Researchers on abuse of pregnant women also found that the most likely pregnant women to experience domestic abuse were primiparous teens (Denham 265) with teen partners (Dye et al 35). Women also expressed tension between them and their partner as a result of the pregnancy and dissatisfaction due to how little their partner helped them during the pregnancy (Dye et al 38, Gagné 395). Willis found in her study of women in domestic violence support groups that men in Appalachia are given societal permission to dominate and abuse women around them, and as a result the abuse goes unchecked and often initially unrecognized (256-57). Abuse tended to increase when women behaved independently and often manifested in women's ties to the outside world, such as cars or phones, being disabled by men (Willis 259 and Gagné 398). Gagné's intimate and foundational study of domestic abuse in Appalachia established stepping stones of domestic abuse, beginning with normative control, or societally accepted male dominance over women, which escalated into individual instances of nonviolent persuasive control over women in which she includes forced pregnancy via preventing contraceptive methods, and ultimately reaching a natural end of physical violence (Gagné 387). While it is true that rural women are uniquely at risk of

experiencing domestic violence and within that Appalachian women are even more at risk, it is important to maintain a nuanced approach when it comes to Appalachian distinctiveness to avoid presenting the region as a monolith.

Indeed, violent crime against women in Appalachia has been slowly decreasing since the early 2000s (Swank et al 130), while the college attendance rate among both men and women in the region has been increasing in the aftermath of extractive industries collapsing (Swank et al 138). Appalachian women tend to have more progressive views on gender roles and feminism than the average woman in the US (Swank et al 135), which aligns with the popular singers and lyrics in this paper. While Appalachian women are uniquely at risk of experiencing domestic violence due to male chauvinism and geographic isolation, Appalachian women also demonstrate progressivism and resistance.

"Knoxville Girl" Like "The Cruel Ship's Carpenter," "Knoxville Girl" is an Appalachian murder ballad. It originally appeared in Wexford, Ireland in the 1700s as the "Wexford Girl." From Ireland, it traveled to England as the "Oxford Girl" before being brought to Tennessee by European immigrants (Waltz and Engle). In all versions, a man tells the story of how he beat his lover to death and threw her in a river because he did not want to marry her. The version of the song sung by the Louvin Brothers depicts gruesome violence against the woman. The singer continues to beat the woman after he has killed her, pounding her body into the ground, "She never spoke another word/I only beat her more/Until the ground around me/Within her blood did flow" (Louvin Brothers 0:57-1:12). The singer then continues to brutalize her, "I took her by her golden curls/And I drug her 'round and 'round" (Louvin Brothers 1:22-1:29), before disposing of

her body in a river. This song, which is more graphic than the other ballads discussed, would have been commonplace for Lynn, Parton, and Ritchie growing up.

The song embodies the violence against women that was and continues to be pervasive in Appalachian communities. In this instance, marriage rather than pregnancy was the catalyst for the violence. Despite courting her, "…every Sunday evening out in her home I'd dwell…" (Louvin Brothers 0:17-0:23), the man has decided he does not want to marry her and instead murders her so, "You can never be my bride" (Louvin Brothers 1:50-1:53). This is a song about a man taking advantage of a woman by courting her only to enact extreme violence on her in the end. The narrative does attempt to hold the man accountable. He is tortured by visions of "flames of hell" (Louvin Brothers 3:00-3:02), in his bed as he tries to sleep after the murder. When he is sentenced, no one is able to help him, "My friends all tried to get me out/But none could go my bail" (Louvin Brothers 3:16-3:23), and in the end he says, "I'm here to waste my life away/Down in this dirty old jail" (Louvin Brothers 3:24-3:32). Despite the narrative holding him accountable, the ballad and its popularity normalize extreme violence against women. Furthermore, the tone of the singers, at least in this version, is not nearly as mournful as it could be. The tone is more soothing than anything, further contributing to the normalization of gender-based violence.

"Send Me to the 'Lectric Chair" by Bessie Smith Bessie Smith's "Send Me to the 'Lectric Chair" was a kind of new murder ballad, told from the perspective of a woman who murdered her unfaithful husband. Smith flips the script of male violence, giving women the physical control in the situation. "Send Me to the 'Lectric Chair" is boldly unapologetic; rather than forgiveness, she begs the judge to execute her in the "'lectric chair." The singer is brutal, "I cut him with my Barlow/I kicked him in the side" (Smith "Send Me" 2:00-2:05), and without remorse, "I stood

there laughin' over him/While he wallowed 'round and died" (Smith "Send Me" 2:06-2:11). Whereas the man in "Knoxville Girl" has friends who attempt to get him out of jail and resigns himself to a life sentence, the woman in Smith's song refuses any mercy, "I don't want no bondsman man to go my bail/I don't wanna spend no ninety-ninety years in jail" (Smith "Send Me" 2:45-2:56). She asks for a harsher punishment than the man in "Knoxville Girl" received even though, unlike the murderer in "Knoxville Girl," the victim was not innocent. The singer explains her motive by saying, "I caught him with a triflin' Jane/I warned him 'bout before" (Smith "Send Me" 0:32-0:42). While repeated infidelity may not be a crime worthy of being stabbed to death, it does make this victim less undeserving than the Knoxville Girl. Still, for a more justifiable crime, the singer demands a harsher sentence.

This song shocked audiences, but "Knoxville Girl" remained a commonplace folksong; the men were shaken to see what they had been dealing women handed back to them. The goal of Appalachian feminism is not to encourage women to behave as badly as men, and that is not what Smith's song is trying to do. Smith did not actually mean to encourage her female audience members to murder their unfaithful husbands. Rather, she meant to present an opposite narrative to men's brutalization of women and in doing so to affirm the physical power of women and to get men to put themselves in women's shoes, if only momentarily. The song gave men a taste of what it might be like to be sung about as a helpless murder victim.

RESISTANCE

"Don't Come Hone a Drinkin'" by Loretta Lynn Loretta Lynn's "Don't Come Home a Drinkin'", written in 1967, took a different approach to dealing with men's mistreatment of women. Rather than anguishing at the abuse, the singer willingly tells the man to shape up or ship out, "Leave

the bottle or me behind" (Lynn "Don't Come" 0:22-0:24). Lynn makes it perfectly clear that just as men had been demanding things from their wives, women also had the right to demand things from their husbands. In the song, the singer repeatedly refuses her husband's sexual advances, telling him, "…don't come home a drinkin'/With lovin' on your mind" (Lynn "Don't Come" 0:25-0:30). A song in which a woman both demands better treatment and refuses sexual advances from her husband was important for Appalachian women in the 1960s to hear. Domestic sexual abuse and rape were persistent problems in Appalachia. Here, Lynn's cheerful voice celebrates a woman brave enough to stand up for herself. The husband is not even given a voice in the song. All the focus is on the power of the woman's refusal.

Another important aspect of the song is that the woman is speaking up about something for the first time after putting up with it for a while. She sings, "You never take me anywhere… And many night I've laid awake/And cried dear, all alone" (Lynn "Don't Come" 1:07-1:19). These lines indicate that this has been a recurring instance that the woman has been dealing with. With this song, for the first time, she stands up to her husband and asserts her worth by saying, "Just stay out there on the town/And see what you can find/'Cause if you want that kind of love/ Well, you don't need none of mine" (Lynn "Don't Come" 0:38-0:48). The woman tells her husband that if her is not willing to value her, then he can take his sexual desires elsewhere. This was important because many Appalachian feminists were wives and therefore existed in the patriarchal structure of marriage either without the means or desires to leave their marriages. Even for these women, who have been dealing with their husbands' antics long before hearing her message, Lynn's song tells them that it is never too late to stand up for themselves.

Lynn also does not present a woman driven to emotional distress over standing up for herself, unlike the singer in Parton's "The Only Way Out." Lynn's voice as she sings "Don't Come Home a Drinkin'" is triumphant and daring, and the woman faces no consequences for standing up for herself. The response of the husband or the outcome of the woman's efforts are not part of the song, as if to communicate that regardless of how it may be received, the important thing is for women to stand up for themselves to the men in their lives; standing up for oneself is a triumph in and of itself, regardless of the outcome.

"One Hour Mama" by Ida Cox To begin with, heterosexual women experience an orgasm deficit. Between both men and women of all sexualities, heterosexual women are least likely to experience orgasms during sex (Frederick et al 273). In the context of Appalachian women, this means that many are also with men who do not value them and have a significant risk of pregnancy. Of course, only a man must orgasm for the woman to become pregnant. This means that a woman could have an unsatisfying sexual experience that resulted in the burden of pregnancy, while the man was able to have a satisfying experience and not experience the burden of pregnancy personally. This unfairness is the subject of Cox's song "One Hour Mama."

Cox tells her audience repeatedly, "I'm a one hour mama/So no one minute papa/Ain't the kind of man for me" (Cox "One Hour Mama" 0:52-1:00). She tells her audience that if she is going to be put at risk of pregnancy, then she wants to enjoy sex. Early in the song, Cox tells her audience that her man, "…needn't ever take the lead" (Cox "One Hour Mama" 0:37-0:40), proudly stating her active sexual desire. This disrupts the notion that men are the ones with libido and women are the passive receptors of their desire. In Cox's song it is the woman, not the man, who is sexually dominant. Cox also refutes attempts at flattery men might make to get out of

helping their partners reach orgasm, “I don’t want no lame excuses/‘Bout my lovin’ bein’ so good/That you couldn’t wait no longer” (Cox “One Hour Mama” 1:12-1:19). Cox will not allow the compliments of men to dissuade her from getting what she wants and what is important to her, a lesson that serves women well even beyond the realm of sexuality.

Just as she is unimpressed by flattery, Cox is also not impressed by the size of men’s sexual organs. She criticizes men who rely on their size alone, saying they have, “…a load of big artillery/But don’t know what it’s for” (Cox “One Hour Mama” 1:38-1:42). The entire song, especially these lyrics, would have repulsed the Black middle class, who were trying to gain rights by appearing respectable to the white middle class (Davis 91), a strategy called respectability politics. Cox was mostly performing in large cities, where these class differences between Black feminists were playing out. Cox is frank about sexuality. She refuses to let the veneer of politeness prevent women from receiving what she believed was a crucial message: that they can and should enjoy sex.

Like other Appalachian feminists, both white and Black, the domestic sphere is the central location for Cox’s push to liberation. Cox is also looking for a man with previous experience, “He’s got to bring me a reference… And must prove he’s got endurance” (Cox “One Hour Mama” 1:43-1:49). Unlike other songs in which women are suspicious of other women who have already or might sleep with their men, Cox actually wants her man to have slept with other women so she knows that he is capable of satisfying women. Even today this might strike audiences as a little unusual, but these lyrics are important because they work to undermine the notion that women should be suspicious of each other. Instead, women should talk openly with each other about their sexual experiences, even if that means serving as a “reference”.

As lighthearted as Cox's song is, she assures her audiences that her sexual desires are nothing to scoff at, "My requirements ain't no joke/'Cause I've go pure indignation/For a guy what's lost his stroke" (Cox "One Hour Mama" 2:05-2:12). Here, Cox demands that her sexual desires be taken seriously, and that they aren't just desires but requirements. She is uncompromising in what she wants to get out of sex. She sings about being indignant at poor sexual experiences, giving herself and other women permission to be honest with themselves, each other, and their partners about how their sex lives make them feel. This is vital because voicing dissatisfaction is one of the first steps in achieving real change. If women are not honest about their sexual dissatisfaction, they cannot hope to improve it.

Cox emphasizes taking her time during sex throughout the song, but near the end she also advocates for taking breaks and foreplay, "I may want love for one hour/Then decide to make it two/Takes an hour before I get started/Maybe three 'fore I'm through" (Cox "One Hour Mama" 2:30-2:40). Cox affirms for her audience that women may want to take breaks during sex, and maybe even orgasm more than once. She also emphasizes the importance of foreplay for women, and does all of this without any thought that it might be greedy, needy, or asking for too much from a partner in any way. Cox presents it as perfectly normal that women should have sexual desires, agency, and requirements, and expect their partners to try to meet them. She sets the stage for women to start their own dialogues about their sexualities, completely disregarding bourgeois notions of propriety.

"Short Dress Gal" by Carolina Chocolate Drops "Short Dress Gal" incorporates both a man's and woman's perspectives about women's clothing. The song begins with the man's perspective, and he speaks degradingly about the woman, telling her, "We gonna talk about you, woman"

(Carolina Chocolate Drops "Short" 0:18-0:19). Referring to her directly as "woman" is derogatory, and the man goes on to admonish the woman by cat-calling her. He criticizes the hemline of her skirt, which he believes is too high, and tells the woman to pull her skirt down in order to cover more of her legs, "Lower it gal/Everybody's lookin" (Carolina Chocolate Drops "Short" 0:45-0:46). He tells her to lower her skirt because she is attracting male attention, which he admits to being part of. In this way, the man attempts to punish the woman for his own desires.

The man ends his portion of the song with the dismissive lines, "We're gonna make room for the ladies to talk/Cause you know the got somethin' they wanna say" (Carolina Chocolate Drops "Short" 1:56-2:01). The men set themselves up as dominant in the conversation by making it seem as if the only reason the woman is speaking is because the men allowed her. The last line dismisses whatever the woman is about to say by passing it off as unimportant grumbling.

Despite this demeaning set up, the Rhiannon Giddens begins her section strongly, equaling dismissive of the man she calls John. Her voice is loud, growling, and purposefully sexual. She presents herself as a woman who has harnessed her sexuality and by doing so has empowered herself to stand up to the men around her. She dismisses the men's cat-calling, "Baby you shoutin' but I don't mind" (Carolina Chocolate Drops "Short" 2:12-2:14). Instead of giving in or letting the men off the hook, she leans in further to her sexuality, daring them to be so bold to her face, "Take a good look while you got the time/Now watch the skirt, it's gonna get higher/ Cause baby where there's smoke you know there's a fire!" (Carolina Chocolate Drops "Short" 2:15-2:22). This last line of her section comes out strongly, strong enough that after this the men

return to their chorus, but softer, as if grumbling rebuttals to tacitly acknowledge their defeat. Before the song dissolves to scatting, Giddens replies to the man's "Everybody's lookin'" with her own bold, "And that's alright with me" (Carolina Chocolate Drops "Short" 2:38-2:41). The woman gets the last word in the song and effectively dismisses the men who attempt to blame and punish her for their own desires. The woman continues to move along in the world, able to assign unimportance to the men who attempt to police her.

Conclusion

Country music singers from Appalachia have produced a trove of songs that acknowledge the suffering of women in their communities and ultimately leave audiences with messages of Appalachian women's resiliency and power. These songs can be paired with their historical and cultural contexts to understand the unique features of women's rights movements in Appalachia. Songs about workers rights and class dealt specifically with coal mining and poverty. Songs about coal mining address dependency on the abusive and monopolizing system that many women protested against and aided their husbands in the formation of unions. Songs about poverty decry the horrible conditions endured by women relegated to periphery industries while also honoring their resourcefulness and resiliency.

Songs about family life focused on unwanted pregnancy and infidelity. Unwanted pregnancy is a deadly issue for Appalachian women and these songs call attention to an issue shrouded in shame and secrecy while holding men accountable for their roles in it. Appalachian singers worked against double purity standards and men's economic power that enabled their unchecked infidelity to tip power dynamics in marital relationships in the favor of women. Their songs worked to validate women who experienced domestic abuse while rewriting cultural

narratives that normalized such treatment of women. Songs about resistance were created to empower women to set and maintain boundaries and demand satisfaction from their partners, as well as to be and stand up for themselves in their communities.

Appalachian women's rights movements differed from their urban middle-class feminist counterparts in their inclusivity and key issues. Appalachian feminists whose husbands worked and died in the mines together were more likely to be racially integrated than their urban counterparts, particularly from the 1930s-1960s. Appalachian feminists also centered welfare access as a key part of their platform. Unlike their middle-class counterparts, working class Appalachian women had dismal job prospects and were often mothers of several children and wives of husbands who were killed or disabled by the mines. Appalachian women knew that the middle-class focus solely on bringing women into the workforce was not enough to provide meaningful advancement for women. The support of social services was key for Appalachian feminists. Black women from southern Appalachian continued to make music to create community among other poor Black people, rather than trying to appeal to white people like the Black middle-class. The songs in this paper contain messages of persistent resistance passed down through generations by Appalachian women to preserve women's rights issues in song.

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