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A Claiming of Kin: A Linguistic Analysis of Southern Appalachian English in Melissa Range's Scriptorium: Poems

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A Claiming of Kin: A Linguistic Analysis of Southern Appalachian English in Melissa Range's *Scriptorium: Poems*

By

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ABSTRACT

The research studies the Southern Appalachian dialect present in five poems in Melissa Range's *Scriptorium: Poems*. The linguistic phenomena characteristic of Southern Appalachian English observed and analyzed in the poems include lexicon, grammatical features, and phonological aspects. The research seeks to bring attention to this Appalachian woman writer as well as to bring understanding of her reasoning behind incorporating the dialect in her poetry. It establishes that the five poems by Range contain the lexicon, grammatical features, and phonological aspects of the SAE dialect. It holds meaning both grammatically and pragmatically within the context of the poem and Appalachia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Appalachian authors, especially Appalachian women authors, are grossly underrepresented in research and our society today. To clarify, Appalachia is used alongside Southern Appalachia to represent the areas of West Virginia, southwestern Virginia, eastern Kentucky and Tennessee, western North Carolina and South Carolina, northern Georgia, and northeastern Alabama. Further, "Appalachian women authors," for the purpose of this research, refers to women authors who are from or grew up in Appalachia and create literary works which involve language or topics related to Appalachia. An article written by Emily Webb about a course in literature titled "The Feminine Voice in Appalachia Literature" at Lees McRae College in North Carolina quotes an Associate Instructor, Kathy Olson: "Women's voices have often been overshadowed by their male counterparts, who write about women…." Olson also mentions that most people who take the course comment that they did not realize the depth and breadth of the female voices explored in the course (Webb). I believe that because feminine voices in Appalachian literature as a whole seem to not be as well known, the poetry of Appalachian women may be a category that is overlooked. The variety of female Appalachian poets who have created poetry for years includes numerous notable women who have produced works which highlight their culture and life experiences in Appalachia, as well as reflect the dialect and different traits that the dialect has come to be known for.

It is important to read works of authors with different backgrounds in order to gain better understanding and appreciation of their culture – to dispel stereotypes which have been in place for years, such as stereotypes related to the intelligence and language of Appalachians, specifically Southern Appalachians. Positive valuation of diversity is something that has become increasingly prevalent in our society, helping people to appreciate those they come across that

may be different from themselves. This is important because many people have had a preconceived image of Appalachian women writers and fail to recognize the brainpower and variety in the different backgrounds that make up this diverse and notable group.

One writer who fits the description of the title "Appalachian woman writer," although she may be unsure of this title, is Melissa Range, author of *Scriptorium:Poems*. She describes in "Outsider Appalachian," an autobiographical essay, that she doesn't "quite fit the bill, at least as the bill is typically writ" (116). Range was born and raised in Elizabethton, Tennessee, which is part of Southern Appalachia, although she does not call it her current home. She advocates for social justice and supports diversity and inclusiveness in our society, especially for Appalachians. Range incorporates her experiences in Appalachia, as well as linguistic aspects characteristic of the Appalachian dialect of English, into her poetry.

Melissa Range was born and raised in East Tennessee, earning her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville in 1995. She went on to receive Master's degrees and now lives in Wisconsin, teaching at Lawrence University. Although she has not always been in East Tennessee, her Appalachian roots have always been present in her poetry. In an interview with Ty Phelps of the Arts + Literature Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin, Range recounted that many told her not to write too "regionally" about Appalachia and instead write more "universally." They suggested that she not use the slang or dialect of the area she grew up in. Range did not take the advice, considering it the "worst piece of writing advice" she has received (Phelps, Range). She has continued to incorporate several elements of the Appalachian dialect as well as her experiences and memories of Appalachia into her poetry. Before *Scriptorium,* Range wrote another book of poetry titled *Horse and Rider: Poems*. The book's theme is the power of love even through the causes and casualties of violence. It includes free

and formal verse as well as elements of war, religion, and the natural world, a subject matter a bit different than that of *Scriptorium.*

In the foreword to *Scriptorium:Poems*, Tracy K. Smith writes about the "voice" throughout the work: "... this particular voice seems entrusted with keeping alive … the voice of Appalachia, what the poem claims as her 'hillbilly' legacy. Not academically or anthropologically, but as a kind of earnest commemoration, a claiming of kin" (xii). Range uses *Scriptorium* to show her pride in being from Southern Appalachia. She claims this as her identity.

Scriptorium: Poems was selected as a winner of the National Poetry Series competition in 2015, which led to its sponsoring of the work's publication in 2016. *Scriptorium* proved to impact numerous people and organizations, receiving awards and fellowships from more than four foundations and organizations (National Poetry Series).

Scriptorium's story and "setting" creates interest in vernacular language such as the Appalachian dialect. Melissa Range details in an interview with Jo Reed of the National Endowment for the Arts:

> My grandmothers had recently passed away and I was really interested in kind of their languages and preserving it. So once I thought about this scriptorium as kind of this metaphorical place where the vernacular language could also kind of come up and assert itself against standardized language, then I thought that was kind of a metaphor that pulled all of my poems together."

She proceeds to discuss why she connects her East Tennessee roots to her poetry, saying that due to being mocked for so long as a result of her Appalachian "accent" or Southern slang, she

wanted to “assert power” and show that they are not something to be mocked but rather something fascinating to explore (Range, Reed).

This research anticipates the presence and use of a variety of linguistic features of the SAE dialect in *Scriptorium* in different linguistic levels such as lexical, grammatical, and phonological and that these features are present due to the fact that Melissa Range intends to display the dialect as well as her identity of being an Appalachian woman.

1.1 MOTIVATION

This section is included in this introductory chapter because personal bias is present in the choice of research and methodology. Personal bias in research is inescapable, especially in choosing the topic of research. My opinion is that the bias may provide benefits to the research due to the fact that there may be more passion within the research if the topic is something the researcher finds important or relevant. However, it is important to remain fair, so that is why I have chosen an advisor and a reader who are not from Appalachia and may not have the same bias as I do.

I am a first-generation college student who grew up living with my parents in the house of my grandmother (“mamaw,” as I called her). My mamaw was a strong Appalachian woman who faced many hardships throughout her life, and I have always felt inspired by her and the stories she told me about growing up and her life as a poor woman taking care of her ten children and numerous grandchildren throughout the years. Like Range, I grew up surrounded by people speaking Southern Appalachian English and I’ve come to realize that it is also important to me that I bring to light the idea that using language in a way that is different does not mean that it is negative in any way. The stereotypes that speakers of Southern Appalachian English have faced

due to their regionalisms inspired me to bring more attention to it. The more we are exposed to something, the less strange it may seem.

It is also important to me, being in a position my mamaw would have never imagined being in (as a college student graduating with honors), that I acknowledge and pay homage to my identity of Appalachian woman because I take pride in sharing roots with strong, determined women. I acknowledge that it is quite possible to be a woman, a speaker of SAE, and a college-educated individual.

2. RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND METHODOLOGY

As stated previously, there is a large gap in the representation of women in the Appalachian literature community. Among the different genres of literature, poetry is often given less attention than others in our society, according to data from Survey of Public Participation in the Arts in 2012, which concluded that the number of people reading poetry in the twenty years prior declined by 45 percent and did not seem to be on the uptrend. I believe that this has led to a lack of study and acknowledgement of many talented poets. The combination of the two factors means that there is even less awareness, research, and appreciation for Appalachian women poets.

In this research, I intend to bring this Appalachian woman poet to the forefront and give her the recognition and study she deserves, along with the numerous other Appalachian women poets who are not given the attention or study they deserve. It is important to celebrate diversity in all places, which is why I chose to research this topic. I also aim, in writing this paper, to inspire more research on the poetry of Appalachian women. While the present study focuses on the linguistic aspects of the works, clearly many more areas remain to be explored, and it is hoped that this study will inspire others.

I study the presence and pragmatics of the characteristic lexicon of the Appalachian dialect presented in Melissa Range's work in order to aid in acknowledgment of, understanding of, and possibility of further research into underrepresented groups in Appalachian literature. The works selected include only poems from *Scriptorium*, published in October 2016. A section is dedicated to the study of each of the selected poems. The research will be based upon and use information provided from previous studies in the sources listed in the literature review in the following section. The research questions are as follows: Do the five poems by Range contain the lexicon, grammatical features, and phonological aspects of the SAE dialect? If so, what meaning does it hold both grammatically and pragmatically within the context of the poem and Appalachia?

I assume that there is variation in dialects within the different levels of linguistic organization such as grammatical, phonological, and lexical features. As Wolfram and Schilling (2016) explain, certain variants of features are socially stigmatized, meaning that … They give examples of grammatical features such as negative concord, regularized past tense verb forms, and regularized subject-verb agreement forms. Stigmatized phonological features include [ɪn] for the present participle ending -ing and [d] or [t] for the interdental consonants. A lexical example is *ain't* (174-5). These are only a few examples of the assumption this research operates on, but the central idea is that dialects contain variation within the different levels of linguistic organization. Features can also be characterized by degrees of representativeness, meaning that not all features that are characteristic of SAE are necessarily unique to it.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

American English: Dialects and Variation by Walt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling was published in 2016 and describes language variation in American English. The twelve chapters of

the book cover topics including but not limited to regional, ethnic, and gender-based variation. This work draws mainly on the sixth chapter and sixth section, “The Social Evaluation of Linguistic Features.”

Appalachian Speech by Walt Wolfram was published in 1976 as a reference work for those interested in studying features of the Appalachian dialect. The six chapters of the book cover topics such as sociolinguistic framework, phonological aspects, and grammatical features. *Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English* by Michael Montgomery and Joseph Hall (2004) studies how words are formed and arranged into phrases and clauses in the Appalachian dialect. Another portion of *Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English,* which is *Grammar and Syntax of Smoky Mountain English*, discusses grammatical and syntactical aspects of SAE. *Smoky Mountain Voices: A Lexicon of Southern Appalachian Speech Based on the Research of Horace Kephart* was written by Harold Farwell and J. Karl Nicholas and published in 1993. The book is a compilation of the many words and meanings of words used in the Appalachian dialect. All three of these works help with identification of characteristic aspects of the Appalachian dialect such as lexicon, grammar, and pragmatics in the work of Melissa Range as compared to Standard American English.

Scriptorium: Poems by Melissa Range, published in 2016, is the other work used for analysis of the Appalachian dialect in poetry. *Scriptorium* shows the influence of the dialect on the writing and poetry of white Appalachian women in Southern Appalachia. The work was chosen due to the fact that it was published within the last six years. Using more modern poetry for this research allows for the representation of authors and poetry that are relevant today. Using a work that was published in more recent times also offers consistency within the research in the sense of my aim to focus attention on Appalachian women writers and poets because it brings

those who are creating works presently and those who may inspire more relevancy of Appalachian women writers and poetry to the forefront. A further advantage to studying a more modern work is that it may be more relevant and gain more attention than works that have already been extensively analyzed.

4. Analysis

Scriptorium: Poems by Melissa Range

Although there are a great many examples in the poems throughout *Scriptorium*, only five are studied in this research. This selection allows for thorough study as well as conformity to space regulations. The poems are examined in the order in which they appear in *Scriptorium*: "A Skiff of Snow," "Fortunes of Men," "Hit," "Crooked as a Dog's Hind Leg," and "Regionalism." These poems were chosen based on both their relevance to the research, meaning how well they represent Range's use of SAE and her reasoning for including them. The section that features the variations that will be studied in each poem will be reproduced in this document.

4.1."A Skiff of Snow"

"A Skiff of Snow" is a poem in the first person in which Range explores her family history and how she and her family have experienced people mocking their way of speaking. Range stands up against this, being proud of inheriting the SAE dialect, but seems at the end that she may be concerned about the future of the dialect.

> "When I left my mountain home to hitch
> to cities, I became a hick,
> my skiff of twang scuffing the air,
>
> breaking on scoffers' ears like ships
> busting on rocks. My granddaddy,
> on a job in Cincinnati, drinking up

his paycheck, heard “You must be one of them
hillbillies" soon as he opened his mouth
to ask the baseball score;

he replied, “They is two kinds of people
in this world, hillbillies and sons
of bitches—so what does that make you?”

Then he slugged the feller one,
or got slugged, depending
on who’s telling it.

“It’s a-skiffin',” we say,
to mean there’s not much,
there won’t be much, and it’ll be gone

in two shakes. It’s untelling
where it goes. It’s untelling
who'll tell it once it’s gone.”
(Range 9, 10).

“A Skiff of Snow” is one of the first poems that appears in *Scriptorium.* It is also one of the first poems to very clearly exhibit the use of characteristic features of SAE. Dialectal variation in the poem may be seen through lexical items and grammatical features.

Lexicon, for the purpose of this study, refers to the vocabulary commonly used by speakers of SAE rather than to the total set of meaningful units in a language. One of the lexical items that is characteristic of the SAE lexicon is in the title: “skiff.” The other two lexical items, which are only used in the poem itself, are “untelling” and “hillbillies.” The word “skiff” is used in the title of as well as throughout the poem. According to Michael Montgomery’s *Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English,* “skiff” means a small amount or thin layer of something, often of snow (539). Range also treats “skiff” as a verb meaning something to the effect of “to fall lightly.” “A skiff of snow” is actually a common phrase used by speakers of SAE, which shows that the poem, using the phrase as its title, certainly utilizes the Southern Appalachian dialect and

through this use shows that Melissa Range utilizes it purposely. The title is a location in which a word may stand out the most, so using "skiff" in the title has the purpose of bringing attention to the Southern Appalachian dialect. In addition, she is explicit about her usage of the lexicon as it also becomes a topic. "Untelling" is a lexical item that is quite characteristic to SAE. It may be found in the lines, "...It's untelling / where it goes. It's untelling / who'll tell it once it's gone." Montgomery defines "untelling" as an adjective meaning untellable, indescribable, or unbelievable (628). "Untelling" is often used by speakers of SAE to describe something as unknown or unpredictable. The word may be placed in the poem by Range in order to draw attention to the dialect as it occurs at the end of its line and is repeated more than once. A lexical item that is a bit different in "Hit" is "hillbillies," which is the plural form of "hillbilly," and according to Farwell's *Smoky Mountain Voices,* is a noun referring to a mountaineer, which may be considered humorous or depreciative (87). Range uses the word first spoken by a non-Appalachian character who is insulting her grandfather. It then occurs, spoken by Range' grandfather, in the lines, "...'They is two kinds of people / in this world, hillbillies and sons/of bitches'... ." Despite the fact that "hillbilly" may be familiar to those who do not speak SAE, it is included in this research because it is a culturally significant lexical item. It may co-occur in more than one variety of English but still be significant to SAE and its speakers due to the fact that it can work both as an insult when spoken by non-Appalachians and as a word to refer to oneself when used by an Appalachian person.

"A Skiff of Snow" also uses grammatical features of SAE. An example is in the line, "'It's a-skiffin',' we say..." The feature that is present is what Wolfram refers to as the a-prefixing that occurs with –ing participial forms, with examples such as "a-beggin'" or "a-cryin'" (69). In SAE as well as "A Skiff of Snow," a-prefixation that occurs with these forms is

inserted in certain environments. Although these forms may occur without a-prefixation, it is very common that they occur with it. There are some constraints to this, however. Wolfram discusses how there are clear cases where a-prefixing is allowed with -ing forms in SAE, but he says there are also cases where it is clearly not allowed such as when the verb complement is last and then the predicate complement is last. Phonological constraints include when the first syllable of the verb is not stressed and when the verb begins with a vowel (71). Usage such as "A-runnin' is fun" and "The party was a-disappointin'" would be incorrect according to these constraints. There may be more constraints, but these are the main issues that are appropriate for this research.

A grammatical feature of SAE, expletive *they*, is found in *Scriptorium*'s "A Skiff of Snow" and involves how, in SAE, it corresponds with a word in Standard English, unlike the relationship of a-prefixing with -ing forms. This feature is found in the line, "...'They is two kinds of people'..." This grammatical feature is described by Walt Wolfram in *Appalachian Speech* as correspondence of expletive *there* from Standard English with *they* in SAE (124-5). If Range were to use expletive *there* as it is used in Standard English, the line would read "There are two kinds of people." Instead, she uses *they*, which is more like the SAE form found in *Appalachian Speech*: "They's copperheads around here" (125).

4.2 "Fortunes of Men"

"Fortunes of Men is written in third person, and Range touches on the culture and life of the Appalachian people and their ties to religion and community.

> "When a youngun's born,
> only God, the Anointer, knows
> what the winters have in store:
>
> …

> Another will rev his Dodge
> around the lake of a Saturday night,
> lit up on Old Crow,
>
> …
>
> One must fix supper every night;
> and one must give the supper away
> to them worse off just down the pike.
>
> …“

(Range 28-31).

Unlike the previous poem, the title “Fortunes of Men,” does not contain any of the elements of SAE within the poem that will be discussed. However, that certainly does not signify a lack of presence of SAE dialectal variations. This poem’s dialectal variations include both lexical items and grammatical features.

In the very first line of the poem, there is a lexical item that is characteristic of SAE: “When a youngun’s born...” According to the *Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English*, the word takes several different forms in SAE, including “youngern,” “young’n,” etcetera. The word refers to a child or “young one” (666). “Supper” is also from the lexicon of SAE, used in the lines, “One must fix supper every night; / and one must give the supper away... ”. “Supper” is defined by Montgomery as a noun referring to the traditional term for the evening meal (583). Mainstream forms of English may refer to the evening meal as “dinner,” so it is clear that Range uses “supper” to include lexical items from her Appalachian heritage. A third lexical dialect marker is “pike:” “to them worse off just down the pike... ”. The *Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English* defines “pike” as a noun that originally referred to a public road having a gate, toll-bar,

or turnstile but eventually came to refer to a through road (446). Range uses “down the pike” in the poem in the way that speakers of Standard English would use “down the road.”

An interesting grammatical dialect feature is in the line, “...around the lake of a Saturday night... .” The phenomenon instantiated here is a common pattern of prepositional usage in SAE, according to *Appalachian Speech*. *Of* can take complements referring to times of day or seasons of the year. Wolfram gives examples of the use of the preposition in which *of* corresponds to *in*: “... get up of the morning” (126). This is not consistent with the case presented in the poem; it seems as if there is correspondence of the preposition *of* with *on* rather than *in*. Wolfram describes that *of* may occur with times of day or seasons of the year, but I do not believe these are the only cases in which this occurs. The data in this poem goes beyond Wolfram’s explanation and indicates that other expressions may occur with this preposition such as days of the week, so I feel like more details should be added about this occurrence in SAE. Further, it is important to consider that Saturday may also be a complement.

Another grammatical dialect feature is found in the line, “... to them worse off just down the pike.” As Wolfram explains, Appalachian English often uses the demonstrative object pronoun/determinative *them* in correspondence to *those* as *those* is used in Standard English (119). For example, SAE would allow “Them people are crazy” rather than “Those people are crazy.” In the poem, demonstrative “them” refers to the assumed noun “neighbors,” who live “just down the pike.” While the accusative, i.e. non-demonstrative pronoun *them* can certainly be the complement of *to*, an accusative form cannot be modified by an adjective phrase, as in **to me worse off.* If the pronoun were the accusative, a relative clause would modify it instead: *to me/them who are worse off*. Thus, this is clearly a use of the demonstrative *them*, which corresponds to *those* in Standard English.

4.3 "Hit"

"Hit," a poem written in first person, emphasizes the word "hit" and presents other examples of the SAE dialect. The title and subject of the poem suggest that Range does not mind that there may be stigmatism attached to this way of speaking and writing; it seems as though she intends to show her appreciation of her Appalachian roots. Dialectal variation in "Hit" includes phonological, grammatical, and lexical features.

> "Hit was give to me,
> the old people's way of talking,
> and hit's a hit
>
> sometimes. Sometimes hit
> is plumb forgot
> and I drop the "h"
>
> that starts hillbilly,
> hellfire, hateful,
> hope. Sometimes hit
>
> …"

(Range 45).

"Hit" is a variant in SAE of the lexeme "it." In *Appalachian Speech*, Wolfram explains this phenomenon as initial *H* retention, because, like other pronouns, and also auxiliary verbs, in English, *it* used to begin with *H* (57). According to Wolfram, initial *H* retention is most likely to occur in the more stressed items in a sentence (Wolfram 58). The poem gives numerous examples of the initial *H* retention in the pronoun *it*, for example in the lines, "and hit's tough: / hit's Old English, / hit's Middle, hit's country…" (Range 45). The stressed items, meaning items where emphasis is placed when reading and speaking, are where the initial *h* is retained. An example of deletion of the *H* in an unstressed item is in the line, "still ain't hit / the sack." Since *ain't* is not emphasized or stressed in the sentence, it does not retain the *H* as *hit* does. I believe that every instance of the presence of "hit" retains the *H* because it is always emphasized in each

occurrence, especially when spoken. When voicing the lines aloud, it seems natural, since "hit" is the subject of the poem, to focus one's voice on the word—to bring it out more than the others. This data constitutes apparent contradictions with Wolfram's constraints. I believe that Range stresses the words for pragmatic purposes. This brings more attention to her use of SAE in the poem and leads readers' focus to what she discusses in the poem. Although it may not be normal to stress "hit" in "hit's tough," similarly to other occurrences in which "hit" wouldn't typically be stressed in "Hit," it is possible to read the occurrences with emphasis on "hit." This emphasis on "hit" can also be used to create different meaning because "hit's tough" may mean something different depending on which word is stressed. This allows for discussion of the word and brings focus to it rather than just using it without the purpose that Range does.

Distinct dialectal grammar forms also occur with the verbs "give" and "forgot." Both of these verbs are irregular, as in Standard English; however, they different in the number of shapes in the paradigm for each. The past participle "give," in the passive clause "Hit was give to me," in accordance with Wolfram's explanation, shows a past participle with the same shape as the base form. The homonymy constrast with the Standard English paradigm, in which the past participle is "given.". On the other hand, the past participle "forgot" has the same shape as the preterite form: "...is plumb forgot." Wolfram explains this phenomenon by saying, "Despite the apparent wide variety of usage for irregular verb past forms in AE, there is a systematic patterning which emerges: The patterning and variability point to a potential situation of language change in progress...the area where nonstandard usage is most acceptable is in the participial forms" (Wolfram 84).

The lexicon in "Hit" also includes distinctive Appalachian features. The specific words in the lexicon of SAE that are seen in "Hit" are "hillbilly," "hit," and "plumb." In "Hit," Range uses

the word “hillbilly:” “...that starts hillbilly, / hellfire, hateful, / hope… .” This word is used in the poem to refer to how using “hit” instead of “it” is related to “hillbilly” because it is associated with the “hillbilly” trait of having “bad” grammar. Range may use this word because of the connotation it has with the SAE dialect being seen as illegitimate or “uneducated” English. In “Hit,” a further example is “plumb.” The poem says, “...Sometimes hit / is plumb forgot… .” While not unique to SAE, the item is still characteristic SAE. “Plumb,” defined by Farwell, is an adverb meaning “completely” or “altogether” (Farwell 125).

4.4 “Crooked as a Dog’s Hind Leg”

“Crooked as a Dog’s Hind Leg” is written in first person, and it describes Range’s desire to be free and make her own choices, likely due to her “no-count grandaddy” and the “ingrate sons” she was exposed to.

> “Yanking my lank hair into dog-ears,
> my granny frowned at my cowlick’s
> revolt against the comb, my part
>
> looking like a dog’s shank,
> no matter what she did, crooked
> as the dogtrot path
>
> out the mountain county I left
> with no ambitions to return,
> rover-minded as my no-count granddaddy, crooking
>
> …
> “When you coming home?” my granny
> would ask when I called, meaning “to visit”
> but meaning more “to stay,”
>
> …
> What could I say but “I’ll be home Christmas,”
> what could I hear but “That’s a long time,”
> what could I do but bless
>
> …”
> (Range 52-54).

As in “Hit,” the title of the poem alerts the reader that the content is related to Appalachia and its language and culture. In Brooks (2016), Melissa Range describes writing the poem as a kind of elegy for her grandmother, aiming to defy gender expectations that are often present in Appalachian culture. She adds that she felt inspired to lead her own life and live for herself after watching her grandmother and the women around her as she grew up having to live for the males in their family and reinforcing the gender expectations for women in Appalachia. She mentions that she purposely wove her unreliable, alcoholic grandfather into the poem to give an example of the expectations that women take care of and devote their lives to their fathers, husbands, and/or sons (Brooks, Range).

As in the previous poem, “Crooked as a Dog’s Hind Leg” offers different examples of the grammar and lexicon of SAE throughout. I focus on copula deletion, specific lexical items, and a specific case of preposition omission.

Melissa Range writes “‘When you coming home?’ my granny / would ask when I called… .” The dialogue exemplifies the tendency of SAE speakers to delete the copula *are*. According to Wolfram in *Appalachian Speech*, copula deletion in SAE typically takes place when following a pronoun, as in the example: “You playin’ right here” (41). Range’s usage closely resembles the example in that the deletion also follows *you*.

Distinct dialectal lexicon in the poem includes “no-count,” and “granny.” Range uses the word “no-count” in her description of her grandfather: “...rover-minded as my no-count granddaddy…”. According to Farwell in *Smoky Mountain Voices*, “no-count” is an adjective meaning “worthless.” The word “granny” is the word Range uses to describe her grandmother, which fits with the definition of the word in *Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English*.

An additional usage observed in “Crooked as a Dog’s Hind Leg” is more difficult to identify.. The phenomenon occurs shortly after the copula deletion: “What could I say but ‘I’ll be home / Christmas…’”. Rather than conforming to Standard English usage, which would be “I’ll be home *at* Christmas,” the clause omits the preposition. It is unclear whether Range changes the function of the word “Christmas” to be used more like the word “Monday,” as in “I’ll be home Monday,” or if the phenomenon is more closely related to the absence of the preposition as Montomery mentions in a chapter on Appalachian English in *Varieties of English: The Americas and the Caribbean*: “Prepositions are occasionally omitted” (461). Montgomery gives examples for this phenomenon but does not explain any constraints, which may mean that there are not any or that no patterns have been found.

4.5 “Regionalism”

“Regionalism” is a poem written in first person that addresses how the South and the Southern way of speaking are stigmatized. Range comments on the different occurrences in which people express negativity about the South and seems to feel conflicted about how she should feel herself.

> “…
> It’s a formless humid place with bad food (except for BBQ)--
> the grits, slick boiled peanuts, sweet tea thick as tar.
> I don’t hate it, but they all do,
>
> …
> my every “might could have” and “fixin’ to,”
> my flattened vowels that make “fire” into “far.”
> I don’t hate how I talk, where I’m from, but they all do
>
> …”

(Range 61).

The title “Regionalism” focuses attention on the dialect. The poem as a whole is a take on how Appalachian people are stereotyped and judged based on certain characteristics of the

language and culture deemed "negative" by society. In the Brooks (2016) interview, Range describes how she used to joke that "Regionalism" was her way of getting revenge for her accent being made fun of her entire life (Range, Reed). Range's main technique in the poem is listing characteristic phenomena of the dialect including two phrases and one phonological example of vowel pronunciation.

The lexicon employed in "Regionalism" includes "fixin' to," "might could have," and "grits." Range uses "might could have" in the middle portion of the poem: "my every 'might could have' and 'fixin' / to'… ." In *Grammar and Syntax of Smoky Mountain English*, Montgomery says that "might could have" signifies possibility or condition on one hand and indirectness on the other (8). In this occurrence, it could be either as Range uses it to refer to lexical items that she uses which people judge or make fun of. "Fixin' to," according to Farwell, is a verb meaning "to plan" or "to get ready" (68). Both "might could have" and "fixin' to" are used in "Regionalism" as examples of words in SAE that were causes of mockery. The final word, "grits," is a noun referring to grated corn from which the hulls have been removed and has significance because corn was a staple for mountain people due to its versatility in ways it could be ground, such as for grits, according to *Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English* (272).

An interesting occurrence to note is how of the list of lexical items in "Regionalism" coincide with the list of grammatical items. The list of lexical items, "…the grits, slick boiled peanuts, sweet tea thick as tar." is followed by the list of grammatical items, "…my every 'might could have' and 'fixin' to,' / my flattened vowels that make 'fire' into 'far." (Range 61). Melissa Range incorporates these elements to allow for food, grammar, and sound regionalisms of SAE to be displayed in the poem.

Modal stacking is stringing together than one modal verb, , e.g. “might ought to” or “might can.” “Regionalism” includes the example “might could have.” Modal stacking tends to occur in certain types of face-to-face interactions, such as when one person is proposing or arranging something with another (Wolfram 8). The lexical item is used to refer to language the author may use when planning something with someone and that the language is made fun of or mocked. The usage and note of modal stacking in “Regionalism” indicates that Range intended to share that this is an aspect of SAE speech that is often mocked in certain situations with speakers of Standard English or other dialects by the way that she lists the expressions. These may be referred to as stigmatized features as their use is often associated negatively in media and society as Range suggests.

In naming aspects of Appalachian speech that are mocked, Range also lists “flattened vowels:” “my flattened vowels that make ‘fire’ into /‘far.’” Wolfram describes this phenomenon as the use of one syllable for words such as “fire” and “tire” rather than two syllables like most other varieties of English(65). The first diphthong is also reduced to /a/, causing them to be pronounced as [far] and [tar] rather than [faɪər] and [taɪər] .

5 ANALYSIS

A variety of lexical items and phonological and grammatical features characteristic of SAE occur in the five poems studied, many of which are stigmatized. The frequency of these features and their placement in prominent contexts, such as in titles, suggests that Range uses them to bring attention to and celebrate the SAE dialect that she identifies with. Clearly, Range displays her identity as an Appalachian woman. As Tracy K. Smith mentions in the foreword, Range keeps the voice of Appalachia alive and uses *Scriptorium* to claim her ‘hillbilly’ legacy and her kin. She inserts her native dialect as well as experiences or memories growing up in

Appalachia in order to share her identity without shame. Range says in “Regionalism,” “I don’t hate it, but they all do.”

Throughout *Scriptorium,* she points out specific words by either using them in the title of or repeating them throughout the poem. Examples include but are not limited to “hit” and “skiff.” She plays these lexical items up by using them at least three to five or more times in the poems and their titles.

The words “hillbilly” and “grits” are not unique to the Appalachian dialect, but they connote the culture. “Hillbilly” is a more explicit way to refer to identity while “grits” is more implicit. Range’s use of “hillbilly,” since it is often used in a derogatory way or as an insult, may be analyzed as Range deciding, as many Appalachian people do, to just take the title, and run with it. In “A Skiff of Snow,” a man insults Range’s grandfather, calling him a “hillbilly.” He responds by commenting that there are only two kinds of people and insinuating that “hillbilly” is not the worst kind to be. This shows that Range may have chosen to include this to show that many Appalachian people are not letting the word “hillbilly” faze them too much and are in a sense fighting back against the stigma. It also shows that the word can have different meaning for speakers of SAE depending on who says it. “Further, other words like “plumb” should not be disregarded due to the fact that speakers of other dialects may be able to interpret their meaning based on the context of the poems. They are still valid examples of Range’s use of the SAE lexicon in her poems because they may be characteristic lexical items of SAE and show that she is using and bringing attention to them in order to share her identity of being from Appalachia and to show that she is unashamed of her dialect.

6 CONCLUSION

The aim of this research has been to bring attention to the poetry of Appalachian women, who, due to the imbalance of representation of women in the Appalachian literature community compared to other groups, are grossly underrepresented in awareness, research, and appreciation. My intention was to bring Melissa Range, an Appalachian woman poet to the attention of the readers and give her, along with Appalachian women poets like her, the acknowledgment and study she has earned by continuing to create poetry about or including Appalachia despite the stigma around it. It is significant that these poems were written by a woman because it may lead other Appalachian women writers to come forward and share their identity and experiences.

The research has identified cases of the presence of features characteristic of SAE which are present in Melissa Range's *Scriptorium: Poems*. Lexical, grammatical and phonological features occur. Through analysis and interpretation of these poems, it is clear that Range's purpose for including these features and items is to bring attention to and show pride in being an Appalachian woman and speaker of SAE.. Range is certainly capable of creating poetry written in Standard or Mainstream English. A short excerpt from "Tyrian Purple," a poem in *Scriptorium* demonstrates this: "Because a parchment plain and pale as sails / doesn't avail gold ink, and because raw silk / for empresses must not be the shade of chalk… ." Range is able to use different writing styles but makes a conscious decision to use SAE in the poems studied as well as others, to bring attention and appreciation to Appalachia and its dialect.

A hope that I have for this research and its topic is that it does not end with this thesis. I hope that I inspire more research into the poetry of Appalachian women as this study has only focused on certain linguistic aspects of the work. Many more areas remain to be explored, such

as what elements of the dialect may not be present in the poetry of Appalachian women and why, feminist criticism, and analysis of symbols and symbolism, to name a few. It is important that we do not continue to overlook the potential and talent that is present in Appalachian women poets and writers. We must give them recognition and voices that are heard and appreciated.

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