Capturing Appalachia: Visualizing coal, culture, and ecology

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SUMMARY

Capturing Appalachia: Visualizing Coal, Culture and Ecology, draws on extensive ethnographic, archival, and ecographic research conducted across Appalachia between 2014-2016 to develop an empirically informed sociological image of the interactions between culture, geography, and industry. Of particular interest are the ways that extractive cultures in Appalachia are constructed and communicated, and so the project includes archival work researching historical images as well as fieldwork focused on the production of images. Drawing on the traditions of cultural and ‘green’ criminologies, geography, and critical ecotheory, concluding that the cultural, political, and ecological worlds of Appalachia exist in a dialectical relationship with one another, and that at the center of each is an intense cultural relationship with the region’s historic and contemporary capture (cultural, economic, and ecological) by resource extraction. These dialectical relationships are made clear in the visuality of Appalachia, with paradigms frequently challenged by the production of countervisual narratives in productions spanning photography, literature, cinema, and media. The project constitutes the first extensive empirical application of the suggestions of an emergent green-cultural criminology. This research contributes significantly to the existing theoretical literature on extractive cultures through the development and application of the concept of ‘capture’, which is employed in throughout and which constitutes a central concept the project. The concept of ‘regulatory capture’ informs much of the existing sociological literature on harmful industry. Expanding on the concept of ‘capture’, I consider the capture of Appalachian economies by a single industry (economic capture), the capture of cultural production by the dominant industry (cultural capture), the legal capture of material landscapes by industry (ecological capture), the visual-mechanical capture of images of ecology and culture (photographic capture), and finally, the capture of ecology and people by an emerging industry of incarceration (carceral capture).

I was born on this mountain a long time ago
Before they knocked down the timber and strip-mined the coal
When you rose up in the mornin' before it was light
To go down in that dark hole and come back at night

I was born on this mountain, this mountain's my home
And she holds me and keeps me from worry and woe
Well, they took everything that she gave, now they're gone
But I will die on this mountain, this mountain's my home

I was young on this mountain but now I am old
And I knew every holler, and cool swimmin' hole
'Til one night I lay down and woke up to find
That my childhood was over and I went down in the mines

There's a hole in this mountain and it's dark and it's deep
Oh and god only knows all the secrets it keeps
And there's a chill in the air only miners can feel
And there're ghosts in the tunnels that the company sealed
-Steve Earle, *The Mountain*

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Here, I find the chance to offer a paraphrased quotation from my sister, Annie McClanahan, who along with her husband Theodore Martin is due thanks as my toughest audience and biggest cheerleader, in her own praise of our mother, Cia White: 'You were [our] first and are still [our] best model of intellectual curiosity, teacherly passion, and political commitment. Thank you more than words can say'. As usual, Annie says it with more eloquence and accuracy than I can hope to muster, and so I will leave her praise as the statement of record. Anne Huntington also deserves endless thanks as an unwavering source of support. Cait McClanahan, Kris McClanahan, and Cait's husband Martin Richards have each been a source of insight and support. My dad, Ed McClanahan, is due what is perhaps the biggest recognition of all; you made me who and what I am, for better or for worse.

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Introduction

It's the summer of 2015, and Tennessee's Smoky Mountains, part of the broader range of the southern Appalachian Mountains, disappear rapidly in the rear-view mirror behind me. In this part of the range, the valleys and peaks are populated with a breath-taking array of trees, shrubs, groundcover, vines, and wildflowers, and the visible material ecology shifts and undulates with the elevation. Behind me are the streams, creeks and rivers of Sevier County, Tennessee that just a few days ago I was wading in, the ice-cold water clear as glass as it ran over my bare feet, trout, warmouth, bluegill, and minnows darting through the rocks and rapids. Behind me also are the tourist towns like Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, and Sevierville, places marked not by the verdant ecology of the mountains, but instead by the somewhat precarious economy of the service industry and its material markers and influence. The strip-malls and theme parks and roadside attractions that vie for their share of the more than one billion dollars injected annually into the economy of Sevier County alone, though, owe their existence to the mountains and to the Smoky Mountains National Park, the hub of the regional tourist economy. People come here, after all, for the mountains. Behind me, then, is the bucolic Appalachia of leisure and idyll and tourism, an Appalachia mostly untouched by the forces of contemporary industrial coal extraction. But like the tourist economy, that idyllic Appalachia is precarious: a few short years after that first journey out of Tennessee and across Kentucky into West Virginia, wildfires will claim a huge chunk of Gatlinburg, the unflinching ecological forces of fire and flame and drought taking back the land.

It all fades from view behind me as I drive north up Interstate 75. I cross into Kentucky and the landscape changes, becoming more rugged and rocky. The diverse timber remains—box elder, Fraser fir, maple, alder, holly, redbud, and dogwood, all fighting for space across the ridges and hollers. So does the kudzu, climbing over everything until all that remains are dense green forms that only *suggest* a shed, a barn, or a utility pole. The strip-malls remain, also, but are less active here, with windows broken and gaping or boarded, parking lots empty. The contour of the mountains changes, too, as the endless rolling peaks of The Smokies give way to the wide, jagged, rocky and flat-topped mountains of places like the Red River Valley and the Sheltowee Gap.

Before long, Kentucky too fades away behind me, as I pass the mechanical and alien and dystopic skyline of Ashland and its oil refineries, on the border with West Virginia, where great plumes of fire spout from the spiralled exhaust chimneys of the petroleum processing facilities. I enter West Virginia here, now on Interstate 64, passing beneath the iconic sign—'Welcome to Wild, Wonderful, West Virginia'—and quickly driving past exits for towns and cities like Ironton, Kenova, and Melissa. I pass the petro-chemical shores of the Ohio River, in Huntington, where giant chemical storage tanks, processing plants, shipping depots, and refineries visually underscore the industrial and extractive histories of the place, histories that run from timber to salt to coal. Following state road 70 from Charleston, I double back south past Beckley and the even-smaller towns that surround it. Here the landscape changes dramatically, the mountains growing taller and sharper, the roads bordered more closely by stands of tall trees and other increasingly dense vegetation. From this vantage point, the mountains in central-eastern Kentucky and east Tennessee seem, retrospectively, more like hills: in West Virginia, the mountains do not roll, they tower and crash. The visible economy changes, too, as abandoned and run-down strip-malls give way to strip mines and high-walls—the flat, vertical rock faces leftover from decades of surface coal extraction. I remember back to my childhood, riding next to my dad in his pickup truck across the backroads of Kentucky as he pointed out old vertical-wall mines, explaining to me that the clean lines that ran down the limestone high walls were bore channels, tubes drilled straight into the rock, down fifty feet or more, and then filled with dynamite to blast away the rock and expose seams of coal.

In many ways, I know where I am, because it is where I am from. But it also all looks different now than it ever has before. What accounts for that difference, I think in the moment, is that I'm here *looking*. I'm looking for the historical and contemporary and emerging scripts of extraction that have been—and are still being—written on the mountains here. I am looking, too, for the effects of looking itself, the lingering ghosts of all those who have—through the visual mechanics of sight, photography, film—taken in the mountains and people of Appalachia, 'grinding them up', to quote Kentucky farmer and writer Wendell Berry, in the machinery of visual apprehension and reproduction. I'm looking for the ways that this landscape that I love, that I find comfort in, can shift in an instant into one that I fear, one that fills me with dread and insecurity and a deeply felt sense of cosmic aloneness. I'm looking for the moments and places that the violence of the extractive history of central Appalachia emerges from the shadows of time and ecological space, those moments when the spectres of capitalist extractive violence assert themselves into the contemporary affective experience of the space and place of the mountains. Finally, I'm looking for the future, for the ways that the peculiar subjectivity of Appalachia can wrestle with what came before in order to imagine what comes next.

To find and describe and theoretically contextualize what I have looked for and what I have seen in extractive Appalachia, I have structured this work to follow the contours of my own experience and the developments of my own enquiries rather than any temporally chronological historical narrative. The central thematic I employ here, as the title suggests, is 'capture', the 'act of taking into one's possession or control by force' or of 'record[ing] accurately in words or pictures'. For me, the material and social landscapes of Appalachia are inextricable from the idea and experience of capture, and so that is the thread that connects each of the chapters herein. The opening chapter, as a possible exception—although it, too, deals with capture in the sense that it discusses some of the ways that Appalachia, justice, and ecology have been ‘captured’ in their respective literatures—describes and details major developments in the fields of criminology and justice studies, ecotheory and ecocriticism, and visual social science. Chapter 2, the first chapter employing data collected during the months of fieldwork that I conducted for this project, joins previous research on Appalachia in describing the various ways that the regional economy, political economy, and material ecology of central Appalachia have been captured and configured by the coal industry. Chapter 3 breaks somewhat from earlier research on Appalachian coal extraction, noting and detailing the significance of the coal industry’s ability to capture the *cultural* modes and imaginations of central Appalachia—a dimension of capture that I argue is every bit as implicated as the construction of a single-actor extractive economy in the uninterrupted and ongoing exploitation of the region. Chapter 4 follows the thread of culture into the realms of the visual, noting and troubling the long history of the exploitation of the Appalachian coalfields by the production of reductive visual cultures of extraction that affirm and reify the disastrous logics of extractive capital. Chapter 5 continues with the themes of cultural capture, with my attention shifting from the ways that Appalachian cultures have been captured by extraction to the ways that Appalachia itself as a conceptual geography has been captured and communicated in the cultural registers of cinematic and literary horror, noting the ways that the extractive landscape lends itself to the dialectics of dread and desire required by horror. Chapter 6 seeks to draw together the previous chapters by merging my fundamental and joined interest in the capture of material ecology and cultural registers, describing the ways and moments in which the ghosts of historic extractive violence linger in mountain landscapes and archives of tragedy, violence, conflict, and memorial and the ways that time and temporality are thus captured by histories of extractive violence and ecocide. In the concluding section, I offer my final thoughts on Appalachia’s capture at the hands of extraction. Here, I describe the ways that the possibility of imagining the future of

Appalachia has, it seems to me, been lost in the darkening mists and violence of extraction and the histories of extractive violence that have so conditioned, captured, and configured central Appalachian landscapes, bodies, ecologies, and imaginations.

What follows, then, is fundamentally a thesis about a place. It is about the processes that have made that place what it is. It is about the ways that place has been apprehended and communicated on the cultural register. It is about the ways that place has been experienced by its own unique subjectivities. It is also, though, about the very processes that allow for experiencing and perceiving and communicating a place and about the violence and exploitation that are too often fundamental to those processes. It is about knowing a place as beautiful, while fearing that same place as horrifying. It is about not escaping the past, and not seeing the future. It is about desire and it is about dread. It is about the mountains and about Appalachia and about time. It is about the assemblages and objects that make meaning in and from space and ecology, and it is about the meanings they make.

Chapter 1

Capturing Appalachia: Theory and Literature

The coal-producing region of southeastern Appalachia, between the peaks and hollows of West Virginia, the rolling hills and bluegrass of central Kentucky and the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee, is home to some of the oldest mountains and most biodiverse hardwood forests in the world. The ecology of the region, though, is under threat from a voracious coal industry. For over a century, the people and land of Appalachia have been deeply affected by coal extraction, a practice that has contributed, conversely, to both the construction and destruction of Appalachian cultures[1] and ecologies. Conceptualized variously in the American imagination as patriots willing to sacrifice health and environment for the good of the nation, as the subjects of a series of processes of internal colonization, and at times as so foolish as to be deserving of the slow death wrought by the destruction of the land beneath them, the people of Appalachia have developed and carried on unique traditions of art, music, literature and storytelling that at times resist and at times reify these conceptualizations. My research, then, considers not only the ecological dimensions of the coal industry in Appalachia, but also the human and cultural dimensions: the various ways that the people of Appalachia respond to their historical and contemporary relationship with coal, the ways that coal has impacted the spatial and social geographies of Appalachia, and the cultural productions—some resistant, some supportive—that have emerged from under the shadows of the draglines and coal-processing towers that have come to dominate the material landscapes of central Appalachia. At its most essential, then, this is a project about the ways that the pasts, presents, and futures of central Appalachia are known, visualized, experienced, and imagined through lenses darkened by coal.

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[1] Here—and throughout—'culture' is used following Raymond Williams' (1976: 90) three-part definition, which includes usage as an independent noun describing processes of intellectual and aesthetic development, a 'particular way of life', and 'the works and practices of intellectual and…artistic activity.' Or, simply, a 'whole way of life' (Williams, 1958: 55)

Perhaps the most significant challenge facing research in and on Appalachia is the fundamental question of the region: what—and where—is Appalachia? As described in the previous section, Appalachia is not a single and monolithic geography, but rather a series of spaces and places, cultures and ecologies, connected sometimes loosely and sometimes closely in the social imaginary and the socio-cartographic imagination. The starting point for any useful and operational definition of Appalachia, it seems to me, is that developed by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), a federal-state partnership formed in 1965 in order to seek opportunities for regional economic development. The ARC defined Appalachia includes within its conceptual boundaries parts of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, along with all of West Virginia. While the ARC-defined Appalachia offers a useful way to imagine the region cartographically—it stretches and winds down the eastern interior of the United States, following the topography of the mountains that stretch from the Adirondack Range in New York to the Smoky Mountain, Piedmont, and Cumberland ranges in the south—it offers little in the way of a useful accounting for the cultural geography of the region and place, as there is little cultural continuity between, for example, Pennsylvania’s Allegheny Range and Tennessee’s Cumberland Gap. Since the ARC first offered its strictly delineated version of Appalachia, other efforts have been made to usefully define the region and its many cultures, although none have been particularly significant or essential to understandings of the region. Rather, the cultural geography of Appalachia is best approached on a case-by-case basis, with the region taking whatever form makes the most sense. For me, then—and as I describe in more detail in Chapter 5—I choose to define the borders of the various Appalachias I am most interested in through a framework that accounts for the ways that a particular piece of the larger Appalachian geography produces, consumes, and is consumed by a culture of extraction. While great swaths of ARC-defined Appalachia do indeed have long and often complex histories of resource extraction, I am primarily interested here in those parts of the Appalachian assemblage that are culturally, economically, and ecologically conditioned by a historically significant relationship with coal extraction. It follows, then, that what I talk about when I talk about Appalachia is coal-producing central Appalachia, that section of the larger geography that includes West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, east Tennessee, and western Virginia. This is not to imply, of course, that other regions of Appalachia do not have their own histories, cultures, and contemporaries of extraction—they do. They do not, though, share the sort of uninterrupted economic and cultural continuity of extraction that conditions experiences and perceptions of the central coal-producing states.

Second to the problem of defining Appalachia in a cartographic sense are the questions of the region's place and significance in broader notions and conceptualizations of American culture, particularly in visual culture, products, and production. There is a wealth of scholarship across the social sciences that describes the unique ways Appalachia gives and is given meaning, and the ways the region's relationship to the rest of the United States is or can be understood. The dominant frameworks for conceptualizing Appalachia's place in the cultural and economic fabric of America rely on its description as an 'internal colony' or 'resource colony' (Scott 2010, 13. See generally: Lewis et al 1978; Gaventa et al. 1990; Gaventa 1980; Perry 1985). These frameworks rely on previous theoretical descriptions of 'the resource curse' to explain the precarity of geographies rich in natural resources, and the ways that economic growth and social stability are, counterintuitively, negatively affected by the presence of exploitable reserves of natural resources (see generally: Ross 1999; Robinson et al 2006; Auty 2002; Brunnschweiler and Bulte 2008). While a Marxist politics is not inherent in the work of those arguing the resource-curse thesis, it is all the same a thesis with close ties to Marxian notions of primitive accumulation (Marx 1867/1976: 502), which Marx defines in *Capital, Vol I* as the 'historic process[es]' of capital that seek to alienate and 'divorce the producer from the means of production' (for an extended discussion on primitive accumulation, see: Perelman 2000). In central Appalachia, and in many other rural geographies of extraction, the 'means of production' is the land itself, of course, and the producer is the extractive laborer.

Developing the Green Perspective in Criminology

Among the aims of this work, perhaps the most essential is to urge an interdisciplinary analytical approach to thinking about the relationship(s) between and intersections of visual culture, harm, and the environmental and ecological worlds. Because of that interest, and because this project grew, fundamentally, from my own interest and engagement with environmental crime, I locate many of the foundations of my own perspective in the emergent field of green criminology. Woven throughout this work, then, are analytical threads that evidence my essential interest in the dynamics and politics of environmental harm and crime.

Since its initial proposal in the 1990s by Mike Lynch (1990) and Nigel South (1998), green criminology has focused the criminological gaze on a wide array of harms and crimes affecting humans, animals other than humans, ecological systems, and the planet as a whole. In the decades since its inception, green and green-minded criminologists have explored various dimensions of environmental crime and harm including poaching (Sollund 2008), waste disposal (Bisschop 2012), state-corporate crime (Kramer and Michalowski 2012), and climate change (Fussey and South 2012). The scholarship of those working within green criminology has expanded criminological understanding of the effects, scope, and meaning of ecological harms, and broadened the space of criminology to include a theoretical examination of the ways in which humans interact with the broader natural world, often to the detriment of the latter.

In his initial proposal for a green criminology, Lynch (1990) foregrounded some concerns—racism, sexism, crime, and environment—shared across a variety of scholarly and activist positions now broadly understood to fall under the umbrella of social justice, noting the relationships between these concerns and political, economic and class issues. While Lynch's interest with issues of social justice has provided green criminology with much of its critical spirit, the foregrounding of these concerns within green criminology—a field thus far concerned primarily with ecology and environment—raises complex issues about potential strains between the aims of effective ecological policy and the aims and desires of social justice. Put simply, the competing social and ecological foundations of green criminology require us to examine the ways that social justice, economic justice, and ecological justice are intertwined, with each wholly implicating the other.

In many ways, green criminology is a theoretical descendant of the longer traditions of criminological interest in state and state-corporate crime that developed through the theoretical perspectives of critical criminologists like Richard Quinney (1970; 1973; 1974a; 1974b). Other contemporary work in the criminology of state corporate crime, though, widens frameworks favored by researchers like Raymond Michalowski and Ron Kramer (2006; 1987; 2012; 2013)—frameworks that necessarily relied on a focus on state and corporate actors—by focusing instead on 'crimes of the powerful' (Friedrichs and Rothe 2011; Tombs and Whyte 2003; Pearce 1976; Ruggiero 2001). In central Appalachian landscapes conditioned and configured by harms to people, animals, and ecologies at the hands of those in power—be they state actors, corporate actors, or otherwise—the theoretical framework provided by the crimes of the powerful perspective is an essential component of a well-developed criminological understanding of the region and its dynamics. This perspective, it should be noted, was anticipated by many seminal writers in the interdisciplinary field of Appalachian studies, from Harry Caudill (1962, 1971) to John Gaventa (1982).

While criminological perspectives on crime and harm are inherent and essential to this project, I find that it is necessary to note that Appalachia, as described above, is more than a material and ecological place and landscape. It is also a cultural landscape, one that contributes significantly to contemporary and classical understandings of rural and remote American culture. Throughout this work, then, I have employed a criminological understanding of environmental crime and harm that is keenly aware of an interested in the cultural dimensions of the construction and exploitation of nonhuman environmental spaces and resources. Throughout my research, I have worked to maintain cognizance of that necessity by engaging with new and compelling developments in the emerging field of ‘green cultural criminology’.

A Cultural Turn for Green Criminology

From what cultural criminologist Keith Hayward calls the ‘inaugurating moment’ of the field of cultural criminology—the publication of *Cultural Criminology*, a collection of essays edited by Jeff Ferrell and Clinton Sanders, in 1995—cultural criminology can be broadly understood as injecting the ‘criminological imagination’ (Young 2011) with necessary and critical attention to the power(s) of culture, cultural communication, and cultural production. In the intervening years, cultural criminologists have considered the cultural and criminological dimensions of issues ranging from graffiti (Snyder 2011; Ferrell 1995), urban experience (Ferrell 2001), terrorism (Cottee 2011, 2014; Hayward 2011; Cottee and Hayward 2011), carceral regimes and modalities (Brown 2009, 2005; Schept 2016)), space and place

(Hayward 2012), drugs (Linnemann 2016), and activism (Muzzatti 2004), to name just a few of the topics falling, so far, under the purview of cultural criminology. While there have been calls for a ‘green cultural criminology’ (Brisman and South 2013, 2014; McClanahan 2014; Natali and McClanahan 2017), a proposed theoretical and methodological orientation that applies cultural criminology’s fundamental concern with culture and meaning to the global problems of ecological destruction described by green criminology, these calls have for the most part gone unanswered. There has, to date, been little or no empirically grounded field-based research that applies this converged criminological framework of culture and environment. Noting the production of a unique Appalachian culture and the intense connections, in the Appalachian context, of cultural production, history, memory, and ecology, my current research considers what those productions reveal about often-competing Appalachian identities, how those identities are understood in the social context of an Appalachia undergoing rapid ecological and social change, and how those same identities are understood outside of the social and spatial context of Appalachia. I consider, moreover, the various moments of meaning revealed in the collisions between ecology and culture, a tendency that is at the core of contemporary calls for the development of a green cultural criminology.

Among the central concepts at work in both cultural and green-cultural variants of criminology, I find that conceptual frameworks of ‘ecocide’ provide the most salient starting point for understanding and analyzing the extractive history and contemporary of central Appalachia. Introduced into green criminological debates and conversations by South in 2009, ecocide, broadly defined, is the destruction of ecological environments and ecosystems[2]. Later honed for criminological relevance by Polly Higgins, Damien Short, and Nigel South (2013), the concept of ecocide truly received its due attention with Short’s 2016 book *Redefining Genocide*. Here, Short makes a compelling case for the development of a new law of ecocide, arguing that fundamental and foundational understandings of genocide included—and so should be reconfigured to again include— conceptual frameworks of ecocide. While I am somewhat hesitant to adopt Short's legalistic approach—particularly given the extent of legal and regulatory failure described in much of the corpus of green criminological literature, and discussed below—I find that his comprehensive and pointed explanation and application of the core concepts of ecocide, and the ways in which he links it to social death (see generally: Patterson 1982; Mulkay 1992; Card 2003) particularly useful in understanding contemporary and historical social and ecological conditions in central Appalachia. Following Short, then, I will employ 'ecocide' as a shorthand for modes and moments of ecological destruction that render the varied geographies of central Appalachia unable to support social, economic, or ecological life. Ecocide, as employed by Short, also has what I find to be an intensely cultural component, as the legal category of ecocide that Short so compellingly argues for is, at its core, a category conceptualized as a protection against the destruction of ecological, social, and cultural modes of living. I use the term, then, in that spirit: ecocide as the destruction of cultures, ways of life, lives, and ecologies.

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[2] See South (2009) for a more thorough definitional scheme.

Extraction, Contraction, and Culture in Appalachia

In his seminal 1980 study of the mining communities of the central Appalachian valley, Gaventa begins to unpack the importance of the extractive cultural identity. Noting that extractive and non-extractive labourers in the region construct an identity dependent on conflicts with 'bosses' and 'rich folk' (129), Gaventa foregrounds the ways in which conflict is a necessary and substantive component of the extractive identity. During the period of Gaventa's study, though, the conflicts that contributed to and strengthened the extractive identity were solely between extractive labour and their culturally and geographically detached coal-owning employers. Following the cooption of labour unions by mining companies after a series of labour revolts and strikes, conflicts between miners and mine owners were either resolved or receded (116-120). In the contemporary extractive landscape of Appalachia—and many other extractive communities—however, contemporary conflicts have emerged. These emergent conflicts are now primarily between environmental activists on one side, and those dependent on continued extraction (mine-owners and extractive labourers) on the other. These new conflicts further the unlikely amicable relationship between blue-collar extractive labourers and absentee corporate mine owners, once bitter enemies, by giving them a common enemy embodied in the anti-extraction activist. Miners, once concerned about the desire of corporate owners to 'annihilate the hillbilly'[3] and 'do-away with' the worker and 'all he represents' (Gaventa 1980: 42) are now aligned with owners in a fight against environmental regulation and the activists and regulators who now present a more pressing threat to the industry and identity on which the worker and community rely. This is due, in part, to the realization on the part of mine owners following the bloody rebellions of earlier days of unionization that their ability to retain a labour force that would acquiesce to the social, environmental and economic conditions of extraction was dependent on fostering the 'hillbilly' rather than annihilating him. In this way, mine owners expanded the ways in which they had captured the extractive region from a purely economic form of capture to one extending to the realms of a unique culture and identity. Through this process, the corporate drivers of extraction constructed a dependent workforce and culture that could be used reliably to resist the efforts of environmental activists and regulators. Cultural resistance to the forces opposed to extraction is understandable; after all, as Kai Erikson (1976: 23) notes, coalfield residents and labourers in Appalachian mining communities have 'both lost and gained' from their unique relationship to extractive industry.

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[3] Here 'hillbilly' refers to the extractive worker, not the farmer, pioneer or 'mountain man' of popular culture.

Rebecca Scott (2010) and Shannon Elizabeth Bell both further the necessary work of illustrating the ways that community reliance on extractive practices leads to the production of unique cultures and identities of extraction through the intergenerational performance of extractive labour. These cultures are often marked by the production of visual, literary and musical work that celebrates extraction, and the production of unique discursive and oral forms, such as storytelling traditions that celebrate extraction, and each of these is used to communicate and build politicized social support for continued extraction. Conversely, extractive cultures often produce work in each of these forms that is resistant to extraction, resulting in a group of competing cultural productions that further reflects the tensions arising from extraction's impact on culture and environment. Culture (and, by extension, the products of culture) as part of the productive processes within the means of production, of course, is necessarily influenced by the material and social conditions under which it is performed (Bourdieu, 1986; See generally: Williams, 1978). Extractive workers and supporters of extraction, then, engage not only in the material labour of resource extraction, but also the affective and emotional labour of the construction of identity and culture. To what extent, though, does an intergenerational social attachment to these various productions and performances—and the identities they produce—exist, and if it does exist, to what extent do those attachments serve to support the logics of continued extraction despite evidence of extraction's negative impacts on human and ecological health?

Work by various scholars has explored some negative impacts on communities following either the construction or contraction of a dominant extractive or industrial employer (Waddington and Parry 2003; Waddington et al., 1991; Andreescu, et al. 2011), and the patterns observed are as present in extractive Appalachia as they are in any other extractive zone. The bulk of this research, however, focuses on those social impacts that are more visible and measureable: the prevalence of crime, social and domestic violence, poverty, and reduced physical health. While these factors are far too important to overstate, the existing literature falls short in that it fails to examine the roles of identity and cultural production in supporting (or resisting) extractive industry, and the moments of philosophical and ontological uncertainty produced by historic and emergent modes of extraction. How might the continued presence or expansion of a dominant extractive industry in Appalachia be supported by an affective attachment to the cultural productions—music, literature, visual art and various other public expressions of the extractive logic—undertaken in the shadow of extraction? What role might an extractive Appalachian cultural identity play in resisting industrial contraction or environmental regulation? Conversely, how might critical artistic productions from within cultures and identities of extraction construct a counter-visual (Mirzoeff, 2011; Schept, 2014) narrative resistant to extraction? What sort of ontological and philosophical anxieties and uncertainties can we locate in the various visual expressions that characterize and condition contemporary moments and modes of extraction and extractive ecocide?

Appalachia, the Visual, and Memory

When we begin to consider the visualization of Appalachia, we can naturally turn our attention to broader questions of spectacle, visibility, visuality, and the ascendant power of the image. In recent years, there has emerged in criminology a tendency to give increased attention to the dynamics and power of the visual. In describing the rise of the image and its centrality to the contemporary criminological imagination, Eamonn Carrabine (2015: 103) notes that the 'field of visual methodology is the site of innovative interdisciplinary scholarship'. Carrabine is correct, of course, as any effort to survey the field of criminology and other social sciences will quickly reveal; there is no paucity of research that deals with or employs the image. The emergent visual criminology has much to offer, particularly when considering the various ways that crime and punishment are given meaning through images and iconography (see generally: Brown 2009; Rafter 2014; Brown and Rafter 2013; Carrabine 2012; Brown and Carrabine 2014). I do find, though, that much of the criminological research that appears to wrestle with the visual, on closer inspection, simply employs the image as mere window dressing, failing to account or attempt to account for the political and social power of the image and its production. In an effort to remain attuned to the deep theoretical implications of the visual image, I turn to visual theorists like Alan Sekula (1982, 1986), Shawn Michelle Smith (1999, 2004), and Susan Sontag (1977). A central aim of my own work here, then, is to not simply insert images into the text but to instead always consider the ways that the production, dissemination, consumption, and meaning of the image is always conditioned and configured by the endless forces of politics, culture, ecology, and the social. Carrabine offers an example of just that sort of research, describing the 'social and political functions of images' and the role of the image in 'wider systems of classification, control, and order' (2014: 136). Following Carrabine, my own work here makes efforts to be attuned to those structural forces and dynamics, and the role that the production of images plays in producing and reproducing social order and certain modes of capitalist social relations in central Appalachia.

While cultural and visual criminologies offer a host of useful frameworks and perspectives for the analysis of the various meanings that condition the culture and ecology of central Appalachia, it is in the canons of cultural and critical theory that I locate some of the most useful theoretical and methodological tools and tendencies. Because I am concerned with, perhaps above all else, the ways in which the Appalachian contemporary is experienced through the complex social interplay of history, culture, and ecology—and the ways those same forces condition our ability to imagine Appalachian futures—I find it necessary and useful to engage with a body of sociological and cultural theory that tangles with the forces of collective memory. Maurice Halbwachs describes memories as existing in two distinct modes, 'one made of habits and turned toward action, and another which involves a certain disinterest in present life', noting that through the preservation of memories of our individual epochs, we perpetuate a sense of our own identity (1992: 47). In central Appalachia—as in many cultural and ecological spaces and places—our memories are preserved in the material spaces of landscape and the material-cultural spaces of memorials. For Paul Riceour (2004: 261), there is a fundamental tension—an aporia—between the fields of memory and the image, a tense dialectic between the 'real' and 'unreal', fiction and truth, a necessary thing to always recall in a landscape like central Appalachia, in which history is reconstructed and relived and reproduced through the proliferation of images of memory.

Dependence, Colonialism, and Capture

In both academic and cultural discourses, Appalachia—along with countless other regions historically characterized as being dominated by a single industry or industrial actor—is most often framed and conceptualized using one of two models: the 'dependence' model and the 'internal colony'/colonialism model. The dependence model, which has long held favor in liberal and mainstream academic discourses in Appalachian Studies, posits that the social, economic, and environmental conditions that construct and configure Appalachia in the social and cultural imagination of rural America can be traced to the region's 'dependence' on coal extraction (see generally: Batteau 1983). 'Dependence', either in name or in concept, has proven itself an enduring concept since even before Batteau and colleagues offered the seminal 1983 volume *Appalachia and America: Autonomy and Regional Dependence;* Gaventa (1982), Caudill (1962, 1971, 1973), and Erickson (1976a; 1976b), perhaps the most influential researchers of Appalachia, along with contemporary voices like Stewart (1996), Bell (2013, 2016), Bell and York (2010), Scott (2009; 2010) each employ the model and language of 'dependence' in describing and explaining Appalachia's historic and contemporary economic, social, and environmental conditions (see also: Drake 2001; Duncan 1992; Deller and Lledo 2007; Billings 1974). While the 'dependence' model has clearly contributed significantly to scholarly understandings of the region, it seems to me that it not only misses the significance of the massive extraction of capital from the region, but also that it affirms problematic notions of Appalachian weakness and inferiority. Moreover, despite attention within the dependence model to the role of culture in affirming, producing, and resisting so-called dependence (see Martin 1982; Bell 2010, 2016), I find that the dominant dependence model and the work that uncritically incorporates it too often assumes Appalachia to be purely or primarily a spatial and economic condition, free of much of the influence and significance of culture and cultural production.

Just as the dependence model that has dominated many academic and public discourses of Appalachia places, to me, too little emphasis on culture, focusing instead on economics and related dimensions of political power[4], the colonial/internal colony model(s) (see generally: Lewis et al. 1978) that have characterized other dominant discourses of Appalachia similarly fail to consider the force of cultural production in configuring historic and contemporary Appalachia. Those models—which, it should be noted, are most frequently employed in tandem—favored by contemporary mainstream voices within the social sciences like Stewart (1996), Bell (2013, 2016), Bell and York (2010), Scott (2009; 2010), position Appalachian landscapes and populations as a historically persistent subaltern beholden to the whims and desires of outside colonial power. As I discuss further in Chapter 2, though, the state of colonial subjectivity requires a degree of self-assessment as subject to an external power; colonial subjectivities are created in the intersection of subjugation and conscious acquiescence, a condition unfamiliar in the great majority of Appalachian voices I have heard, voices I trust to evaluate their own position in broader social and economic structures. This is not to say, of course, that many Appalachian people do not feel oppressed, marginalized, alienated, or otherwise subjugated—many of my interviews and experiences in the field expressed precisely those sentiments—but rather that few if any of the people I spoke and spent time with positioned *themselves* as colonial subjects. In failing to account for the affective significance of culture, then, the colonial and dependence models each function, at times, to continue the historically problematic imposition of meaning and subjectivity on Appalachian lives and communities.

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[4] See Gaventa (1980) for an example of the various ways in which Appalachia is conceptualized as a condition of political and economic power.

If, then, the colonial and dependence models fall short in conceptualizing Appalachia's historical and contemporary conditions—and if those shortcomings stem from a failure to take seriously the forces of cultural products and production and a failure to take seriously the power of capital to contain and enclose people and ecologies at the periphery of the cultural and economic landscape—I aim in this work to develop and operationalize a new framework in order to understand the ways that Appalachia exists both inside and outside. Rather than understanding Appalachia as dependent, or colonized, I find that thinking Appalachia as historically *captured* more accurately captures, for lack of a better term, the various ways in which the region, its resources, and its people have been pacified and brought to order while remaining within the periphery of late-modern American capitalism. A framework of capture also serves to complement and operationalize my essential consideration of the political, narrative, and reproductive dynamics of photography, as Appalachian landscapes and people are historically captured by the rote mechanics at the core of the material production of scopic regimes and visual economies of rurality, poverty, exploitation, and disorder. 'Capture', then, serves as the main organizing and analytical concept in this work, as I argue that the mountains of Appalachia are a space captured by the logics and economy of extractive capital, captured culturally by the affective power of labour, and captured materially by the ocularmechanics of photographic production. Moreover, I argue, 'capture' has extended the power of extractive capital into the memory and ontology of life in Appalachia's extractive zones, conditioning at their core subjective and affective experiences of Appalachia.

The Dialectics of Horror and Ecology

Joining capture and the green cultural perspective in criminology among the key concepts operationalized and employed throughout this work are the oft-joined concepts of ecology and horror, and the dialectic that inextricably binds the two. The field in which I have conducted this research—and here I intend 'field' to encompass what I describe in the appendix on methods and methodology as an infinite material and conceptual space spanning from the archive to the imagination—is, broadly, 'the mountains.' While, of course, each mountain and mountain range has its own peculiar geography and features, there are threads that bind all mountains across conceptual, cultural, and political fields of meaning. Geographers Bernard Debarbieux and Gilles Rudaz (2015: 126-27) offer a compelling and comprehensive political history of 'the mountain' as an essential political and cultural site of the production and reproduction of various modes of social relations, noting along the way the centrality of Appalachia to the cultural project of America. Following their attention to the mountain as a unique cultural, conceptual, and political geography, and searching for the kind of dialectics that can, perhaps, offer a more rich analytical perspective in my own work, I find the cultural use of 'the mountain' as a certain kind of dialectic shorthand essential. Since the French Revolution and the rise of Maximilien Robespierre's group *La Montagne* ('The Mountain') in the Jacobin assembly, 'the mountain' has occupied a unique dialectic space in cultural and political discourse (Debarbieux and Rudaz 2015; Aston 2004: 34-36, 54). Here I find that Robespierre and La Montagne's favored dialectic—the relationship between and political necessity of virtue and terror—maps interestingly and usefully over another enduring dialectic of the mountain that I employ regularly here, the dialectic of desire and dread.

While this work is, then, in many ways about the various tensions and dialectics of culture, justice, environment, memory, and place, it is most fundamentally about ecology, about the vast visible and invisible networks and connections and transmitters and receptors that make the *world*. Here, my use of 'world' is neither coincidental nor accidental: as critical philosopher Eugene Thacker (2011) describes, we exist across three distinct conceptual planes, planes that coalesce into the affective, conceptual, and material space in which our human subjectivity is located. Thacker's typology—which is entirely central and essential to my own understanding and experience of central Appalachia—distinguishes the subjective 'world' from the objective 'Earth', noting along the way the various moments in which we make the conceptual leap from one to the other. Thacker's fundamental interest, though, is in horror and the limits of philosophy, and it is in the moments when philosophy—and, in particular, ecophilosophy—becomes horrifying by failing to offer comforting frameworks for imagining the future that I find his typology to be particularly useful. Geographer David Bell (2006; 1997) also offers an eminently useful typology for making sense of the contemporary meaning(s) of rural landscapes of horror, noting that perceptions and representations of those landscapes are often imagined in a dialectical framework of 'idyll and anti-idyll'. Similarly, as I press toward a scholarly engagement with the spectral forces that haunt and condition social and ecological landscapes, I draw heavily on sociological traditions of reading the unseen, ghostly, and occult(ed) forces that configure contemporary social and ecological relations (see generally: Derrida 1994, 2000; Gordon 2008; Bell 1997; Jolly 2006; Armstrong 2010).

Despite the centrality of green criminology to my own understandings and considerations of Appalachia, I find that the discipline has failed to adequately conceptualize the area and scope of its fundamental inquiry. This is, of course, not the fault of green criminologists, who each have their own interests and who produce compelling work that describes and details various dynamics of harm to and through ecologies and ecosystems. Rather, I find that the majority of writing and research within green criminology has too readily adopted simplistic and traditional understandings of the ‘natural world’ based on concepts of ‘green’ ‘nature’ that rise from an unbreakable adherence to notions of ‘environment’. Following the observation by Raymond Williams—an observation that has, by now, become something of a cliché though it remains necessary and essential—that nature is ‘perhaps the most complex word in the language’ (1976), Colin Riordan (2004: 46) notes that the implication of the dialectical complexity of ‘nature’ in Williams’ definition must not be forgotten. For Riordan—and for me—‘nature’ corresponds to an entirely uncritical mode of thinking human subjectivity. What, after all, do we talk about when we talk about nature? Given the endless answers to that question, we must begin to locate and recognize the boundaries of the utility of ‘nature’ as a linguistic category and object. For Timothy Morton, similarly, ‘nature’ and ‘environment’ alike are simply comforting fictions:

> ‘What is called Universe is a large object that contains objects such as black holes and racing pigeons. Likewise there is no such thing as an environment: wherever we look for it, we find all kinds of objects—biomes, ecosystems, hedges, gutters and human flesh. In a similar sense, there is no such thing as Nature. I’ve seen penguins, plutonium, pollution and pollen. But I’ve never seen Nature (I capitalize the word to reinforce a sense of its deceptive artificiality).’
>
> -Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects* (2014)

Equally implicated alongside ‘nature’ by Morton, ‘environment’ too has lost any meaning it ever might have had, along with any contemporary salience; as a category in constant correspondence with ‘nature,’ ‘environment’ suffers the same fate. In order to orient my own thinking away from traditional conceptualizations of nature and environment, I make efforts to instead think the world in terms of *ecology*. Following that, I conceptualize ‘ecology’ from a starting point informed by Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze. Guattari (2008: 20) describes his own ecological thought in terms of ‘three ecologies’—‘the environment, social relations, and human subjectivity’ — that condition transformation and crisis, noting that political configurations respond only slowly to the upheaval of the natural ecosystem(s), and only then through technocratic solutions and relations. Throughout their ecological writing, Guattari and Deleuze privilege a consideration of relations and subjectivity, a mode of ecological thought that also informs the political ecology of writers like John Bellamy Fosterwho offers an explicitly Marxist political ecology, describing and detailing the ways in which global ecosystems are conditioned and constructed by capitalist production and social relations (1999; 2002).

Thinking ecology in this mode requires attention to certain fundamental questions of subjectivity, culture, and relations. Responding to the relations between culture and ecology—and, in particular, literary representations of ecology and ‘nature’—the field of ecocriticism offers a rich theoretical vantage point from which to locate cultural meanings of ecology. Emerging initially from critical literary studies in the mid-1980s (see generally: Waage 1985; Glotfelty and Fromm 1996; Sammells and Kerridge 1998), early examples of ecocriticism were primarily focused on critical analytical approaches to the literary representation of nature and environment. Later, though, with the emergence of new forms and modes of ecocriticism more attuned to broader cultural fields and more closely informed by critical social theory, critical ecotheory[5] began to coalesce around a broad and ruthless critique and questioning of the relationships between subjectivity, culture, and ecology. Chief among those questions are those raised by the sort of emergent object-oriented ontology (see generally: Morton 2011) proposed by critical ecotheorists like Levi Bryant (2008; 2011; Bryant et al 2011) and Graham Harman (2010; 2011; 2012), whose reconfiguration of traditional ecological thought and philosophy is essential to my own. In a world in which there is no longer any possibility of a human subjectivity that experiences wilderness or wildness in the traditional senses—a world in which every material corner has been touched and conditioned by the endless advance of technology and capture—what sense does it make to imagine materiality and the object as somehow on unequal footing with human subjectivity? An object-oriented ontology responds to that question by insisting that all relations, regardless of the involvement or degree of involvement of human subjects or consciousness, are on the same plane of validity, equally capable of producing meaning. For me, the extractive zones of central Appalachia are configured by things outside of the scope of the quotidian relations of human subjectivity. The landscape of meaning that is written over the material landscape of central Appalachia's coalfields is built by and of relations between various material ecologies, social ecologies, and subjects and subjectivities that range from the human, to the nonhuman, to the spectral or cosmic. Each of those dimensions, then, is necessary in the production of my own ways of knowing and apprehending Appalachian spaces; to consider only the visible or material relations of human subjectivity is not enough. I also find in an object-oriented ontology a sharp and final rejection of anthropocentrism, and so with that rejection a potential for a truly radical contemporary ecophilosophical politics that moves beyond 'ecocentrism in the political ecological sense, as a strand of activism, but rather as a question of values' (Riordan, 2014: 46) and towards more liberatory frameworks of social and ecological organization. An object-oriented ontology as a central component of an ecological mode of thought requires that we consider human subjectivity in a broader context, a context that looks outside itself, to the objects of planet, of earth, of cosmos, and beyond. Here, I find opportunity to read Thacker's 'horror of philosophy' as fundamentally concerned with ecology from an object-oriented ontological perspective: Thacker offers, in his tripartite framework, a way to imagine the material and immaterial as corresponding to different levels of object-oriented and non-anthropocentric relations and subjectivity. We take in ecology as the subjective 'world', the objective 'earth', and the entirely nonhuman, nonobjective, nonsubjective 'planet'. In the conceptual and material field of central Appalachia, I have encountered world, earth, and planet alike.

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[5] I draw a distinction here, for my own utility and my own ecological thought, between 'ecocriticism' and 'critical ecotheory'. The former, to me, is always focused on the literary construction, communication, and representation of nature and ecology. The latter, while often engaging with the same literary fields as the former, reaches beyond literature in an effort to engage with the vast cultural registers of late modernity.

Because my chief concern as a green cultural criminologist lies in the often harmful collisions and intersections of the ecologies and cultures of central Appalachia, I find that ecocriticism—with its merging of the essential questions of ecology and essential questions of culture—offers an indispensable body of theoretical contributions and tools. As Helena Feder (2014: 1) describes, there is an element of intellectual 'danger [in] a notion of nature that excludes culture and its role in ecological crisis', and so we must remain mindful always of the many ways—both within and without Appalachia—that culture is implicated in ecological collapse and crisis. We must also, though, take into account the vast types and degrees of ontological uncertainty endemic in the subjectivity of advanced capitalism—and following that, we must note that contemporary cultural relations and crises are also configured by ecological conditions, crises, and relations. That is to say: ecology and culture are as intertwined in their implication in the 'ordinary emergency' (Benjamin 1968; Wall 2016) of advanced or late-modern capitalism, just as they are in all other relations. It is from that basic starting point—the recognition of what we might think of as the fundamental horror of ecology, as wedded to the other endless horrors of capitalist subjectivity—that new ways of thinking about ecology emerge, ways of thinking that I find particularly suited to a theoretical ecocritical engagement with the extractive landscapes of Appalachia. If, after all, we imagine the extractive political economy of Appalachia as developing along the lines of what Andreas Malm (2013; 2016) calls 'fossil capital'[6]—an ongoing moment of economy and ecology characterized by the unimaginably vast networked histories of the extraction and combustion of fossil fuels—we can also join Mark Steven (2017) in noting that horror and capitalism are fundamentally and inextricably intertwined in a dialectic that plays out on the field of cultural production and representation, thereby wholly implicating *extractive capitalism* in the production of the deeply internal horror of late-modern life. In this vein, writers like Morton, who follows Deleuze and Guattari (1988) in considering ecology as the interactions between assemblages, or what we can imagine as networks of social and material networks, offer new perspectives on social and ecological relations that condition and configure contemporary subjectivities. What Morton (2007, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2014) and others (see generally: Latour 2004; Serres 2013, 2012) offer is what we can think of as a 'dark ecology', or what Jeffrey Cohen (2013) calls an 'ecotheory beyond green'. Those taking up the mantle of dark ecology have produced work that considers everything from the ecotheoretical logics of black metal to the ways in which classical texts of ecology and culture—texts traditionally read as romantic—have at their edges and margins hints of the anxiety that comes from living in the unthinkable world (Buell 1995, 1996; See generally: Thacker 2011, 2013). Connecting the threads of dark ecological thought, it seems to me, is an interest in what Levi Bryant locates as the central tenets of his 'black ecology'[7]: that ecological equilibrium is a myth of teleology, that placing culture outside of ecology privileges human subjectivity, and that ecology stretches infinitely beyond that which we can sensorily apprehend.

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[6] While Malm is interested in fossil-fuel economies at every stage from extraction to combustion and through to the lingering effects and externalities, I am primarily interested in the cultural and ecological meanings of moments of extraction alone. Throughout, then, I use the term 'extractive capital', a tweak on Malm's 'fossil capital', in order to home in on modes, moments, and histories of extraction and their place and presence across cultural registers.

In emergent frameworks of dark ecology I find opportunity to think Appalachian extraction and the peculiar socio-ecological assemblages it creates and fosters as something outside the rigid boundaries of 'nature' as material space. Thinking dark ecology allows for the enhanced consideration of affective conditions—particularly conditions of fear, anxiety, isolation, melancholy, and irony—as an essential part of the subjective experiences of contemporary capitalism in an extractive zone. By confronting, challenging, and rejecting romantic notions of a green pastoralism of the sort that have dominated—or been believed to have dominated—the cultural production and reproduction of material nature, dark ecological thought more accurately and holistically grasps the affective realities of life in late-modern zones of extractive capitalism. Because so much of what, it seems to me, conditions life in extractive Appalachia comes from the affective weight of being in and of a space that is in the midst of ongoing and perhaps unending collapse and destruction—in ecological and socioeconomic terms—and because of the role of culture in producing, reproducing, and communicating that heavy affective mode, I locate in dark ecology (and the ways it is expressed in the cultural products and production of horror) an opportunity to hear and amplify the voices of a place, people, and ecosystem whose uninterrupted exploitation at the hands of capital has rendered all remembered pasts horrifying and all livable futures unimaginable.

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[7] 'Black' here is in response to 'green'. It does not describe or hint at 'black' as a racial category, although there is a strand of ecological thought that specifically engages the prismatics of race. Bryant's black ecology denotes an affective position of melancholy and ontological insecurity and anxiety, as well as a tendency and call to consider material ecologies beyond 'green'. In thinking black ecology, the ecological field is expanded to consider the unseen and unseeable, the cosmic, the occulted, and the metaphysical.

Methodological Implications

The cultural turn in and for green criminology, as proposed by Brisman and South and as advanced by Mol (2013), Cianchi (2015), and others (see generally: McClanahan 2014; Brisman, McClanahan, and South 2014; Beirne 2013, 2014) has deep implications for method as well as theory. While the theoretical suggestions offered in the emergent green-cultural criminological perspective advance the field towards a 'theoretical promiscuity' that borrows from the porous theoretical borders that have long characterized cultural criminology, the subtle implications for methodology found in recent calls for a green-cultural perspective urge an ethnographically-oriented engagement with cultural sources and products ranging from everyday cultural practice to artifacts of popular culture and archival materials.

Because ecology and environment—particularly from a theoretical and experiential starting point informed by and sympathetic to notions of 'dark ecology', which grants significance to the affective dimensions of ecology—are experienced in intensely visual ways[8], it is fitting that a cultural criminology that is interested in ecology adopt and explore methodologies that are attuned to what Carrabine (2012: 463) has called the 'ascendant power of the spectacle' in order to locate cultural meaning in moments of human interaction with the broader, non-human ecological world. For this project, that call has—I hope—been answered by my own methodological choice to interrogate some of the corpuses of images of extraction and extractive culture—images themselves, it should be noted, that are extracted from the social and cultural landscape—in Appalachia. This visual approach to researching, writing, and 'knowing' Appalachia is coupled with other forms of qualitative social research including participant observation (Jorgensen 1989), unstructured interactive interviewing

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[8] This assertion admittedly ignores critical perspectives on the various ways in which the visual is overrepresented in conceptualizations of human experiences of ecology. Those perspectives, broadly understandable as critically approaching 'occularcentrism' (see generally: Bartram 2004; Jay 1995), are not at all without merit. Their substantive inclusion here, however, is beyond the scope, scale, and purpose of the present work and analysis.

(Corbin and Morse 2003), ethnographic content analysis (Altheide 1987; Bogazianos 2011; Plummer 1983), and archival ethnography (Decker 2013; Gracy 2004). In order, though, to preserve what I intend to be a sometimes discursive narrative structure, the majority of the overt methodological discussion written into this project appears in Appendix A. There are, though, comments, notes, and suggestions on methods and methodology woven throughout, and it is my hope that those perhaps-fleeting discussions of method that are embedded in the broader context of narrative might urge interested readers and researchers to the more structured and focused methodological appendix.

Chapter 2

‘A Fox Caught in a Snare’: Capturing Appalachian Economies and Ecologies

I was born on this mountain, this mountain's my home

She holds me and keeps me from worry and woe

Well, they took everything that she gave, now they're gone

But I will die on this mountain, this mountain's my home

-Steve Earle, *The Mountain*

On a Tuesday morning in July of 2015, I arrived at the offices of Coal River Mountain Watch (CRMW) in Naoma, West Virginia. Naoma is a small town—barely a town, really, and more a loose collection of homes scattered in tight clusters along an eight-or-ten-mile stretch of road—in southwestern West Virginia, near Whitesville, a marginally larger town, on the western edges of Raleigh County. CRMW is an activist and advocacy organization, founded in 1998 in response to the troubles faced by people living in the midst of central Appalachia's coal fields. Their offices are housed in an old building that, in previous incarnations, was a grocery store, a restaurant, and a retirement home. The building sits just off the main road, with enough room in front to park half a dozen cars, its front porch spanning the width of the building, with five large panes of plate glass facing the roadway. By the time I arrived at the CRMW office, I had already been in southwestern West Virginia for ten or twelve days, sleeping in my tent at a campsite on the opposite end of Raleigh County about an hour’s drive from Naoma. Despite having spent most of my life in Kentucky, which shares a border, history, reputation, and culture with this part of West Virginia, the preceding days had felt like my first immersion into this part of the world. For days I had been driving the rutted and muddy backroads of southwestern West Virginia and Eastern Kentucky, crisscrossing my way through the coalfields. I had spent days hiking and camping in the central Appalachian forests in the oppressive summer heat and humidity.

The morning I first visited at the CRMW offices was no exception—the rain had been nearly constant, and by 11 AM the temperature hovered just below 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Despite the heat and the general discomfort that comes with long stretches spent living in and out of a tent and a hammock, though, I was excited to be there. I was in West Virginia to learn about how coal extraction has touched the ecology and culture of central Appalachia, and at CRMW to meet Junior, CRMW's outreach coordinator. Junior and I had exchanged a couple of short emails over the last six months, and just the day before my first visit he called my mobile phone unexpectedly after several weeks of silence. He invited me to meet him in Naoma around noon, promising that he would take care of showing me what I needed to see. Pulling up in front of the CRMW offices—officially called the Judy Bonds Center, after former CRMW director Julia 'Judy' Bonds—I found Junior and Debby, co-President of CRMW, sitting on the front porch smoking. After making our initial introductions and finishing our cigarettes, Junior and I headed into the office while Debby talked with a coal truck driver who had pulled his truck to the side of the road to take a rest.

Inside the CRMW offices, there are traces of each of the building's previous lives. The floors are well-worn hardwood, and six pillars support a stamped-tin ceiling crisscrossed with the sort of framing rails that indicate a previously installed drop-ceiling. Two large and cluttered desks sit at the left wall, and a small sofa and coffee table sit on the right next to four low-slung glass grocery-display cases (filled now with stickers, pamphlets, books, and other printed and ephemeral materials). Further back, the large room gives way to a full-size commercial kitchen that dominates the rear quarter. Between the desks and the kitchen, the left wall of the room is lined with three restaurant booths, each covered in stacks of papers and books, and the right side of the room is lined with more bookshelves stacked with more books, more papers. Down the middle of the room are arranged three large round tables, each surrounded by chairs. A large section of the right wall is covered in charcoal and ink portraits, sketches done by an artist who recently visited to take part in a project documenting the faces and stories of Raleigh County people. The room was immediately comfortable—it smelled like a mix of old tobacco and cigarette smoke, old books, and gasoline from the lawnmower and rotary tiller stored in the back corner. It was just me and Junior, although in the coming weeks I will know the place—which will quickly become, in conversational shorthand, 'the office'—as frequently bustling with activity.

Then, though, it was just me and Junior. After a few minutes of small talk and ice-breaking—Junior telling me that he's 25 years old, and that his family has lived in Eunice, a small collection of homes just down the road from Naoma, since he was eight—we sat at one of the round tables. I took out my voice recorder, and Junior started talking to me about his life and this place, and how each have been touched, conditioned, and configured by coal. The story that Junior told me is the story that is written in the ecology of the mountains of the central Appalachian coalfields and in the lives and subjectivities of the people of central Appalachia. Over the months and years that followed that first meeting with Junior, I would hear the story again and again, from countless voices. I would also come to read the story in the material landscape, as the ecologies of the space and place of Appalachia showed me their scripts in the streams, the trees, the soil, the rocks, and the air.

Consumption, Coal, and Extreme Energy

How, though, are the scripts of Appalachian landscape written? How did the ecology of central Appalachia become so populated by high walls, abandoned and active strip mines, polluted streams and slurry ponds, coal trucks, and all of the other material scars of an under-regulated industry? How did it come to be that, through the dominance of first the timber industry, and then the coal industry, absentee corporate landowners control over 50 percent of land and mineral rights in the coal-producing counties of southwestern West Virginia (WVCBP 2013; Boettner 2013) (data is not available for eastern Kentucky, but a 1981 study concluded that of 13 million acres of land in ARC-defined central Appalachia, 75 percent of surface land and over 80 percent of minerals were owned by absentee corporate interests; there is little reason to believe that those figures have changed dramatically since)?

The short answer—one that does not take into account the gulfs of difference between the Appalachian experience and that of the rest of the nation—is, as is so often the case, energy consumption. Among the nations with the highest energy use per capita (measured, generally, by the annual use of energy in kilograms of oil equivalent, a metric developed to count all forms of non-renewable energy), the United States ranks second only to Canada. To feed the ever-growing appetites of an energy-hungry culture and economy, that energy must be produced[9]. In the United States, that production has historically meant coal-fired power generation. Power from coal-fired power plants represents a major portion of domestic American energy production—31 percent in 2016, second only to natural gas (33 percent), which has only emerged as an energy source in the last 25 years (U.S. Energy Information Administration 2017). The short answer, then, is consumption. In order to locate Appalachia's centrality in satisfying national energy appetites, though, I find it necessary to turn my attention to the longer answer, one located in historical dimensions of the place and the ongoing extraction of its resources and exploitation of its people.

From the region's settlement, Appalachian industry has been dominated by resource extraction. While other regions of the nation settled during the mid-18th Century built industry around agriculture, the regionally-favored form of industrial resource extraction in central Appalachia—which, because of the mountainous terrain, was not particularly suited to moderate-to-large-scale agricultural production—was initially timber, followed shortly by salt. By the late 19th century, though, coal had been firmly established as Appalachia's economic core. By the dawn of the 20th century, coal extraction in Appalachia —which had previously been limited to small, independent operations—began to industrialize, with outside corporate interests buying and consolidating small mining outfits and creating the cultural and economic foundations for what would become the Appalachia of today: a singular place, with political, geographic, and social landscapes all shaped intensely by the extraction of coal. Deep mining, the originally favored method of extraction, involved the digging of deep tunnels into the core of the mountains, tunnels that would then be filled with human workers using hand tools to slowly chip away at the coal seams inside and hauling out the resulting mix of coal and rock in tracked carts. Deep mining, then, was intensely dependent on a willing and able labour force of local men, and it was those workers who built the coal industry.

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[9] There are, of course, plenty of arguments to be made that energy consumption—whether energy from coal, gas, or 'sustainable' or renewable sources—is the central issue. While those arguments are, at the very least, worth having, their scope, scale, and purpose exceed the scope, scale, and purpose of this work. For

Preceding the onset of the Great Depression, though, the industry had begun to flag. The advent of various home-heating fuels, which could be produced more efficiently than coal and thus sold more cheaply, combined with overproduction of coal and a lack of capital to make extraction more efficient through mechanization, precipitated the end of the coal boom of the early 20th century. With the Great Depression looming nationally, and having already begun in the Appalachian coalfields, labourers became restless. What followed was a protracted period of labour struggle, led in Appalachia by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), the regionally dominant labour organization. In 1931-32, miners in Harlan and Bell Counties in Eastern Kentucky decided to strike, protesting against decreasing wages and hours, eviction from company-owned housing and, increasingly, starvation. These striking miners, though, were abandoned by the UMWA, which had increasingly been coopted by mine owners and operators, leaving the workers with little representation and recourse. In response to the pacification of the UMWA, striking miners in Harlan and Bell counties joined the National Miners Union (NMU), a smaller and more radical union backed by the American Communist Party. Fearing a communist insurrection in the hills of Appalachia, and foreseeing the spread of a newly radicalized and politicized form of trade unionism, mine owners and regional elites in business and government decided to launch an offensive against the striking miners and NMU, attacking striking workers and their families, disrupting the flow of aid being sent to the union, and using their access to national media to paint the miners, once understood to be the backbone of rapidly expanding American industry, to be anti-American traitors. Ultimately, efforts to stop the NMU were successful, owing primarily to a campaign to discredit the union by way of publicly noting communism's fundamental mistrust of religion; however much labour was a powerful force in 1920s-1930s Appalachia, faith was doubly powerful. With the NMU broken following the murder of Harry Simms, a young communist organizer, in 1932, striking miners returned to the UMWA and, following a series of negotiations whose outcomes heavily favored mine owners, to the mines.

The conflicts that arose between miners and owner-operators during this protracted period of unrest, particularly in Harlan and Bell counties in Kentucky and Boone, Mingo, and Raleigh counties in West Virginia but also across the Ohio and Pennsylvania coalfields, were constant and violent affairs[10]: five men were killed and dozens wounded in a series of skirmishes known as the Harlan County War. Fourteen were killed in Matewan, West Virginia in what would come to be known as the Battle of Matewan or The Matewan Massacre. The Battle of Blair Mountain, in West Virginia, claimed the lives of over 100 miners and 30 members of the various organizations brought in to suppress the strikers, with another 985 striking miners arrested. Some 40 years later, striking miners in Harlan County again faced violent reprisals from mine owners during the UMWA-organized strike against Duke Energy’s mines, a conflict which left UMWA organizer Joseph Yablonski and his family murdered in their Pennsylvania home and Harlan miner Lawrence Jones shot dead in a skirmish with a private security guard hired to protect strike breakers. Each of these moments of unrest and violence in Appalachia has contributed to the complex and complicated relationship the region has with coal, and each contributed to the eventual abandonment of deep mining.

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[10] Anti-union violence was and is not, of course, limited to Appalachia. Workers—often extractive workers—in other parts of the US and the world faced, and continue to face, violence from their private or state employers. From the lynching and hanging of union organizer and anti-war activist Frank Little in Montana in 1917 to the machine gunning of striking miners in South Africa in 2012 which left 75 miners dead, anti-union violence is a persistent response from the forces of capital to the organization of labour.

Following the turbulence and violence of the first 50 years of industrial-scale coal extraction, mine owners and operators saw the need for increased efficiency, not only to bolster flagging profits, but to finally remove the possibility of worker revolt on such a scale as to halt production. With this in mind, mine operators turned to the emerging technology of mountaintop removal, a process developed in the 1970s as an extension of surface strip-mining that promised the ability to substantially increase the raw amount of extracted coal while simultaneously greatly reducing the need for workers. Mountaintop removal mining entails the removal of up to 800 vertical feet of a mountaintop or ridge in order to access deep coal seams. Practiced extensively in the predominantly rural area of Southern Appalachia—primarily Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, and Tennessee—mountaintop removal is estimated to have impacted over 700,000 acres in the region, a figure assumed by geographers to understate the problem by as much as 40%. The processes required for mountaintop removal include clear-cutting, blasting, digging, waste dumping, on-site processing and loading of coal, and reclamation (Appalachian Voices 2013; Fox 1999). Taken individually, each of these elements of mountaintop removal constitutes serious environmental harm. When considered in aggregate, the steps of mountaintop removal coalesce into a process that does irreparable damage to ecosystems and residential communities. Old-growth forests are clear-cut, killing wildlife and damaging the natural landscape. Ridges are blasted as little as 300 feet from homes and neighborhoods, frequently cracking wells and foundations. Digging machines, called draglines, are brought in, replacing the natural landscape with machines up to 22 stories tall. The removed rock and soil, dysphemistically called ‘spoil’ or ‘overburden’ by coal companies, is dumped into valleys, burying streams and further harming remaining wildlife. Mined coal is processed on-site, creating leaking ponds of sludge or slurry that further damage the water table (Appalachian Voices, 2013; Fox 1999; Clark 2012). Over 500 mountaintops have been flattened, and over 2000 miles of streams have been buried. Each day those numbers increase. At the same time that new forms of Appalachian coal extraction have reshaped the material landscape of the coalfields, they have also reshaped the economic landscape. No longer do miners rely on union representation and collective bargaining to ensure safety and fair wages; today’s directly-employed West Virginia coal miners earn, for example, an average of $60,000 per year (Dwyer 2010) in a state with a median *household* income of just $39,000 (Bell 2009). High salaries, of course, are part and parcel of the pacification of the region by extractive capital: coal operators learned, after the union rebellions that characterized earlier eras of Appalachian mining, that the most simple and cost-effective way to keep coal flowing from the mines was to develop forms of extraction that reduced the need for labour—surface mining—and then to pay what labour remained enough that their acquiescence could be counted on.

If, as sociologist Damien Short and colleagues note, extractive processes like horizontal drilling for shale gas—‘fracking’—that have arisen in the wake of declining oil reserves and discovery in the world’s traditionally exploited oil fields constitute what can be usefully understood as ‘extreme energy’, a term coined by Michael Klare (2010; 2011), I find that mountaintop removal joins fracking and tar-sands oil extraction as an emerging and extreme form of resource exploitation and as a step in the cycle of energy production. Short and colleagues offer the following as a conceptual definitional framework for extreme energy:

> '…extreme energy is a 'process whereby extraction methods grow more intense over time, as easier to extract resources are depleted'. The foundation of this conception is the simple fact that those energy sources which require the least amount of effort to extract will be used first, and only once those are dwindling will more effort be exerted to gain similar resources. Extreme energy, in this sense, is evident in the history of energy extraction – in the change from gathering 'sea coal' from British beaches and exploiting 'natural oil seeps', to opencast mining and deep-water oil drilling.' (Short et al., 2015: 700)

Mountaintop removal, under this definitional scheme, is clearly 'extreme' (and, in fact, even without the utility of Short's definition, mountaintop removal is plainly extreme in its methods, effects, extent, and aesthetics). It is not, though, extreme only in the scope and scale of its ecological effects. Because of the power—both historic and contemporary—of the coal industry in Appalachia, the emergence and eventual dominance of mountaintop removal mining in central Appalachia conditions economic and social opportunity just as extremely as it conditions Appalachian ecology. In what follows, then, I will describe the various ways that coal has 'captured' the economy and the ecology of central Appalachia.

Capturing the Economy of Central Appalachia

On that first morning I spent at the CRMW offices, after giving me some basic information on his and his family's background, Junior tells me about his options after high school in Raleigh County: 'You either go to work for the coal company, you go to the military, or you sell prescription drugs.' Here, Junior reveals what the bulk of academic knowledge and common sense alike have long held as the central truisms of life in this part of Appalachia: the most stable, obvious, and accessible economic opportunity comes from the coal industry. In the previous couple of weeks in West Virginia, this was certainly clear to me, the lack of economic opportunities contrasting with the obvious signs of a cycling boom-and-bust economy—expensive trucks parked outside ramshackle homes, ramshackle trucks hauling expensive off-road vehicles—affirming what I already knew from a lifetime spent in and around central Appalachia, a lifetime of hearing talk about the place and about coal. It was also clear to me from reading all of the academic literature I could get my hands on, the seminal work of writers like John Gaventa (1982) and Kai Erickon (1976a; 1976b), and contemporary voices like Kathleen Stewart (1996), Rebecca Scott (2009; 2010), and Shannon Elizabeth Bell (2013; 2016). From what I could see, and what I had read, Junior was right—outside of coal jobs (visible, despite their dramatically waning number, in coal trucks and bustling processing plants), a vice economy built around prescription opioid painkillers (visible in the constant presence of roadside drive-thru pharmacies and pain clinics, often sited in small towns without even a grocery store), and the military (visible in the bumper stickers and yard signs dedicated to enlisted family members), there were not many options to support a life or a family. It would seem, then, that this was a place—an Appalachia—which had seen its economy thoroughly captured by coal.

The story of the economic capture of Appalachia by the coal industry is a story of change. From changes in land-use in Appalachia—from homesteading and small-scale frontier agriculture, to logging, to the extraction of salt and coal—to the changing ways that the extractive political economy of Appalachia functions, to the changing methods of extraction itself, change conditions and structures the ways that Appalachian ecology and culture are experienced and perceived. Changes in the ecological conditions peculiar to Appalachia, though, are experienced in ways that are, of course, structured by changes in the economic conditions and structures that have captured the region. Because the conditions of land and economy are so intimately intertwined (Marx 1867; Bellamy-Foster 2000), changes in the material Appalachian landscape are often experienced as economic changes, not ecological ones, and vice versa. The various ways that land and economy are linked in central Appalachia—and the ways that changes to one end of the spectrum that makes up ecological and economic relations and conditions can be obscured or revealed in changes to the other end of that spectrum—was made strikingly clear to me in a conversation with a retired coal miner, Terry Steele, whom I talked to in 2016. Describing the ways that miners and coal industry supporters in central Appalachia understood the industry and its influence on the ecology and economy of southwestern West Virginia, Terry said that 'this place, really, is like a fox that got its foot caught in a snare trap. It's sittin' there dying, bleeding out, but it's happening slow and it doesn't even know it. Imagine it, a fox caught in a snare, and he's lickin' at the blood, his own blood, thinking he's getting a good meal, but he don't even know he's dying. He just thinks he's getting a good meal.' Here, Terry highlighted the ways that coal workers—particularly the younger generation of workers, those lucky enough to land jobs in the waning industry, but without the experience to understand the ways that coal jobs are fundamentally unstable because of the ecological, geological, economic, political, and public health realities of extraction—employed a sort of cognitive disavowal in order to make sense of and accept the ecological and economic conditions of extractive industry in Appalachia. Moreover, though, Terry highlighted a fundamentally important dimension of the history of Appalachian extraction: the material and cultural geography of Appalachian extraction is, just as the fox, captured in a snare and slowly bleeding to death.

The extent to which the history of coal extraction in Appalachia has captured and configured the regional economy and economic opportunity is not, though, limited to those opportunities that come from the coal industry. Nor is the framework of ‘consumption’ limited to its application to Appalachian coal. Returning to Junior’s three options above, the ways in which the extractive history of central Appalachia has been instrumental in the making of nearly all economic opportunity in the region is clear in the ties that bind the vice economy of prescription drugs to the coal industry. Because of the bodily pains of extractive labour—whether the labour of underground mining or surface mining—the industry routinely encouraged coal-company doctors to prescribe painkillers in order to ensure a workforce that could continue to enter the mines despite chronic pain. As the industry contracted and shifted with the mechanization of extraction and the rise of surface strip-mining, and as the extractive labour force increasingly found itself out of work and economically strained and marginalized, many former or itinerant coal workers found new opportunity in the underground economy of prescription opioids. At the same time, major international pharmaceutical firms targeted areas like eastern Kentucky and southwestern West Virginia with new and powerful opioids like Opana, OxyContin, and Oxycodone (Eyre 2016a; Eyre 2016b). As the coal industry contracted, then, in the late 1990s, the joined economies—one legal, one illegal—of bodily pain expanded, emerging as an essential and central component of opportunity and imagination. Those two pain economies were configured in the social imaginary by, in the case of the quasi-legal economy of drive-thru pharmacy, pain clinics, and ‘pill mills’, the sociolegal imaginary of The Drug War, and in the case of the underground economy of illicit drug sales and the eventual proliferation of heroin in the wake of police crackdowns on the quasi-legal drug market, the cultural production of central

Appalachia as the site of an ‘epidemic’ of opioid addiction. It is true, of course, that central Appalachia is a geography intensely touched and troubled by the contemporary drug economy. Lost, though, in the sociolegal and cultural construction of an Appalachia of addiction are the various ways that the history of the coal industry is central to the making of the contemporary illicit-drug economy of Appalachia.

If the history of Appalachian extraction has configured and captured economic opportunity in the region, binding opportunity between the poles of coal and drugs, Junior’s third option—the military—exists between those poles. As discussed later in Chapter 6, the United States military is a constant and complex cultural and material presence in central Appalachia. While Junior is correct in noting that military enlistment presents a relatively stable and accessible form of economic opportunity in Raleigh County and the surrounding area, enlistment numbers for West Virginia and Kentucky are relatively low when compared to other southern states in the region; both states have fewer enlisted people between the ages of 18 and 24 (per 100,000) than neighboring states like Illinois, Ohio, Virginia, and North Carolina (Bender et al., 2014). Despite the tendency to imagine central Appalachia as a uniquely patriotic zone of sacrifice, the rates of enlistment reveal that while military service may be available as an opportunity, it is not an opportunity that is regular seized. If, then, Appalachia is in some ways a cultural and material ecology of patriotic sacrifice—I believe that it is, because of the power of a cultural mythology (discussed in the following chapter) that connects coal and country, although I think the patriotism that undergirds the quotidian material labour of extraction is often overstated in academic literature—the conditions of patriotism do not appear to capture the economic imagination of young people in the region to the extent that coal and drugs do. While there is no data available to compare rates of military enlistment directly to involvement in the drug or coal economies, the absence of that data—and the social knowing it would produce or support—indicates the presence of at least two layers of Appalachian economy: a counted and countable economy of opportunity located in military service, service-sector employment, and coal-industry employment, and an uncounted and uncountable figure of involvement in the drug economy. As I describe in Chapter 5, central Appalachia is in many ways constitutive of what contemporary ecocriticism would understand as a ‘black ecology’ (Bryant, 2013) captured by the logics and imagination of extraction. In coal and drugs, then, we can also locate an Appalachian black *economy*, unknown and unknowable but clearly present and clearly conditioning the social and material landscape.

While the broad economic capture of Appalachia by the coal industry does, of course, provide some historical insight and contemporary context—economic capture is a concept that provides a tidy answer to the questions surrounding the ongoing role of Appalachian people in the ecological devastation of the region: extraction is the only economic choice—it does not offer much help in locating the extent, direction, and power of *ecological capture*: the ways that the logics of extraction have taken hold of the material landscape of Appalachia. We can, though, use economic capture as a heuristic starting point, the first step down a path that leads to a consideration of ecological, cultural, and photographic capture, and also the various ways that memory and imagination in and of central Appalachia have been captured in and by the cultural production of horror and the construction of a spectral geography of extractive violence.

Capturing the Ecology of Central Appalachia

The material land of Appalachia—that land so disproportionately owned by outside or absentee interests—is, as described above, blessed with exceptional biodiversity; the Mixed Mesophytic forests of the region often support over 30 canopy-tree species at just a single site, while a forest floor of fungi, ferns, lichen, and annual and perennial plants supports animal life including large and small mammals, insects, land snails, birds, snakes, and salamanders. The aquaculture of the forests is equally diverse, with streams, ponds, lakes, and rivers all teeming with vast taxa of fish, aquatic mammals, snakes, turtles, and other wildlife. Put simply, the biodiversity of central Appalachia is as staggering as it is threatened.

If coal has captured the material terranean ecology of Appalachia—as illustrated in the extent of the land that is owned by corporate interests, the extent of the land already mined for coal, and the extent of land holdings controlled by an always-prospecting coal industry—it has also captured the hydroecology of the region[11]. There are ample moments, too, of the communication of Appalachia’s water troubles in various forms of cultural production. In a gas station in Kanawha County, West Virginia, for example, I found a stack of paper cocktail napkins featuring a retro-style illustration of a smiling man in a suit raising a drink under a banner that reads ‘Appalachia: Where the Beer is Clearer than the Water!’.

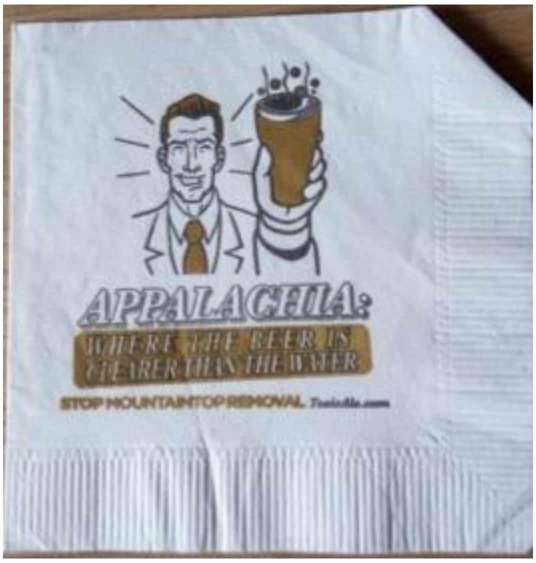

Figure 1. Cocktail napkin found in West Virginia. Photo by the author

Clean water is, indeed, hard to come by in the extractive regions of central Appalachia, despite sustained attention by activists and groups like CRMW to clean and protect streams, creeks, and rivers. Some of the water pollution in central Appalachia is, of course, the result of illegal dumping: West Virginia alone has an estimated 15,000 major illegal garbage-dumping sites, many of them located in or near creeks or riverbeds. While these ad-hoc dumping grounds are, primarily, the creation of local residents and communities, their prevalence is, to me, intimately tied to coal extraction. Because the history of extraction in central Appalachia is the starting point for the creation of communities underserved by municipal services including water provision and waste disposal, communities that—because of the coal industry's ability to both lobby for tax breaks and creatively manipulate existing tax codes—are intensely underfunded relative to the mineral wealth they produce for outside interests, and communities that regularly see industrial scale ecological crime and harms to the earth and water go unpunished (or even celebrated), it seems an error to place blame for illegal dumps solely on the individuals who use them. In fact, most residents in places like southwestern West Virginia seem eager to protect the quality and ecology of wild streams; in my time in Raleigh County in 2015 and 2016, I participated in water cleanup and protection efforts organized by the staff at CRMW. Those efforts included tire-disposal drives in 2015 aimed at collecting and properly disposing of used car-and truck-tires. Despite the fact that those wishing to drop off old tires had to drive to the CRMW office and unload their own waste, the drive collected nearly 2000 tires in just five days. In 2016, I joined CRMW staff and about fifteen local residents in a two-day cleanup of Peachtree Creek, a tributary of the Big Coal River that runs behind the Judy Bonds Center. Again, local residents eagerly removed waste from the creek, and I heard many laments about the state of the water and land in Raleigh County. To me, waste dumping in West Virginia, then, is as much a byproduct of living in a place so thoroughly ecologically captured by the extractive and ecocidal logics of the coal industry as it as a byproduct of laziness or some failure to adequately care for the environment.

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[11] If we return to Marx’s ecological thought, it is important to note here that, as Marx explained, ‘economically speaking’ ‘soil’ includes water (1867: 127).

As heartrending as the presence of waste in the streams of Appalachia is, the refrigerators, oil cans, old furniture, and fast-food waste that characterize most of the illegal creek-bed dumps in central Appalachia are nothing relative to the damage done by the region’s history of coal extraction. In several months of fieldwork, I saw countless creeks and rivers with large runoff pipes dumping discolored wastewater into their streams. As illustrated by Junior’s childhood experience with his family’s cracked well-walls, residents of central Appalachia regularly find their access to water threatened by the ongoing ecological disaster of coal extraction. On January 9, 2014, a container holding MCHM – a chemical used in the processing of coal – spilled over 7000 gallons of its contents into the Elk River, a 172-mile-long tributary of the Kanawha River running through central West Virginia. Residents of Charleston, West Virginia, who noticed a ‘sweet liquorice’ smell in the air, first identified the spill and it was quickly traced to the faulty and outdated storage containers owned and managed by Freedom Industries (Constantino, 2014; Gabriel, 2014). Freedom Industries’ tanks were located on the banks of the river, directly upstream from the West Virginia American Water intake and treatment and distribution centre, which provides potable water to 16 percent of West Virginia’s population – 300,000 residents in nine of the state’s counties (Gabriel, 2014; Osnos, 2014; Pearce, 2014). Following the spill, hundreds of residents who came into contact with the contaminated water – either from the river directly, or from taps serviced by the American Water facility – fell ill, displaying a range of symptoms including nausea, burned skin and eyes, vomiting, exhaustion, diarrhoea, and rashes (Atkin, 2014; Heyman and Fitzsimmons, 2014). Clean-up efforts did not begin immediately following the detection of the spill, slowed, in part, by confusion over the extent and chemical makeup of the leak (Palmer, 2014).

As in the cases of the Buffalo Creek flood and the Martin County flood (both discussed thoroughly below), state regulatory miscarriage marked not only the conditions leading to the pollution event, but also the response. Such failure occurred across multiple lines: Freedom Industries, the company that owned and operated the chemical storage facility known as a 'tank farm' (Osnos, 2014: 38), had had their facility inspected only twice since 1991: once in 2010 in response to a neighbour's complaint noting a liquorice smell, and a second, cursory check in 2012 to determine if Freedom Industries was in need of updated permits, wherein inspectors determined that the company was currently compliant with their permits. The containers themselves, furthermore, were highly substandard (Brodwin, 2014) – a fact that might have been noticed had Freedom Industries not been exempt from West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection inspections because the company does not produce the chemicals it stores (Davenport and Southall, 2014; Farrington, 2014; Heyman and Fitzsimmons, 2014). Moreover, Freedom Industries did not really appreciate the risks to human and ecological health presented by MCHM, the leaking chemical, and so did not understand – or did understand but did not care about – the risky nature of storing the chemical on the banks of a major river (see generally Karlin, 2014). Freedom Industries failed to report the spill after it had come to its attention (Farrington, 2014; Kroh, 2014); instead, residents near the river reported the spill to the state regulatory authorities (Gabriel and Davenport, 2014). The company also neglected to put into place a protocol to alert the local water company in the event of a chemical incident. In addition to the failures of Freedom Industries, West Virginia American Water – a company with annual revenues nearing US$3 billion that has been publicly traded since its divestment from a German parent corporation in 2008 – had no plan in place to stop the intake of water from the Elk River in the event of a spill (Brodwin, 2014; Osnos, 2014). (Indeed, it took the water company several days to develop a methodology to measure the level of contamination from the Freedom Industries' spill (Maher and Morath, 2014).) Freedom Industries and West Virginia American Water acted irresponsibly by failing to take even the most basic steps to ensure the safety of their facilities and the neighbouring ecology (Desvarieux, 2014). Instead, the two companies elected to knowingly operate risky facilities in virtually total absence of regulatory oversight (Desvarieux, 2014; Osnos, 2014).

During fieldwork in West Virginia—in towns just over an hour drive along the backroads to Charleston—I asked several residents how they themselves felt about the Elk River spill. While all were sympathetic, of course, most quietly and apprehensively expressed some degree of exasperation about the extent of media coverage and national attention that the spill received. People in counties like Mingo, Boone, Raleigh, Logan, Wayne and all of the other counties surrounding Charleston that have long and troubled histories of extraction seemed to feel as though the attention showered on Charleston in the wake of the spill was a slap in the face. To these residents, the responses to the Elk River spill illustrated the extent to which the ecological problems of rural residents of the coal fields had their issues ignored time and again, while the relatively urbane and wealthy residents of Charleston had truckloads of water donated by concerned outsiders. Despite those feelings, though, most of the residents of the southwestern coalfields I talked with responded to the Elk River disaster with material assistance and solidarity: Junior and other CRMW staff and volunteers drove cases of donated water to the capitol city during the weeks that municipal water was unsafe. Junior tells me, though, that even when his family eventually got municipal water lines in Eunice ‘the water around [here] still wasn’t any good to drink, it’s probably not safe’.

The impacts of mountaintop removal mining on water in central Appalachia, though, exceed cracked wells and slurry ponds and chemical spills. Fundamental to the process of mountaintop removal is the filling of valleys with the cleared timber, rock, and soil. The resulting valley-fills bury headwater streams, dramatically increasing salinity and concentrations of trace metals, sulfates, and other toxic minerals (Lindberg et al., 2011). Because of the extent of mountaintop removal in central Appalachia—the practice has converted nearly three million acres of central Appalachian forests to mine sites—there have been thousands of kilometers of streams and headwaters buried beneath the rubble. There is no evidence that reclamation and mitigation efforts (discussed more thoroughly below) can offset or reverse the toxic effects on the land and water in and around the valley-fill sites that are a necessary component of mountaintop removal (Bernhardt and Palmer, 2011).

The advent and dominance of mountaintop removal has not, however, captured only the terrestrial and hydro ecologies of Appalachia. Among the essential changes in the experienced effects of extractive practice in Appalachia since the rise of mountaintop removal is the shift of the impacts of coal extraction from underground spaces to above-ground spaces. In the final three chapters, I offer a thorough discussion of the cultural, visual, and political meaning(s) of the new extractive verticality introduced by mountaintop-removal mining. In the present chapter, though, I am less interested in meaning than I am in materiality and the ways that, in the contemporary landscape of Appalachian coal extraction, the air above Appalachia is as touched and captured by coal as the land and water below. As Matthew Ross describes, '[mountaintop removal] mining is not just an impact that happens in space—it happens in depth' (Valentine, 2016). As I describe in chapters five and six, mountaintop removal-mining actually extends the depth of extraction by intensifying the effects of extraction on the social and conceptual spaces above traditional underground extractive geographies. Mountaintop removal also, though, materially captures and conditions the air above Appalachia.

Explosive blasting, the central technology of mountaintop removal, sends clouds of silica and rock dust and smoke into the sky above and around central Appalachian communities and mountains. Fly-rock—chunks of rock and stone sent into the air by blasting—lands regularly on roadsides and properties adjacent to surface mines. There is no currently available data quantifying the number of annual mountaintop-removal blasts in central Appalachia, but residents described for me a regular but unpredictable schedule of explosions, each resulting in a massive dust cloud (in addition to the other obvious ecological disruptions). As Helen Chapman, a lifelong resident of Raleigh County describes in a 2014 interview: ‘you bring Massey in, and you know, the deep mines was *then,* you know, they were back in and down. That was then. And now, you know, they’re not only taking what’s underneath the mountain, they’re taking what’s *over* the mountain’. Chapman illustrates not only the contemporary reality of ecological capture—the entire ecology of the region, from subterranean space, to surface space, to water, to air—is conditioned and captured by the material forces of extractive capital, but also the ways that moving extraction from the depths to the surface ushers in new ecological anxieties and eco-ontological uncertainties[12].

While the industrial capture of Appalachian land and water has effects that ripple well outside the region—water polluted in the extraction of Appalachian coal flows down rivers and streams, and the centrality of Appalachian forests to American and global biodiversity means that the destruction of those forests is a significant loss for global biotic health and biodiversity—the relationship between Appalachia, coal extraction, and the air is, perhaps, the most direct. Coal-fired power plants are the primary source of carbon-dioxide emissions in the United States, emitting a total of nearly two billion tons of CO2 per year, with the typical coal plant outputting 3.5 million tons of CO2, 114 pounds of lead, 720 tons of carbon monoxide, 220 tons of hydrocarbons, and 225 pounds of arsenic annually (UCS, 2016). With increasing public awareness of and attention to the various problems of climate change and climate variability, new technologies have been introduced in order to mitigate the polluting externalities of coal-based energy production. Those technologies, though, primarily focus on the combustion stages of energy production—efforts to capture emissions from power plants, then, shift the source for coal-related pollution and toxic externalities from the extraction point to the burning point. For the residents of Appalachian coalfields, this means that the ‘washing’ of toxins from coal happens increasingly at or near the site of extraction, increasing the extent of water and ground pollution. Here, then, the ‘green victories’ of legislative moments like the Clean Air Act are a blow against environmental justice in extractive Appalachia. Trends in and effects of Appalachian extraction following new provisions added to the Clean Air Act in 1990 illustrates Davies’ point clearly: in the wake of those addenda, mountaintop removal increased and mortality rates in central Appalachia rose (Hendryx and Holland, 2016). From an environmental justice perspective, moreover, we can locate a certain axis of intersectionality between the experiences of communities in Appalachia that provide coal to fuel American energy consumption and the communities in which that coal is ultimately burned. Because coal-fired power plants are more likely to be located in economically distressed or marginalized and nonwhite communities, the harms of extreme energy are spread across non-Appalachian and Appalachian communities alike.

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[12] The shifting cognitive conditions of Appalachian subjectivity in an era of surface mining and post-extractive social, ecological, and economic ruination are described thoroughly in Chapters 5 and 6.

Regulatory Capture and Disaster in the Shadow of Coal

After talking for an hour or two on that first day I spent at the CRMW office, Junior and I loaded our cameras into his car. We were joined by Emily, a young woman from Vermont conducting research for an undergraduate thesis. Emily had been here for a few days, and was staying another 10 days or so at the CRMW offices, which also regularly serve as a sort of basecamp for researchers and interns. We loaded up into Junior’s car and headed down the road, planning to stop and look at the old Marsh Fork Elementary School. The drive took only eight or ten minutes, and we rode mostly in silence before pulling into a small gravel lot in front of the school building.

The now-vacant Marsh Fork Elementary building sits maybe 100 yards from the side of state Highway 3, the road that connects the network of small towns across this part of

Raleigh County. It looks like any other school—a low brick building, with classroom windows, a small gymnasium, and little courtyards and walkways covered with metal awnings. What sets this school apart, though, is not the conditions of its campus, but the vast architectures of extraction that exist just behind it. Marsh Fork Elementary is surrounded by a 1849 acre-mountaintop-removal mine, and a large prep plant and processing and storage silo visible just behind the school, across the river. Behind the prep plant is a large earthen dam, holding back an impoundment of nearly 3 billion gallons of toxic coal slurry.

MARSH FORK
ELEMENTARY

MARSH FORK ELEMENTARY
STAFF STUDENTS PARENTS WORKING TOGETHER

Figures 2-4. Marsh Fork Elementary and prep plant tower, Raleigh County, West Virginia. Photographs by the author.

The prep plant behind the school serves, among other purposes, as the loading area for powdered coal to be placed into open-top railcars that carry the cargo northwest, mostly to coal-fired power plants in Illinois and Ohio. Before it leaves Raleigh County, though, the coal dust covers nearly everything, including the school—Junior, who attended Marsh Fork in this building tells me that as a kid, he could ‘run a finger over a locker [in the school] and it’d come away black. It [coal dust] was everywhere.’ Following campaigns by local activists, most of them connected to CRMW, the school closed its doors in 2012 and moved three miles down the road to a new building.

Further still behind the old school, just four kilometers up a small ridge, is the Brushy Fork Coal Slurry Impoundment. At approximately 900 feet (270 meters), the earthen dam at Brushy Fork is currently the tallest dam in the Western Hemisphere, nearly 200 feet taller than the Hoover Dam. Constructed in 1995[13] by a network of subsidiaries of Massey Energy, the dam holds back the Brushy Fork Impoundment, a seeping pond of 30,075 acre-feet—or nearly *ten billion gallons* of sludge. The smaller impoundment—though calling it small seems ridiculous—behind the former school has, since its construction in the early 1990s, seeped toxic waste into local aquifers. Junior tells me that after continuous blasting from mountaintop-removal operations nearby finally cracked his family's well, the 'water came out blood red, like rust,' and that it 'stained your clothes, your skin, whatever it touched.'

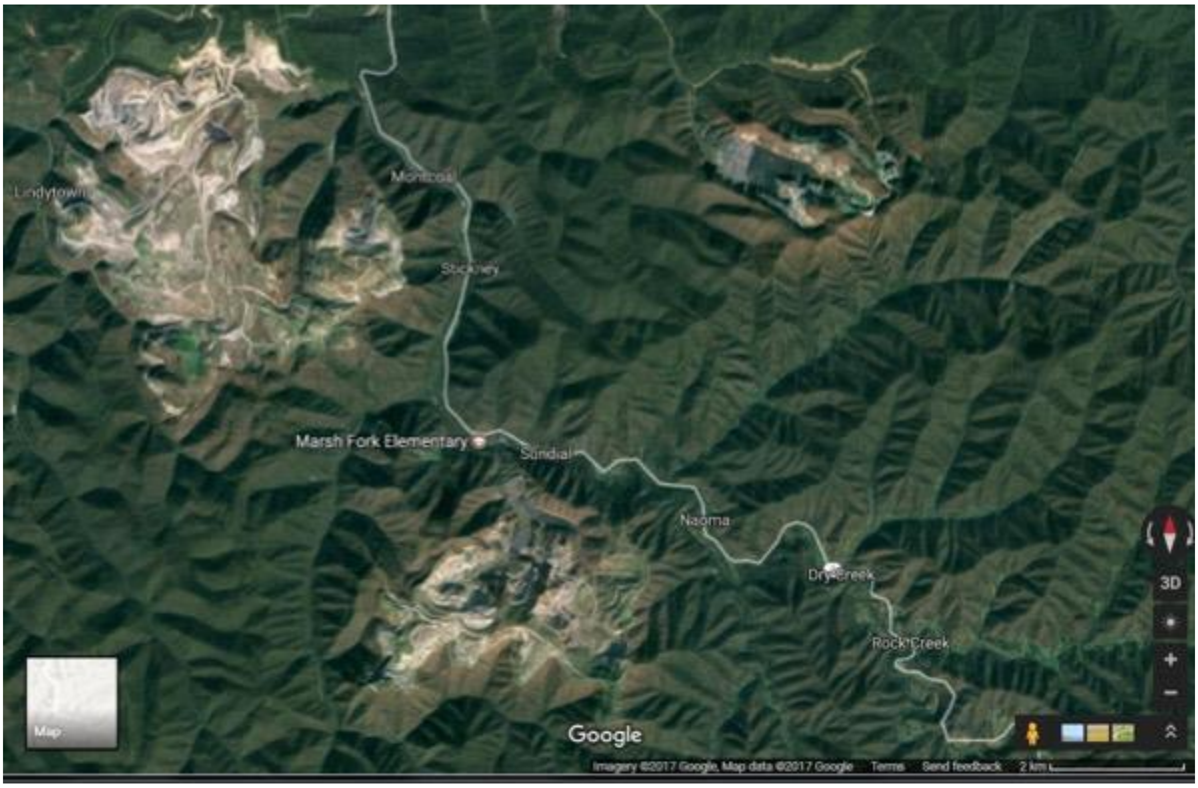
Lindytown
Montcoal
Stickney
Marsh Fork Elementary
Sundial
Naoma
Dry Creek
Rock Creek
3D
Map
Google
Imagery ©2017 Google, Map data ©2017 Google
Terms
Send feedback
2 km

Figure 5. Satelite map image showing Marsh Fork Elementary and nearby surface mines, slurry ponds, and prep plant. Image courtesy of Google Earth.

Large slurry impoundments like the two described above are a major risk to environmental and human health and safety. Kai Erikson famously described the 1972 flood in the Buffalo Creek holler in Logan County, West Virginia. That flood was caused when an earthen dam holding back a relatively modest 130,000,000 gallons of slurry burst following heavy rains, sending crests of slurry up to 30 feet high rushing through the narrow holler. The flood directly hit 15 coal camp towns in the valley, including Lorado, Pardee, Robinette, and others, with a population totaling just 5,000. In its wake, 125 were dead, over 1,100 seriously injured, over 500 homes destroyed entirely, and over 4,000 residents left homeless.

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[13] Initial permits were issued in 1995, and construction began that year. In the intervening years, though, Massey has been granted additional permits to expand and alter the dam.

The Buffalo Creek disaster is a tragic example of the result of what economist George Stigler called 'regulatory capture'—a concept drawn into the criminological fold by John Braithwaite and Ian Ayres. At the time of its construction, the failed dam at Buffalo Creek—which was built to allow coal operators to expand the total tonnage of waste stored in the valley after two previous and smaller dams had structural issues—conformed to federal regulatory guidelines which amounted to a single paragraph mandating that earthen dams built to contain coal slurry were 'substantially constructed'. In Buffalo Creek, just four days before breaking, the dam that initially failed had been inspected by a single regulatory agent who was simultaneously employed by the Pittston Coal Company, the majority owner of the dam project and the mines it served. The complicity and collusion of the state and capital in causing the disaster at Buffalo Creek echoes also in the legal response to the tragedy; the first commission created by then-Governor of West Virginia Arch A. Moore was made up entirely of members sympathetic to the coal industry or of government officials whose own offices likely shared the blame for regulatory failure. Responding to what was widely seen as an investigation by the governor's commission that had no real intention of finding any actionable fault with the coal company or its regulators, and to Governor Moore's rejection of requests made by the United Mine Workers union that a coal miner be added to the commission's panel, a second 'Citizen's Commission' was established. The official commission, assembled by the state, concluded in its report that blame for the disaster could not be placed squarely or solely on the Pittston Company, describing that 'Witnesses…

warned people up and down Buffalo Creek just hours before the dam broke that it was going to fail. Yet there were those who ignored the warnings, and some of them died.' Here, the commission—a body thoroughly captured by the coal industry—made clear its intention to find the locus of the devastating tragedy anywhere but in the coal industry. By comparison, the ad-hoc Citizen's Commission concluded that the Pittston Coal Company was directly responsible for the deaths of 118 victims—seven were still missing, and so were not counted among the dead—and the vast majority of the property damage and loss suffered by the towns and hamlets in the hollers around Buffalo Creek. The citizens' commission—chaired by then-president of West Virginia's Department of Natural Resources Norman Williams—called for a blanket ban on strip mining across the state, reasoning that the method could not possibly be profitable without 'damning and jeopardizing' the land and ecology of the state. Ultimately, the state followed only the recommendations of the Governor's Commission, suing Pittston Coal for $100 million. That bill was never paid, though: three days before leaving office, Governor Moore quietly settled with Pittston for just $1 million.

The Buffalo Creek disaster does not, of course, stand alone. There are countless and uncounted disasters like it that mark and define the history of the major central Appalachian coalfields of West Virginia and Kentucky.[14] On October 11, 2000, in Martin County, Kentucky, a tragedy that echoes the one at Buffalo Creek struck when coal slurry from an improperly constructed impoundment broke through the pond and rushed through an abandoned deep mine below. The toxic water and sludge—all 306,000,000 gallons of it—flooded the mine network and ran right into all regional tributaries of the Tug Fork River, devastating small creeks like Coldwater Fork and Wolf Creek before making its way to Big Sandy River and, eventually, the wide Ohio River. Water supplies—some from wells, some from municipal providers who saw water treatment capacities stretched and, ultimately, overwhelmed by the spill—to over 27,000 residents were contaminated by the spill, and some local residents saw their entire property covered by pools of toxic sludge up to one foot thick. By volume, the spill was 30 times larger than the infamous Exxon Valdez spill. All aquatic life in Coldwater Fork and Wolf Creek was killed.

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[14] I provide a thorough discussion of some of these tragedies, and of the ways that they continue to condition contemporary experiences of life in central Appalachia, in Chapter 5.

At the federal level, regulatory response to the Martin County spill was overseen by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). MSHA is widely known to be—or believed to be—a thoroughly captured regulatory body; during the months of fieldwork I completed for this project, and during my life in Appalachia, I have never heard MSHA talked about as a serious or meaningful source of regulatory power or bite. That assessment appears, at least when considering the agency's response to the Martin County flood, to be correct: MSHA fined Massey Energy[15] just $5,600. Local and state fines, though, totaled $3 million and Massey paid an additional $46 million in cleanup efforts—a paltry sum, considering the damage to the local ecosystem and Massey's deep pockets. Massey and other major coal operators, though, seem to be just about the only ones in central Appalachia with deep pockets.

Political Economies of Appalachian Extraction

The ability of the coal industry to capture the economy and ecology of Appalachia relies, of course, on the industry's political and legal power. Central to that power has been the broad-form deed, a legal technology that has allowed coal operators and mineral prospectors to gain ownership and mineral or timber rights of large swaths of Appalachian land. Among the many ways that Appalachia is a unique geography is that, peculiarly to the region, mineral rights are regularly divorced from land rights, meaning that 'land' can be owned by one person or interest, while the rights to the minerals beneath the land can be owned by another interest entirely. The broad-form deed was central to the legal separation of land ownership and mineral rights, allowing mineral owners—most often extractive corporate interests—to extract minerals or log timber by ‘any means necessary or convenient’. The broad-form deed itself was, at the height of its use as a legal technology of Appalachian extraction, already an outdated and arcane legal document. While other states generally interpreted the broad-form deed as dealing with underground mining—broad-form deeds allowed mineral owners to dig deep-mine networks—Kentucky courts interpreted it as giving the same sort of license and leeway to mechanized surface extraction and strip-mining. Even if landowners objected, the owners of mineral rights, which could be sold by a single consenting signature regardless of joint or family ownership, were permitted under the broad-form deed to pursue the extraction of minerals even if it meant the destruction of the land above the minerals. This system of land deed existed in central Appalachia, with its most pernicious and destructive use localized to Eastern Kentucky, until it was finally overturned in 1988. By then, though, vast amounts of land in the coal fields had already been converted, mined, and devastated under the broad-form-deed system.

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[15] Massey Energy appears regularly here as the corporate interest behind many moments of ecocide and human tragedy in Appalachia not because it stands alone as a uniquely dangerous or under-regulated bogeyman, but because Massey's regional dominance of a dominant industry is so thorough.

In contemporary Appalachia, the power of legal technologies like the broad-form deed has been supplanted by the power of a political system beholden to the coal industry. Election seasons in central Appalachia are characterized by the rush of candidates for nearly all positions to demonstrate their fealty to coal. During the campaign season preceding the 2016 US presidential election, candidates from both major parties campaigned heavily in West Virginia and eastern Kentucky. Donald Trump, who would win that election, made his support for coal a central component in his promise to ‘make America great again’, while Hillary Clinton suffered significant and unexpected losses in Appalachia and the Midwest after publicly commenting that her administration would ‘put a lot of coal miners and coal companies out of business'. Regional media outlets, seemingly regardless of any political affiliations, latched onto Clinton's comments; in West Virginia during that campaign, I heard her remarks replayed nearly constantly on local and regional radio, and overheard countless exasperated conversations about the tone-deaf nature of the campaign. While West Virginia has, since 1996, reliably given its electoral votes to Republican presidential candidates, Donald Trump's defeat of Clinton in the state in 2016 was exceptional: Trump carried the state with a 42.2% margin of victory, his largest in the election. Party affiliation, though, is not as clear an indicator of the state's voting tendencies as the outcome of the 2016 presidential race in West Virginia might suggest. As Shannon Bell notes, 'the coal industry's control and domination of central Appalachia has been facilitated both through political influence…and corporate ownership of the land' (2016: 17). Junior's description of West Virginia electoral politics makes it even clearer: 'It really doesn't matter what party they're with, it's all mostly just a show to see who can be the bigger supporter of the coal industry'. In central Appalachia, then, it seems likely that politics, like just about everything else, is captured and driven by the coal industry.

What is most remarkable, though, about the contemporary conditions of those peculiar central Appalachian geographies materially and culturally captured by the extractive imagination is how little economic benefit the coal industry offers to Appalachian communities. Since the advent of mountaintop-removal mining in Appalachia—an era that has seen the destruction of over 500 mountains, 2000 miles of streams, and countless deaths of human and nonhuman animals—the number of coal-sector jobs in Appalachia has plummeted. In 1943, for example, the coal industry in West Virginia directly employed over 135,000 workers. Following the rise of intensely mechanized mountaintop-removal in the 1970s, though, that number fell dramatically; in 2016, there were only around 12,000 West Virginia workers directly employed by the coal industry (Bell and York 2010). Kentucky's labour statistics tell a similar tale, with 2015 seeing a 28% decrease in coal employment, leaving the state with only 8,000 coal jobs, and a further loss of 1,500 jobs—or 18 per cent—in the first three months of 2016 (Estep 2016). Production, though, has been far more stable, with West Virginia and Kentucky each hitting peak production in the late 1990s. What those figures make clear is that the coal industry has intensified its accumulation and extraction of land and mineral resources while, through mechanization and the extractive technologies of mountaintop removal, left local communities and labour economies built—quite literally, in fact, given the role of coal operators in the construction of Appalachian infrastructure—on and by coal to fend for themselves. The results, it should come as no surprise, are tragic: West Virginia and Kentucky have been ranked 50th and 49th, respectively, among the American states by the Gallup Well Being poll since the index began years ago. The well-being index measures factors including emotional health, financial security, access to food and water, physical health, and more. Perhaps indicating the intergenerational and affective cultural attachment to extractive labour described in Chapter 3, West Virginia ranks relatively high in residents' positive feelings about 'work environment'. What these spaces of Appalachian extraction have been left with, then, are troubled and endangered communities, devastated ecologies, broken promises, and the looming collapse of regional economies.

Political Ecology and Appalachian Extraction

The relationship between ecology and economy in central Appalachia is broadly characterized by the tensions between ecological withdrawal and social additions—the coal industry withdraws ecology and resources, and adds ecological byproducts like toxic waste and flattened mountaintops and social/economic byproducts of extraction like capital. The processes of withdrawal and addition that are built into late capitalist production are described by sociologist Allan Schnaiberg (1980) as creating a 'treadmill of production' in which human activity and industry endlessly withdraw resources and input industrial byproducts. Criminologists Paul Stretesky, Mike Long, and Mike Lynch (2013) reimagine the treadmill of production as a treadmill of environmental crime, a framework that offers a rich explanation for the economic, ecological, and social conditions of contemporary central Appalachia.

The trouble, of course, is that while the ecological byproducts of extraction are left to linger in the landscape of central Appalachia, the capital that is produced by resource extraction is almost entirely extracted from the region just as the coal is, with profits flowing not to local communities, but to absentee corporate landowners and coal operators. Just as the coal industry harnessed the legal power of the broad-form deed to capture the land of Appalachia, it also captured local county economies by exercising its political power. Because coal companies have traditionally paid severance taxes on each tonne of coal extracted—Kentucky coal operators, for example, paid 4.5% of the market value per tonne extracted, while West Virginia assessed a rate of 5%—the dramatic decline in Appalachian coal production since the 1990s has left communities that had come to rely on not only coal jobs, but also coal revenues at the county and municipal level, increasingly strained (Hendryx and Ahern 2009; Konty and Bailey 2009). Harlan County, Kentucky, for example—once among the region's top coal-producing counties—went from receiving $5.3 million in severance tax revenue in 2012 to under $1 million in 2016 (Greenblatt 2016), while West Virginia's Nicholas County saw severance revenues decrease from $1.2 million to under $100,000 between 2012 and 2015 (Tyson 2017).

The tensions between ecology and economy in Appalachia reveal the extent of the metabolic rift of advanced capitalism. If we return to the central organizing framework of green criminology as proposed by Mike Lynch (1990)—a framework that stresses the significance of social and environmental justice frameworks of theory and practice—we can begin to locate some of the ways that tensions arise within that framework as the goals of social and environmental justice are often oppositional to one another. Criminologist Pam Davies (2014) highlights some of the conflicts and tensions between various dimensions of social and environmental justice. These tensions can be found in those situations wherein the rights and viability of human communities depend on forms of social organization, material production and labour that might clash with the goals of environmental justice. Davies finds this clash in the case of a Lynemouth, UK smelting plant, which was closed in response to increasingly strict national legislative efforts to regulate carbon emissions. She describes the toll that the plant closure has had on the local population, which has been entirely economically dependent on the plant for over two decades—like many Appalachian towns and spaces, Lynemouth had been thoroughly captured by a single, ecologically harmful, industrial actor. With the closure of the plant came the loss of jobs for much of the local male population, giving rise to increased issues of economic strain and the myriad problems associated with it. Industrial contraction in areas dominated by a single industry or employer has been well documented as a contributor to crime and social conflict (Waddington & Parry, 2003; Kirk and Wall, 2008, 2011). While some instances of industrial contraction, like that of the Lynemouth plant, can be understood as moments of 'green victory', they may also be understood conversely as a significant blow to the communities that make up the local workforce. Industrial contraction touches Appalachian ecology and opportunity in various ways. As mentioned above, moments of victory for environmental law and regulation like the Clean Air Act might actually increase harms to ecologies like central Appalachia. Those ecological effects are matched, though, by social effects: in extractive spaces like central Appalachia, closure or contraction can serve as a means to quicken the processes of dislocation, alienation and accumulation necessary to the production of pacified spaces required by capital.

There is perhaps no Appalachian space more illustrative of the entire cycle of the various processes of capital's metabolization of nature—the dislocation of people, alienation of people and labour from capital, the accumulation of spaces and ecologies that can be transformed from primitive surplus into capital, and the production of pacified spaces of capitalist social relations—than the reclaimed mountaintop-removal site. In the years I spent conducting fieldwork in central Appalachia, I came to recognize the peculiar topography and geography of the reclamation site as a material symbol of the history and future of extractive capital and the ways it has captured and conditioned the ecological and social landscapes of the region. Reclamation of abandoned mining operations is mandated under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA). The law requires that mine operators in most states—including Kentucky and West Virginia—place a surety bond on the land they mine, and that bond is returned only when the conditions of the land conform to standards mandated by the Office of Surface Mining, a federal agency within the US Department of the Interior. While the SMCRA originally mandated that mined lands be 'restored to the approximate original contour' 'in order to achieve an ecologically sound land', coal operators in Appalachia immediately identified provisions in the regulation that would allow them to instead comply with the law by claiming that depleted surface mines could be transformed into land suitable for 'equal or better economic use' compared to its pre-mining state (SMCRA 1977: 273-274). Effectively, then, in order to have their surety bonds returned, coal companies in Appalachia had only to argue that the land left behind after mountaintop removal was more suitable for economic development than it had been previously. Restoring a mountaintop to its original contours after blasting away hundreds of feet of its peak is, of course, an impossibility. But that is an ecological mandate, one that necessarily separates nature from capital. In the extractive imaginary, though, ecology and capital are one in the same—all is a resource, and all is extractable and countable and economizable. The ecological result of an Appalachian landscape of reclamation for ‘equal or better economic use’ is plainly illustrated in the material spaces of reclamation I encountered in Kentucky and West Virginia; previously lush and dense mountain ecologies are replaced with rocky and barren slopes. Mountain peaks become tabletops, streams and creeks are buried under dozens of feet of rubble, and the whole ecology is given a surface makeover through the application of nonnative Asian grasses that are seeded across the former extractive strip. The resulting landscapes, coal operators argue, are more suited to the desires of capital than the mountain ecologies they destroy and overtake: in the imagination of extractive capital, a mountaintop is pacified through its ecological devastation, and the flattened landscape that remains can be imagined as a suburban development, a site of primary agricultural production, or a geography of service or retail capital. In the parlance of extraction, then, mountaintop removal is not mountaintop removal, but ‘mountaintop development’. The vocabulary of mountaintop development is not difficult to locate in the cultural spaces of Appalachian extraction (spaces described more thoroughly in Chapter 3). I took the photograph below in the private ‘Friends of Coal’ dining room in a large, locally owned restaurant in Hazard, Kentucky, in the summer of 2016:

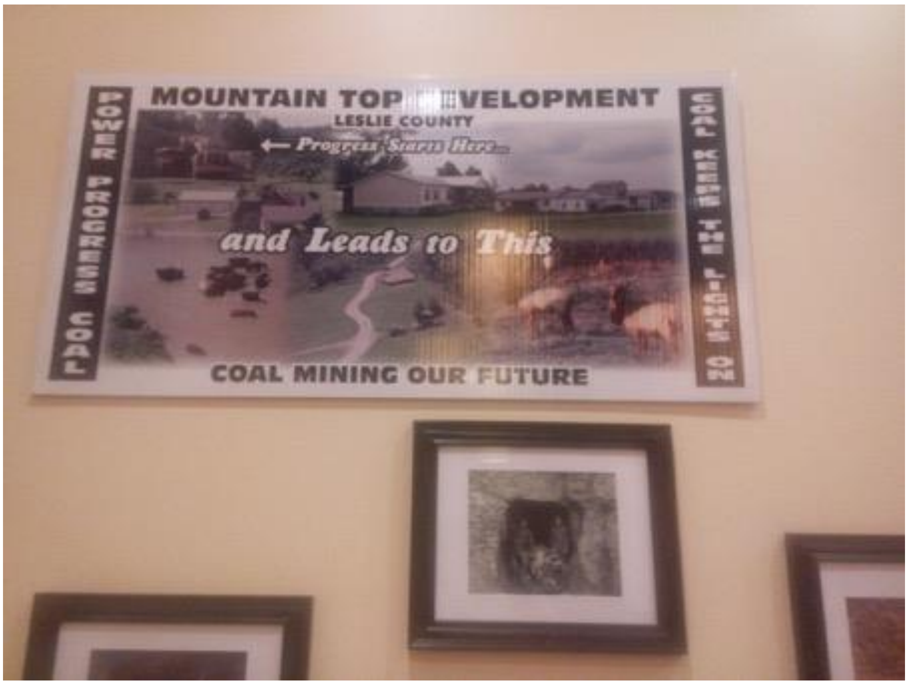

Figure 6. Pro-coal poster in private dining room, Hazard, Kentucky. Photograph by the author.

In this image, the logics and cycles of accumulation, extraction, and pacification of Appalachian mountain ecologies are made strikingly and plainly clear. In this corner of the extractive capitalist imagination, the mined-out mountaintop marks the starting point of 'progress'[16]. 'Power' and 'progress', moreover, are linked here inextricably to coal extraction, and the 'progress' that arises from the extraction of coal and the ecological destruction that comes with it are manifest, finally, in flat land that can perhaps be reimagined and rebuilt not as a mountain, but as a subdivision, or a pasture for grazing livestock. This, then, is what reclamation for 'better economic use' looks like. Under this scheme, the bonds are returned to the coal company—or, as many people in West Virginia and Kentucky told me candidly, the company simply walks away from the bond without doing the mandated reclamation, having still made a huge profit—and the entire cycle starts anew. Under current guidelines, then, it does not make much sense to me to understand what happens in the wake of extraction as reclamation. Reclamation implies that what is becomes what was—that the ecology of the mountains is restored. What I found in central Appalachia, though—and what residents of the region have long known and experienced—is that mountaintop removal sites are not *re*claimed by ecology, but instead *claimed* by capital.

Appalachia, then, has been—and is being—built and rebuilt, claimed and reclaimed, in ways that reflect the desires and needs of a vast network of interests that has, more often than not, not accounted for the desires and needs of Appalachian people and communities. The convergence of political influence and land ownership that conditions and configures economic opportunity and ecological stability contributes, as many scholars of Appalachia have argued, to the region's place as an internal 'resource colony' (Scott 2010, 13. See generally: Lewis et al 1978; Gaventa et al. 1990; Gaventa 1980). For me, though, central

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[16] Here, we can turn our attention to Walter Benjamin's (1968) famous observation that 'that which we call progress, is this storm [the violence of history]'.

Appalachia does not *feel* like a colonial space, and I have not encountered residents in the field who understand their own Appalachian subjectivity as a colonial subjectivity. I join critical voices like David Walls, then, in rejecting the internal-colony model—which, to be clear, does have much to offer despite its shortcomings, in that it offers an unbending critique of accumulation, extraction of surplus value, and pacification—in favor of a model of understanding the historical political economy of central Appalachia as an internal periphery at the margins of an advanced capitalist society rather than an internal colony. Seeing Appalachia's place as a periphery within the advanced capitalist society of the United States decenters the 'otherness' implied by knowing Appalachia as a colonial space, instead contextualizing the region as central to the economic and ideological project of American capitalism. The Appalachia that I know from my life and my work is not a colony or a colonized space—it is not, for all of its seeming difference, a different nation or world—but rather a place at the edges of the United States, a periphery that is simultaneously valorized, ignored, belittled, celebrated, mythologized, and forgotten in waves that ebb and flow with the ongoing production and reproduction of late-capitalist social and ecological relations.

What matters most, though, in any of the available theoretical formulations of Appalachia's place and condition is the inevitability of connecting economy and ecology, capital and land. In any agrarian or extractive regional or national economy, the material landscape is the means of production, and so to capture the land is to capture the economy. With the ecological commons long-converted by the endless instantiation of capitalist logics of property into the private space of capitalist production and accumulation, to capture economy is also to capture ecology. From a conflict perspective, it is the tension between economy and ecology, humanity and nature, and managerial/owner and proletariat/lumpen proletariat classes that conditions and configures law and justice in Appalachia. While a perspective based on locating and interrogating the various conflicts between ecology and economy, community and industry, or owner and working classes may offer a crude analysis of those tensions and their effects on historical and contemporary relations in Appalachia, it seems to me that conflict, in its broadest sense, is a fitting frame for understanding what has happened—and what is happening—to the people and ecology of central Appalachia.

Imagining Appalachian Ecology and Economy after Coal

The challenges facing Appalachia are vast. The landscape continues to bear the scars of its extractive past, as the extractive present cuts new wounds every day. Economic opportunities are difficult to see, and in my time in the region I saw little outside of the three choices described by Junior: coal, drugs, or the military. Similar to the ways that to imagine an Appalachian economy unconditioned by coal is fundamentally challenging, an ecologically post-coal Appalachia is elusive, to say the least. The economy and material ecology of central Appalachia are so thoroughly constructed, conditioned, and configured by coal that to try to imagine the region after or without coal is, in many ways, to endeavor to imagine the unimaginable.

For some in Appalachia, the future is full of promise—in eastern Kentucky, many people tell me about how the local farmer’s markets are picking up, and how maybe with enough participation and attention, subsistence farming will again carry the region as it did before coal took hold. Similarly, many local residents and activists tell me about how hopeful they are that an eco-tourism economy—an explicitly post-extraction eco-tourism economy, in fact—will arise from the post-coal landscape of Appalachia, citing successes with such economic shifts in previously-captured extractive ecological and economic spaces like Wales. For Junior, the most promising vision of the future employs the conflict that, in many ways, provides the social and cultural foundation of central Appalachia (that foundation of conflict is discussed at length in Chapter 6): Junior imagines a regional industry of boutique firearm manufacturing, built on recycling the disused railroad tracks, wooden mine posts, and industrial spaces of extraction and sold at a premium to a public interested in owning a piece of the history of Appalachian coal, conflict, and violence. As much as I would love to see the promise in and of each of those futures realized, my own imagination struggles.

The economies and ecologies of central Appalachia—and also various legal architectures and regulatory agencies and actors involved and implicated in the extraction of Appalachian coal—are so thoroughly captured by the logics of extractive capital that imagining an ecological or economic landscape untouched and unconditioned by coal becomes nearly impossible. Following Mark Fisher and Franco Berardi, we can locate in central Appalachia the 'slow cancellation of the future', a condition accompanied by a 'deflation of expectations'. The deflation of expectations is clear in the ways that those still involved in the extraction of Appalachian coal imagine regional geology; before the advent of mountaintop-removal mining, it was assumed that Appalachian coal would last forever. With the rise of mountaintop removal, though, and the decline in traditional mining jobs and attendant increases in production, the geological realities of rapidly declining coal reserves—not just a declining industry—have caused Appalachian extractive labour to rethink its expectations. Nearly every person I spoke with during fieldwork noted the facts of coal's geological limitations in Appalachia, placing the material possibility of ongoing extraction at somewhere between five and 15 years. Here, then, is where the dromic tendencies of service and credit and finance capital that so intensely characterize, condition, and configure the social relations of late modernity run into the material walls of productive possibility. The acceleration of capital is slowed only by being forced to reckon with the limitations of ecology, of the soil which it captures, and from which it produces and metabolizes value. The future, then—and any ability to imagine it—vanishes with the mountains as the developed and pacified geographies of mountaintop removal are left to time, left to linger without the realization of the promises made by extractive capital. Central Appalachia is left to bear the scars of its capture, left to mourn the loss of past, present, and future. Perhaps, then, as post-extractive Appalachian economies and ecologies emerge, it is necessary to work to expand ways of knowing Appalachian subjectivity beyond the traditional conceptual boundaries of economic and ecological capture. What has been clear to me is that the dominance of coal in Appalachia goes well beyond the realms of ecology and economy, extending the tendrils of the extractive logic and imagination deep into the fields and registers of culture. Indeed, despite the rapidly vanishing coal economy and a material ecology that is still—that will always be—deeply scarred by the extractive past, what remains is a cultural attachment to coal. Next to the long history of an Appalachian ecology and economy captured by extractive capital and practice, then, is a parallel and equally important history and contemporary of an Appalachia captured by the culturally productive and constructive power of coal.

Chapter 3

‘Friends in Low Places’: Capturing Appalachian Culture(s)

They went plumb crazy down in Washington.

They're talking about closing the mines.

They're gonna bleed us all dry from the inside out.

They don't care that much about the little man or the calloused hands.

It's a way of life 'round here, just like it's always been

-Jimmy Rose, *Coal Keeps the Lights On*

Driving along West Virginia state highway three, outside the small town of Glen Daniel in the southern coalfields of the state, I am stopped at the traffic light—the only traffic light in town—behind three late-model pickup trucks. On the rear window of each truck is a collection of stickers large and small, and I recognize each as examples of the sorts of stickers sold from the roadside tables, flea markets, and truck stops all over this part of West Virginia. Each of the stickers celebrates coal extraction in some way; one depicts a miner on his hands and knees, his headlamp casting a beam of light in front of him, under a banner that reads ‘I’ve got friends in low places’, text borrowed from the title of country musician Garth Brooks’ 1990 hit country song (a song not about mining, but about resilience and the social and economic marginalization of rural America). The truck ahead of that one has a sticker, smaller than the one described above but still taking up the majority of the truck’s rear window, depicting two crossed coal picks under a banner that reads ‘coal is our future’. Finally, the third truck I can see—this one in the lane next to me—has in its rear window cut vinyl sticker of Calvin (of the *Calvin and Hobbes* comic strip popular in the 1990s) urinating on simple text that reads ‘tree hugger’. On these truck windows, I find more than meaningless collections of stickers, but instead a snapshot of some of the tensions that exist in and across central Appalachia. The voices of these vehicles, of their owners (and, of course, the voices of the ‘tree huggers’ the third sticker hopes to antagonize), are the voices of an Appalachian culture not dependant on, but *captured* by the logics of extraction, a capture that no doubt exists concomitantly and dialectically with the coal industry’s capture of the economy and ecology of Appalachia.

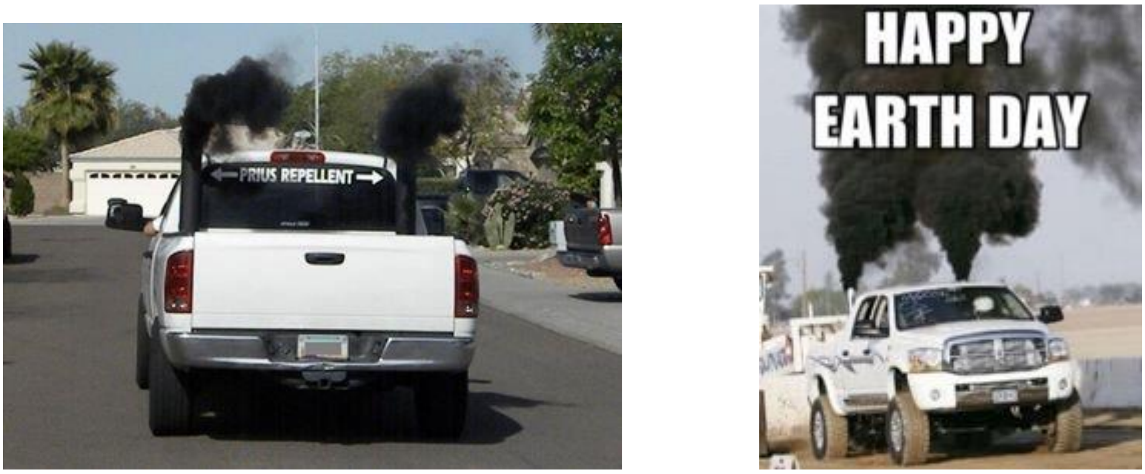
If the economy, land, water, and sky of Appalachia have been captured by the historical dominance of the coal industry, how can we make sense of a contemporary Appalachia that continues to be captured by those same forces despite a dramatically waning coal industry? While the material ecological landscape of Appalachia, of course, continues to bear the scars of an extractive history, the cultural space and landscape of Appalachia are also built, touched, conditioned, and configured by coal extraction. Here, then, I locate a dialectical cultural Appalachia that, just like its ecological counterpart, owes its contours and conditions to the extractive forces and histories that have converged on the mountains of eastern Kentucky, West Virginia, east Tennessee, and southern Virginia. These distinctly Appalachian cultures—cultures captured by the logics and processes of extraction—exist not apart from other cultural forms and formulations in and of Appalachia, but alongside and within them. As I have previously described, there are many ways that Appalachia can be conceptualized and communicated in terms of its spatial boundaries, and the cultural boundaries of the region are no more clear or defined. Just as ARC-defined Appalachia sees the ecological and material borders between New York and Kentucky fade away, so does any effort at constructing or communicating a culturally singular Appalachia see the boundaries between the cultures of those two distinct cultural geographies fade away. What is certain, though, to me at least, is that if central Appalachia exists economically as a periphery to a larger advanced late-capitalist contemporary, so too does it exist as a cultural periphery, a geography of cultural difference.

There are, then, many cultural forms, identities, and productions unique to central Appalachia. Among them we can locate the hillbilly, the miner, and the environmentalist, and it is these three that this chapter will focus on. This is not, of course, because these are the only Appalachian cultural identities at work in central Appalachia, but rather because it is in the these three distinct identity formations that I find the most essential illustration(s) of the ways that culture, ecology, and coal intersect in the mountains and coalfields of central Appalachia. Similarly, the aim of this chapter is not to catalogue and describe each significant Appalachian cultural identity, but to place the three core identities identified above into conversation with one another in order to reveal and excavate the ways that each contributes to experiences of Appalachian subjectivity, the subjectivities of extraction, and the ways that ecology is conditioned, configured, and given meaning in the extractive zones of Appalachia.

If, as described and detailed in the previous chapter, the ecological and economic spaces of Appalachia have been captured by the uninterrupted dominance of the coal industry in Appalachia, we can extend the concept of capture into the less material field(s) of culture. Much of the common sense knowledge surrounding Appalachia rests on the notion that the ongoing domination of regional environments and economies is simply the result of a high degree of economic dependence on the coal industry. The conclusions coming from that analytical position, while valuable, fail to apprehend and account for the contemporary state of extractive industry in Appalachian spaces like southern West Virginia and Eastern Kentucky. Because the last two decades of coal exploitation in Appalachia have been primarily characterized by the rise of ‘extreme energy’ extraction and the contraction of the coal industry, few communities, if any, in central Appalachia’s extractive spaces and places, continue to enjoy any of the extractive opportunities of the past. Following the decline of the coal industry in the region, it no longer makes sense to understand central Appalachia's relationship with the contemporary industrial modes and forms of extraction as being conditioned by any substantial degree of economic opportunity. Instead, it seems to me, contemporary attachments to coal extraction in central Appalachia are imbued not only with economic significance and dependence, but with cultural meaning and desire.

Cultures of Attachment to Extraction

Anyone who spends any time whatsoever in central Appalachia will, invariably, encounter various cultural productions and performances that function primarily to support the extractive logics that circumscribe the cultural and material Appalachian landscape. While contemporary cultural celebrations of coal mining in literary and performing arts are scarce, such celebrations are abundant in other visual and visible forms of cultural expression. One cannot travel any major roadway in extractive Appalachia, for instance, without noticing the ubiquitous sloganeering stickers extolling the virtues of Appalachian coal: 'Coal Keeps the Lights On!', 'Guns. Coal. Freedom.', 'If You Don't Like Coal, Stop Using Electricity!' are all common sights on the bumpers of vehicles across southeastern Appalachia. One campaign has been so successful, in fact, that its slogan—'Friends of Coal'—has become an officially available Kentucky automotive plate, seemingly applying the state's full endorsement to one side of what amounts to a regionally divisive political issue. Regional youth also express a cultural attachment to coal, despite the fact that the labour force required for continued extraction has shrunk so dramatically since the advent of mountaintop removal that local youth can no longer dream of the economic freedom once (falsely, as it turns out) promised by the miner's life[17]. Still, though, young men in extractive Appalachia—men who if they are lucky enough to currently work in coal will, more than likely, not find work for long in the industry—engage frequently in a cultural phenomenon called 'rolling coal', in which diesel-engine pickup trucks are modified in order to *increase* emissions, with the goal to produce the largest cloud of black, sooty smoke possible. In what is perhaps the ultimate rebuke to any environmental concerns, these trucks are often festooned with stickers designed to antagonize and taunt environmentalists (e.g.: 'Prius Repellant', a reference to the Toyota Prius, a popular hybrid vehicle), and 'coal rollers' share pictures online with captions positively linking coal, trucks and pollution to masculinity (Kulze 2014).



Figures 6-7. Images of 'coal rolling' trucks taken from online forum Topix.com. Photographs by anonymous sources.

While 'coal rolling' is not, in fact, materially linked to coal production—the smoke produced is a product of diesel fuel, not coal—that the practice is culturally constituted through the discursive deployment of 'coal' points to coal's place in the social imaginary as a signifier of ecological harm. Avi Brisman (2012) and others have written extensively on the efforts of 'climate change contrarians' to present their views—which can be accurately reduced to the idea that climate change is a hoax, exaggerated for profit, or otherwise a fiction—as ‘skepticism’ in order to retain a veneer of scientific validity (see generally: McClanahan and Brisman 2015; McCright 2007; McCright and Dunlap 2011; Anderegg et al. 2010). In coal rolling, though, we can locate an emergent and more radical contrarianism, one that finds itself at a different set of logical conclusions by accepting that climate change is, in fact, real, but that responds not with false scientific validity but a sneering nihilism. Coal rolling, then, is not so much climate contrarianism as it is climate antagonism, and that same sort of antagonism is woven through expressions of extractive culture in Appalachia such as the aforementioned sticker of Calvin urinating on the phrase ‘tree hugger’. These moments of the communication of an anti-green sentiment are exemplary of what Brisman and South (2014: 122) and others call an ‘anti-environment movement’.

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[17] Despite its many hardships, life as a labourer in the early days of the coal industry in Appalachia was actually a step up for many Appalachian workers, who previously had to rely on subsistence agricultural practice and hunting, trapping, and fishing. Because of the unique geographic features of the mountainous regions of Appalachia, subsistence through those means is exceedingly difficult. Intergenerational knowledge, though, of the methods best suited to support a family on an Appalachian homestead eventually coalesced into the 'hillbilly' cultural identity discussed below.

Coal is not, then, the only consumable good produced in central Appalachia. Just as the mountains are mined for minerals, the cultural landscape of Appalachia is mined for meaning and identity. And just as coal is exported out of Appalachia to power the nation, so too are cultural productions extracted from Appalachia in order to power the production, reproduction, and maintenance of Appalachian and American identities and meanings. During my time in the coalfields of southern West Virginia and Eastern Kentucky, I routinely encountered evidence of the ways that the logics and legacies of extraction continue to exercise their hold on Appalachian cultural subjectivities. In Beckley, West Virginia, the Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine is a central attraction in the small city, boasting a mining museum and gift shop located in the old company store, preserved coal-camp houses, and several thousand feet of underground tunnels and restored tracks. The mine itself is open daily for guided tram tours—an account of my own tour of the mine can be found in Chapter 5—and the grounds of the mine can be explored without a guide. What is most illustrative here, though, of the ways that the logics of extractive capital have captured dimensions of

Appalachian cultural production, are the items available in the gift shop at the exhibition mine. The shop stocks the usual assortment of t-shirts and sweaters and caps that you can find in nearly every roadside shop in central Appalachia’s extractive zones, items bearing the usual pro-coal slogans like ‘I Luv Coal’ and ‘Coal Keeps the Lights On’. Also on offer, though, are seemingly endless trinkets made of coal; earrings, rings, keychains, necklaces, ink pens, bookends, statues, tie bars, cufflinks, and more, all made of black Appalachian coal, line the shelves and walls of the shop. Plastic hardhats with LED miner’s lamps, in children’s sizes only, illustrate the centrality of the exhibition mine and the extractive logics and cultures it represents to the experience of childhood in Raleigh County. Perhaps recognizing the digital tendencies of contemporary youth culture, the museum also features a video game in which the player works against a ticking clock to fill a dragline bucket with coal and then transfer it into waiting trucks.

Figures 8-9. Trinkets carved from coal. Beckley Exhibtion Coal Mine, Beckley, West Virginia. Photograph by the author.

As described in the previous chapter, central Appalachia’s educational system has been intensely conditioned by the historic presence of the coal industry, and the exploitation of the region’s resources under a regime of taxation that allows for the wholesale export of the capital produced by extraction is wholly implicated in the region’s low rates of educational attainment. What is striking, though, are the ways that the coal industry has employed its own theft of Appalachian resources and opportunities in an effort to strengthen its grip on Appalachian cultural production. With schools in the coalfields failing, essentially, because of insufficient tax revenue streams, the coal industry routinely steps in to fund education. The price, of course, is that school curriculum and the central experiences of childhood are imbued with the logics of extraction. Take, for example, the image below of a worksheet given to elementary school pupils in Eastern Kentucky:

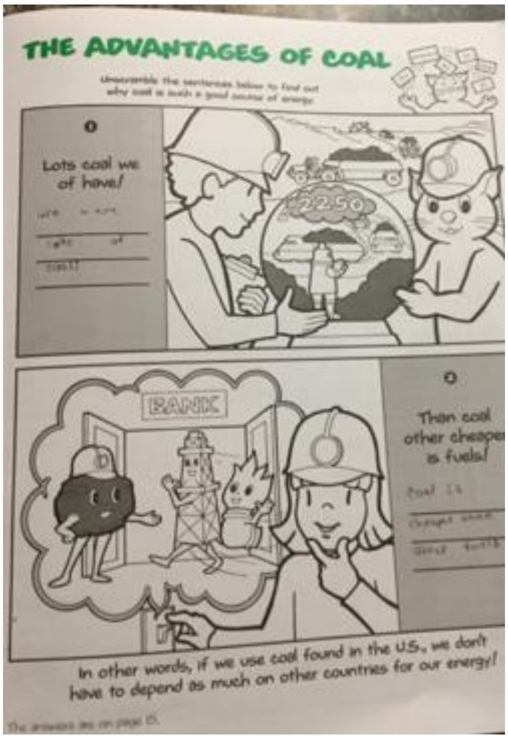
THE ADVANTAGES OF COAL
Lots coal we of have!
2250
BANK
Then coal other cheaper is fuels!
In other words, if we use coal found in the U.S., we don't have to depend as much on other countries for our energy!

Figure 10. Pro-coal coloring book page from public school in Eastern Kentucky. Photograph by Adam Barrow.

During fieldwork, I heard several stories from younger coalfield residents that described and illustrated their own experience as subjects of an Appalachian educational system that affirmed and, at times, valorized and reified the logics and history of extraction in the region. On one occasion, I mentioned to Junior that I had visited the exhibition mine, and he told me that ‘that fucking place is the only fieldtrip I ever went on, every year I was in school we went to that damn mine’. Adam, another CRMW worker and close contact in the field, confirmed, adding that he ‘probably [knew] that mine about as well as the guides’. Appalachian attachment to extraction is plainly evident in schools precisely because of the disastrous economic effects of the region’s extractive history. As described in the previous chapter, the coal industry’s use of severance tax loopholes in the region has, in the wake of the industry’s decline, left municipal tax revenues so low that many public schools struggle to stay afloat. The gaps in school funding are then filled by the coal industry itself, with coal advocacy groups stepping in as ‘partners in education’ with programs like Friends of Coal’s ‘Coal in the Classroom’, providing coal operators with a captive audience of young people (Friendsofcoal.com, 2009).

What is most compelling to me —and most illustrative of the extent of the coal industry’s capture of Appalachian cultures and identities—are the various ways that the industry has captured the ways that young people imagine Appalachian futures. As I describe in Chapter 6, a central feature of the psychogeography and experience of Appalachian subjectivity is the way that the historic domination of the coal industry has collapsed past, present, and future. For young people in Appalachia, then, there is no hope for the progress suggested by notions of linear temporality. Instead, any efforts to imagine the future are necessarily conditioned by the historic and ongoing ecological and economic violence of extraction[18]. At the Appalachian Media Institute (AMI) described in the following chapter, I saw photographs taken by a fifth-grade student and resident of Whitesburg, Kentucky as part of a photovoice project coordinated by AMI. One of the images featured a quilt on the girl’s bed, sewn by her grandmother, embroidered with the image of a miner carrying a pick and lunch pail. Later, at the 2016 Kentucky State Fair’s quilting competition, I saw another quilt featuring a miner, again employing similar iconography of deep mining. In these expressions of attachment to traditional forms of extractive labour—expressions that merge the traditional craft forms of quilting, which itself intimately signals a sort of attachment to a particularly idyllic Appalachian rurality—we can locate the various ways that young people's ability to imagine and visualize the region, its past, its present, and its futures, is conditioned by the historical presence of extractive industry.

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[18] These processes are described more thoroughly in Chapter 6.

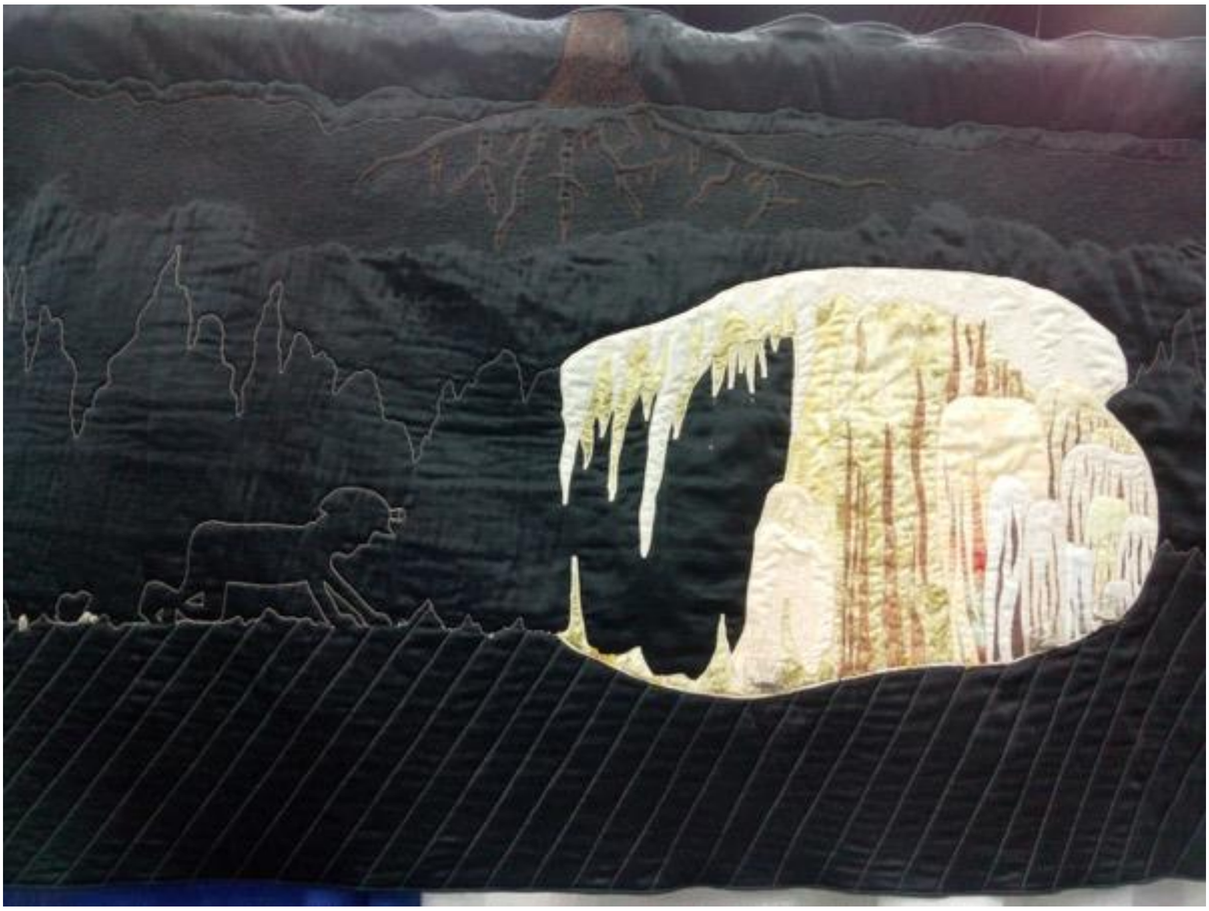

Figure 11. Quilt section featuring underground miner. Photograph by the author.

On the register of visual culture, the constant presence of the past is made strikingly clear in displays of pro-coal sentiment that rely on the iconography of forms of extraction that are all but gone from central Appalachia. The pickaxe and headlamp, for example, are visual artefacts of underground mining; as retired union miner Sam Hatfield told me in the summer of 2015, 'ain't hardly nobody swung a pick in this state in 30 years'. The iconography of deep mining, though, lingers still in the visual-cultural landscape of central Appalachia. At a roadside vendor outside Hazard, Kentucky, I found an assortment of clothing and ephemera that employed the iconography of the underground miner, despite the fact that jobs in underground coal mining have declined by over 70% since 1979, leaving just 3,000 direct-employment underground-mining jobs in eastern Kentucky in 2016 (down from nearly 30,000 of those jobs in 1979) (Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet 2016). Those same pieces of iconography would never be far from my eye or mind in central Appalachia; from the 'friends in low places' sticker mentioned above, to the ubiquitous pickaxes and headlamps and crawling miners, the visuality of a bygone era of extraction—an era that despite its absence as opportunity remains present in the ecological and economic scars left in its wake—remains a central piece of the visuality of central Appalachia. That particular visuality, moreover, regularly intersects and collides with competing visualities of extraction, some supportive and some resistant, on the register of visual culture.

On the northeastern edge of Beckley, just off interstate 64 and about four miles from the exhibition coal mine, is the Tamarack Center, a major roadside attraction in the area that houses displays, retail booths, and galleries featuring West Virginia arts, crafts, books, and the sorts of gifts that line the shelves of just about every truck stop and rest area in the United States. The website for Tamarack boasts that it draws half a million annual visitors, but on the day that I first visited—I would later return, many times—I was virtually alone in the winding and cavernous interior space. As I walked through the aisles, booths on either side offered a glimpse into the prevalence of the extractive cultural identity of central Appalachia. I saw shirts, hats, keychains, pens and countless other tchotchkes celebrating the extractive history, contemporary, and future of the state and region.   Many of the items that celebrate coal extraction available for sale at Tamarack are placed amidst items that celebrate the natural beauty of West Virginia and central Appalachia. In the sharp contrast between those two visions of Appalachia's pasts, presents, and futures—one that celebrates coal, and one that celebrates non-coal Appalachian mountain ecologies—I locate a collision of identity that illustrates the tense dialectics of overlapping and competing ways of knowing and imagining Appalachia and Appalachian subjectivity.

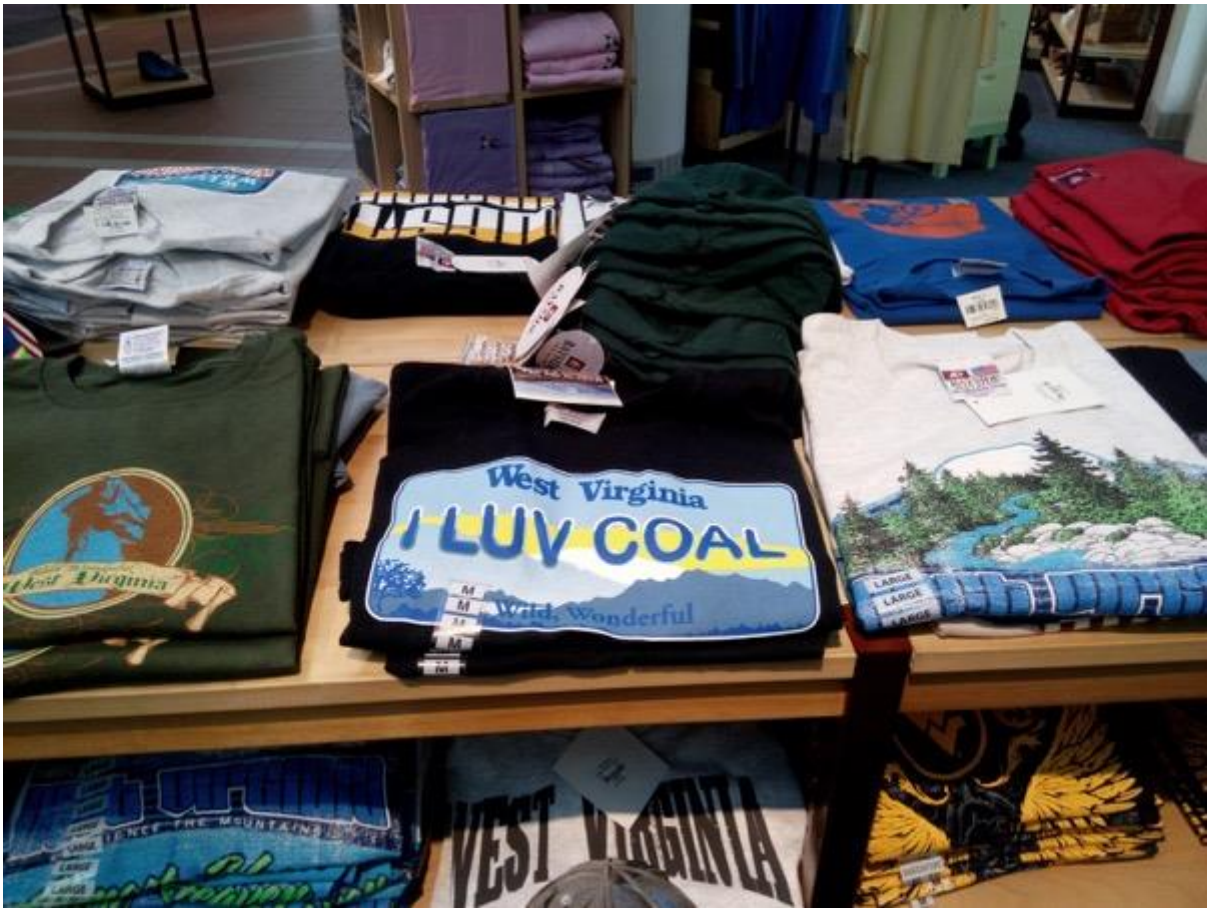

Figure 12. Assortment of t-shirts for sale at Tamarack Cultural Center. Beckley, West Virginia. Photograph by the author.

What were most striking, to me, in the presence of the assorted cultural productions of extraction and the extractive identity at Tamarack are the ways that those identities are subtly legitimated and connected to broader cultural identities of place, state, and nation through their inclusion in what feels like an official space of the bureaucratic production of culture. While there is no shortage of places to purchase bumper stickers and shirts and other ephemera of extraction in central Appalachia, there is a clear hierarchy of the commerce of extractive cultural communication. At the bottom of that hierarchy are the roadside stalls and flea-market booths that populate the gravel lots and abandoned strip-mall parking lots. More often than not, these are small operations run by a single entrepreneurial soul, and generally consisting of a small canopy tent over a folding table covered in stickers and t-shirts. These are the vendors most likely to sell what can only be called the more crude products of an extractive culture: Calvin urinating on various targets including the words ‘environment’, ‘environmentalist’, and ‘tree hugger’ (or even an image of Earth), Confederate flags, or the sorts of stickers favored by ‘coal rollers’ described above. One step above those vendors and commercial spaces are the permanent stores, generally located closer to medium-sized towns like Glen Daniel and Whitesville, that stock, for the most part, Friends of Coal merchandise which tends to be somewhat more subtle and less confrontational in its celebration of extraction. And finally, at the top, are spaces like Tamarack, which present cultures of extraction as entirely non-confrontational, simply a square in a larger cultural quilt of Appalachian culture. Tamarack, though, is a quasi-bureaucratic space; it was conceived and built by the state in 1994, and so its celebrations of extraction take on the feeling of an official celebration of southern West Virginia’s culture of extraction.

In the spring of 2015, I visited another site of official attachment to a culture of extraction: the Clay Center for Arts and Sciences, a large children’s science museum in West Virginia’s capital city of Charleston. After a worker at a local café, hearing about my research suggested I plan a visit, I came to the museum. The Clay Center is one of the largest and most well-kempt buildings in downtown Charleston—which is, despite the economic issues faced by West Virginia, a beautiful and well-kempt city in its own right. In the museum lobby, plaques list the donors who support the museum. Some are private individuals, but the majority are coal companies or other corporate interests involved in the coal industry. The names on the plaques are a veritable who’s-who of Appalachian extraction, including ARCH Coal, Massey Energy, Patriot Coal, and Appalachian Power. After paying the entry fee at the museum, I made my way through a labyrinth of displays describing the geology of the region. Schoolchildren darted and scampered around the space, more captivated by whatever games they had invented than by the lumps of coal, sandstone, limestone, and slate sitting in interactive display areas. After taking in the majority of the museum's interior, I made my way to the rear doors, following signs that lead to a temporary outdoor exhibit housed in the museum's rear parking lot, in a truck and trailer. The exhibit, which, I learned, travels to schools across the region, was called 'Power your Future!' and was sponsored by donations from the oil and gas industry. I was unable to tour the inside of the trailer—it was not open on the day I visited, and museum docents told me that, unless I was booked in as part of a school group, I would be unable to tour the exhibit in the following weeks. The outside of the trailer, though, and the information I was able to find online confirmed what the barista at the coffee shop who initially suggested I visit had indicated to me about the exhibit: its purpose is to extoll the virtue and potential of the oil and gas industry for West Virginia. Here, we can locate the ways that the logics of extraction are able to transcend the peculiarities of materiality in the construction of a political and cultural economy of extractive labour. What the exhibit suggests is that oil and gas interests see in West Virginia a labour force already captured by the logics and arts of extractive labour, a geography already captured by the processes and practices of extreme energy.

As described later in Chapters 5 and 6, extractive labour in Appalachia is historically characterized by tragedy and death; according to the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), over 100,000 workers lost their lives in coal-mining tragedies between 1900 and 2016 (United States Department of Labour 2016). The various and many tragedies of Appalachia extraction, then, are not free from commodification and consumption[19]. In the summer of 2015, I visited Dollywood—the large and popular theme park owned by country singer and Appalachian icon Dolly Parton that serves as the core of east Tennessee's tourist economy—in order to experience firsthand the consumption of extractive tragedy. Among the many rides, attractions, and rollercoasters that make Dollywood so popular is Mystery Mine, the 1,800 foot long rollercoaster that employs the thematics of a coal-mine collapse in order to thrill park-goers with the sort of near-death experience that most rollercoasters promise. The experience of Mystery Mine, which was built and opened in 2007, begins with the rider's entrance into a faux-ramshackle underground coal mine, complete with roughhewn wooden pillars of the sort that would, during the heyday of underground extraction, collapse under the weight of the limestone ceiling and crush and kill miners. The walls are lined with strange bits of extractive ephemera that hint at the horrors to come—horrors that, of course, are not simply the stuff of the imagination of the ride's designers, but horrors experienced by generations of extractive workers in Appalachia—including daily wage postings for mine workers and placards noting and celebrating the gendered nature of extractive labour in Appalachia and the conceptual darkness that characterizes underground extraction[20].

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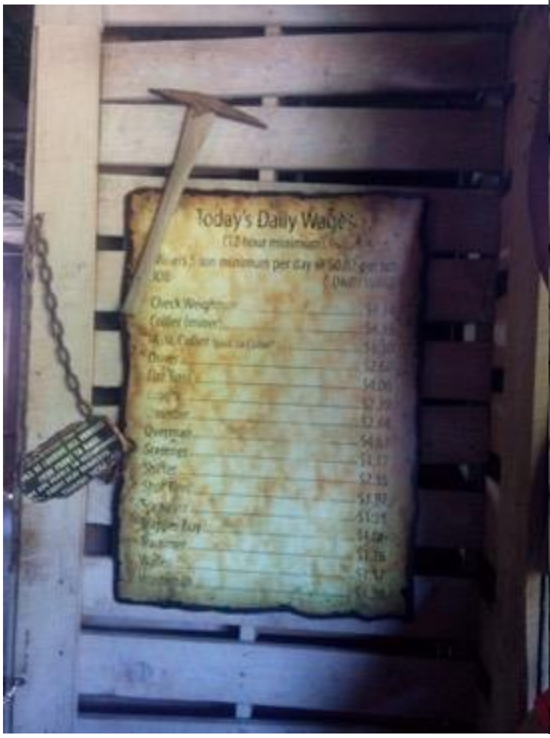
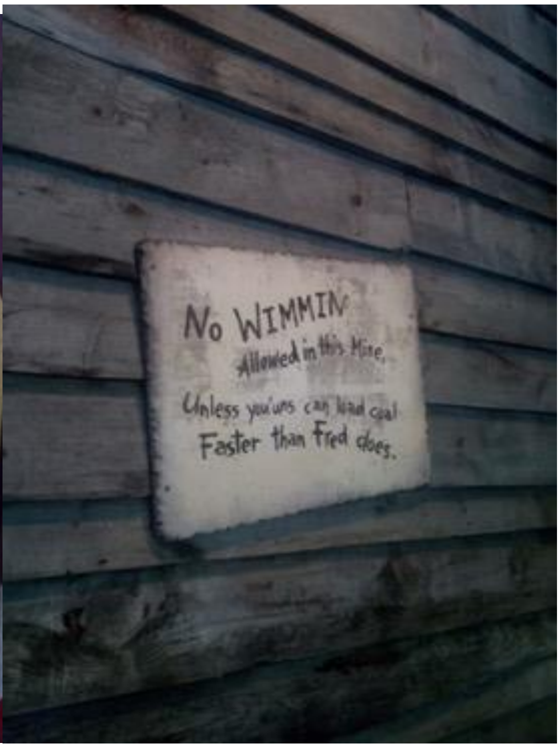
[19] These tragedies are also consumed as part of the memorialscape of Extractive Appalachia, a phenomenon and conceptual geography discussed thoroughly in Chapters 5 and 6.





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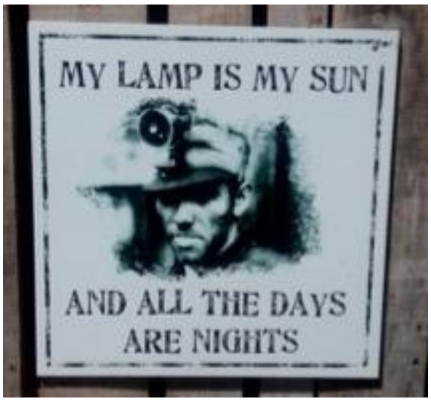
[20] Chapter 5 offers a more thorough discussion and description of Appalachian extraction as an emergent category of horror.



Figures 13-15. Posters and ephemera of fictional extractive tragedy at the Mystery Mine rollercoaster. Dollywood, Tennessee. Photographs by the author.

As the coaster progresses, riders find themselves in the middle of a tunnel collapse of the sort that has, historically, taken the lives of countless miners. The cars jostle down the tracks in the pitch-black interior of the ride before climbing a steep hill while a giant television screen overhead displays flames and explosions licking at the edges of the cart. Finally, the track breaks through to the outside, but only briefly—just as quickly, it drops back into the dark depths of the ride as the type of bluegrass banjo music that has come to characterize cultural representations of the horrors of Appalachia plays faster and faster. Riding the Mystery Mine, I could not help but wonder how the families of the men who died in the 2010 explosion and subsequent collapse at the Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia would feel seeing their tragedy, loss, and hurt sold and consumed to crowds hungry for a taste of the Appalachian experience.

Friends of Coal, Brotherhood, and Power

Among the cultures of extraction produced and consumed in central Appalachia, perhaps no mode or form is more persistent in the visual cultural landscape than those cultural expressions flowing forth from the Friends of Coal campaign. Started in 2002 by coal-industry public-relations operatives in West Virginia, Friends of Coal (FOC) works to ‘inform and educate’ Appalachian citizens ‘about the coal industry and its vital role in the future’ (Friends of Coal, ND). The impetus for the creation of the FOC campaign and organization, though, was really the growing voice of an environmental justice movement in central Appalachia that arose in response to issues endemic to the Appalachian coalfields, including water, air, and land pollution, slurry spills, mining-related deaths and injuries, economic injustice, and the problems presented by a system of regional infrastructure that sought first and foremost to serve an industry rather than residents. Friends of Coal, then, again illustrates the ways in which cultures of support and cultures of resistance are mutually constitutive, operating in an intense and tense dialectic.

The FOC campaign, visible in bumper stickers, yard signs, pins, clothing, and other consumables, quickly spread to Kentucky and West Virginia. Kentucky took the unique step of granting an FOC license plate officially sanctioned by the state and, thus, supported by tax revenues in the form of license-plate fees. The Kentucky plates, which cost an additional $45 annually over the standard state license-plate fees, are solid black with the FOC logo on the left side and ‘Coal Keeps the Lights On!’ in bright yellow along the bottom edge. The plates quickly became ubiquitous in Kentucky, particularly in the eastern parts of the state, and before long West Virginia, Indiana, and Virginia each offered their own FOC plates. The creation of the FOC license plate, then, marks a unique moment in the relationships between communities and an industry involved in countless controversies and political battles: through the FOC license plate, the coal industry has made it possible to have its PR fights funded by local communities rather than the deep pockets of a multi-billion dollar industry. Here, then, we can observe the mostly uninterrupted collusion of the coal industry and the state, and thus we can once again find support for a criminological understanding of historic and contemporary modes of coal extraction in central Appalachia as moments of state-corporate crime (Michalowski and Kramer 2006; Kramer et al. 2002; Lynch et al 2010; Rothe 2009; Rothe and Friedrichs 2006).

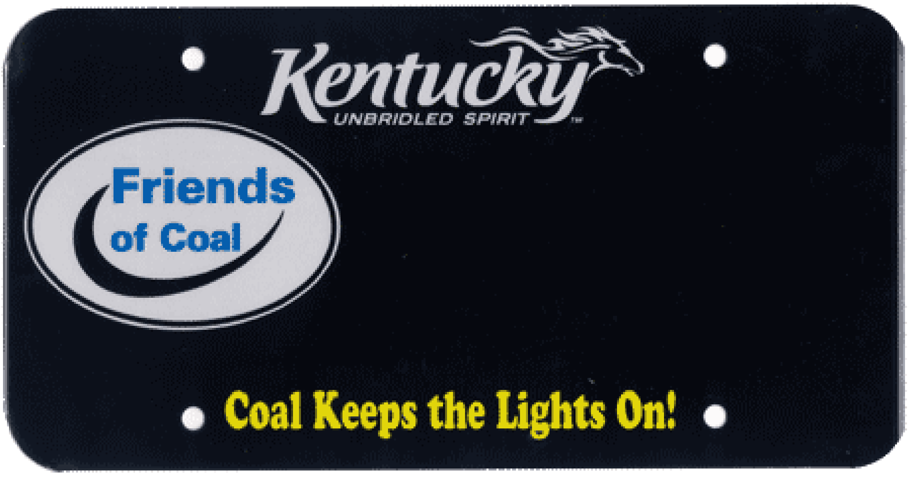


Figure 16. Friends of Coal license plate design. Image courtesy of www.KY.gov.

The purpose and power of the FOC campaign, though, does not stop with license plates and stickers (despite the ubiquity of both). The organization—which, according to its sparse website, is run on a volunteer basis, with free membership and members' 'level of involvement…at their own discretion'—also sponsors auto shows, community picnics, pro-coal rallies and political events (FOC ephemera was, for example, highly visible in the periphery and core of then-presidential candidate Donald Trump's West Virginia rallies in 2016), and major sporting events including the Friends of Coal Bowl, a college football game between long-time state rivals Marshall University and West Virginia University[21]. What is far more significant, though, and far more illustrative of the power of the FOC campaign, are its ability to coopt and redirect some of the various ways that extractive labour in Appalachia understands and maintains an affective connection to its own history. As many intimately familiar with extractive labour in central Appalachia told me, the coal industry found the FOC campaign necessary following the ultimate victory of the industry over the forces of unionization and organized labour. As it became clear that unions in the coalfields had lost the fight for meaningful (or radical) representation in the fights between labour and management, and as those unions that remained like the UMWA increasingly became coopted by the industry management they once fought against, coal operators found it necessary to reinvigorate Appalachian culture attachment to coal extraction. As retired union miners like Terry Steele, Sam Hatfield, and Gary Bone each described to me, the FOC campaign was formed in response to the loss of a sense of 'brotherhood', 'fraternity', and 'connection' shared by Appalachian miners and their families. John Gaventa (1982) describes the dynamics and tensions between power and powerlessness, quiescence and rebellion, in Appalachia's coalfields in Gramscian terms, noting that powerlessness will eventually produce passivity and an inability to act. In a contemporary Appalachia that has seen organized labour take its last meaningful breath while coal operators rise again to the highest levels of political power, powerlessness has come in the form of de-unionization. David Harvey (1996: 337) describes 'traditional…blue-collar and unionized' forms of labour and production as standard sites and sources of power, and any post-Gaventa evaluation of central Appalachia can make no conclusion other than that power no longer rests in those traditional sites of social organization and relation, but rather in trade organizations like Friends of Coal and the cultural productions and attachments that it manufactures. While some Appalachian cultural productions of extraction, then, might be more organic—such as the quilts and other crafts and folk arts described above—the FOC campaign is truly manufactured by the industry in a final bid for power over Appalachian lives and ecologies.

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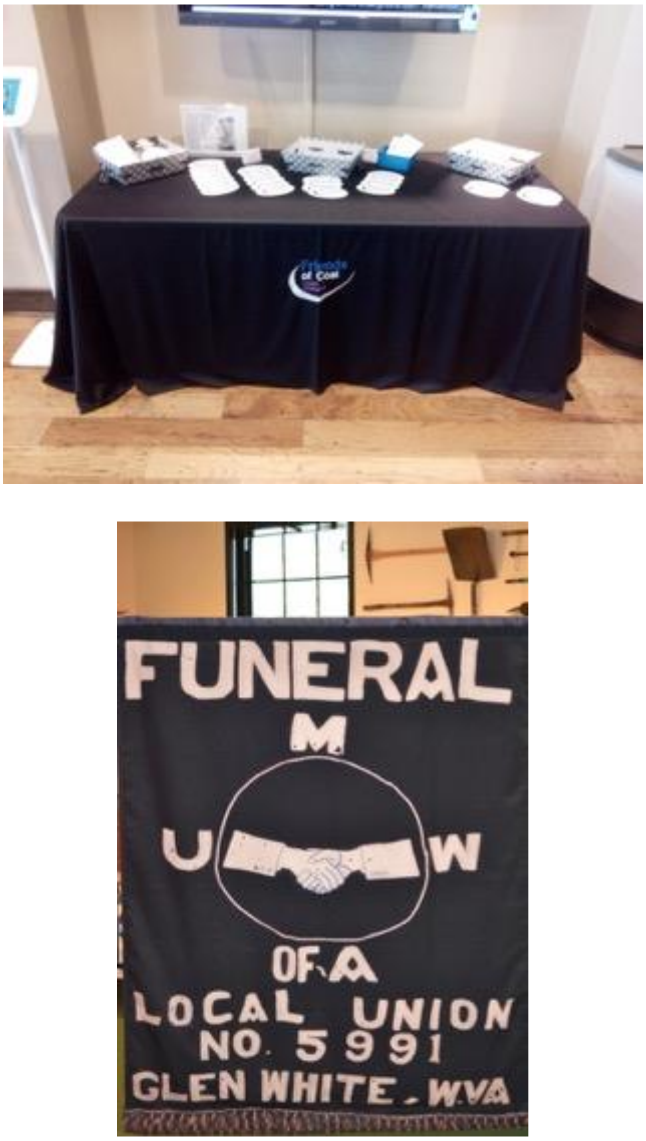
[21] The FOC Bowl trophy is itself a remarkable example of coal's cultural significance; called 'the Governor's trophy', it consists of a carbon platform, a glass pedestal, and a football made entirely of West Virginia coal. I made multiple efforts over three years to see the trophy in the private halls of West Virginia University's athletic department, but was never granted permission.

The strange and tense dialectics between Appalachia's history of radical labour organization (See generally: Hall 1986; Gaventa 1982; Korstad and Lichtenstein 1988;

Fones-Wolf 2007; Fisher 2009) and the FOC campaign is made most strikingly clear from the ground floor of the gift shop at the Beckley Exhibition Mine. Located in the old company store—itself a conceptual and material site of the exploitation and horror of Appalachian histories of extraction—the gift-shop entrance is dominated by a large table draped with a Friends of Coal banner. On the table are buttons and stickers, along with a few membership forms, and a sign-up sheet for the FOC mailing list run by the ‘Friends of Coal Ladies Auxiliary’.



Figures 17-18. Friends of Coal table and UMWA funeral banner, Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine, Beckley West Virginia. Photographs by the author.

Standing at the FOC table, one can turn a circle and see countless celebrations of coal, right down to binders full of antique company scrip—the tokens given to miners as pay in lieu of cash, pay spendable only in the company store itself—for sale[22]. From there, though, you can also look up, to the building's vaulted wood ceiling, where half a dozen banners—all original, and all beautifully crafted and preserved—indicate the significant and radical history of organized extractive labour in Appalachia. The banners, which would have primarily been displayed outside funerals and burial processions for killed miners, are an Appalachian craftwork all their own, with the United Mine Worker's clasped hands of solidarity floating over the name and number of the local. Among the countless surreal moments of historical collapse I have experienced in central Appalachia, looking up from the FOC table to the UMWA funeral banner is perhaps the most unsettling. What, after all, would the hundreds of miners who fought and died in the countless conflicts organized labour fought against coal operators, or the thousands of miners who died and continue to die in the mines, think about their history being relegated to sharing space with a Friends of Coal table? As Terry Steele told me later in the summer after my first visit to the exhibition mine, 'Coal ain't never been a friend to West Virginia, and if you live here and think coal is your friend, you might need to think about who you're friends with'.

Just as the coal industry has found in failing schools an opportunity to strengthen regional bonds with the extractive identity and culture of central Appalachia, so to has the FOC campaign found moments of extractive harm useful in affirming the position of the extractive identity as central to Appalachian subjectivity and affective attachment to coal. Following the spill of chemicals used in coal processing into the Elk River by Freedom Industries in 2014—a disaster described in the previous chapter—the FOC campaign quickly mobilized to provide bottled water to Charleston residents who found themselves without potable water. Here we can again locate the power of the coal industry to transform nearly any event into an opportunity to reaffirm its centrality to the region and further affective connections to extractive labour; deadly disasters, chemical spills, and failing schools are each mobilized and employed by the industry to strengthen its grip on central Appalachia.

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[22] Displays at the exhibition mine claim that scrip was a necessary part of the coal economy because it was 'expensive and problematic' for coal companies to keep U.S. currency on hand to pay miners. Here, perhaps more than anywhere else in the complex, the exhibition mine reveals itself as fundamentally celebratory of the violence and exploitation of historic modes of Appalachian coal extraction.

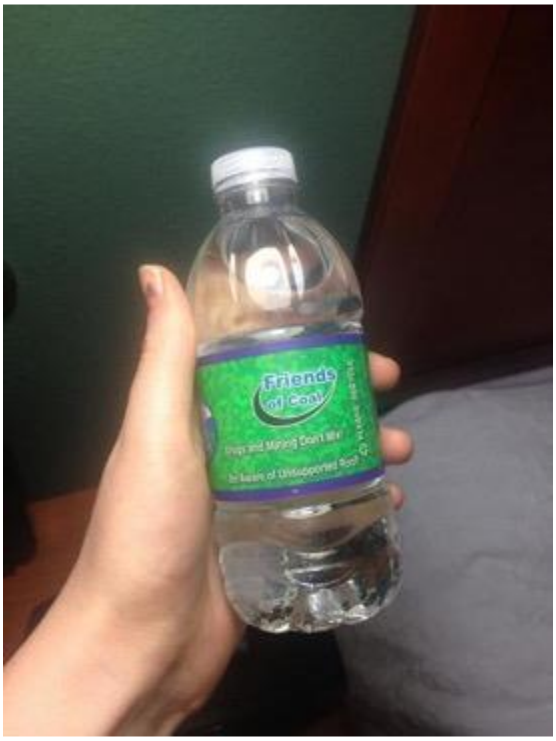

Figure 19. Friends of Coal water bottle. January, 2014. Photo courtesy of Emily Atkin.

Extraction, as established and described above, is a central and necessary part of many Appalachian identities and experiences. It follows, then, that regional attachment to coal extraction comes from more than the economic attachment and dependence described in the previous chapter. Instead, the extractive experience informs and conditions the cultural landscape of Appalachia just as it does the material landscape. While the extractive identity is, of course, reliant on the presence and history of extractive labour for its formation of a unique Appalachian culture and subjectivity, so too are those identities that resist extraction and its attendant effects on the material and cultural geography of the region. Here again, we can locate a tense dialectic; those identities formed around resistance to extraction require, of course, extraction. Resistant identities and cultural productions find their purpose and foundation in extraction. If these two identities and cultural formations exist in a mutually necessary and constitutive relationship, then, I find it necessary to begin to consider the moments in which they collide, moments most frequently experienced and communicated on the cultural register.

Cultures of Resistance and Anti-Extractivism

We'll fight 'em in the streets and we'll fight 'em in the courts
Where else we 'gonna fight 'em? In the mountains and the forests
Every single action done at night, pushes the cause into the light
-Appalachian Terror Unit, *Armageddon Won't be brought by Gods*

Before turning my attention to the ways that the anti-extractive or resistant cultural identity(s) of central Appalachia are communicated and constructed on the visual register, I find it necessary to include some discussion that can potentially trouble the boundaries of what we imagine and conceptualizes as 'resistance'. A long-running critique of cultural criminology—and one that I find equally applicable to any number of related sub-disciplines—is that it suffers from a tendency to fetishize resistance, seeking a radical political consciousness where none exists, and framing everything from drug use to skydiving as 'resistance'. Responding to those criticisms—which are, as he notes, little more than rehashes of Gouldner's 'zookeepers of deviance' critique of certain schools of sociological theory and method (1968)—Hayward (2016) aptly defends cultural criminology by noting that recent turns in cultural criminology have made efforts to fill in the gaps, so to speak, by offering a more theoretically rigorous account of moments and modes of political resistance on the cultural register (see generally: Brisman 2010; Hayward and Schuilenburg 2014). In central Appalachia, most of what I saw that read to me as political resistance was mobilized on the ground in the form of community-crafting projects. In small Appalachian towns like Naoma, groups like CRMW operate tirelessly to fill in the gaps left by a declining and rapidly vanishing industry and a state built around that single industry. Staff at CRMW, for example, organize river clean-up days, collect tires and other waste that would otherwise end up in ad-hoc roadside dumps, and offer their offices and other scant resources to support community members and events. They also house and support academics and activists working on any number of projects; in my time in Naoma, for example, I have met other social scientists, authors, poets, geologists, and biologists at the CRMW offices.

As made clear by the bumper sticker described at the start of this chapter, the one featuring Calvin urinating on the words 'tree hugger', one of the most significant forms of contemporary Appalachian culture—and one that frequently collides with Appalachian cultures of extraction, sometimes violently but nearly always with significant tensions—is the 'environmentalist' identity[23]. It is essential to note here that what constitutes an 'environmentalist' in central Appalachia is, in many ways, significantly different from what constitutes an 'environmentalist' in the broader context of socio-ecological relations in the United States. While the classic American image of the environmentalist is formed around notions of the sanctity of nature—and, as described above and by Richard White (1996), a tendency to delegitimize ways of knowing nature that come from engaging in material labour with and in natural ecologies, contemporary Appalachian identities that resist extraction tend to draw heavily on the 'hillbilly' identity described more thoroughly below. Staff at CRMW, for example, regularly engage in the sorts of immersive eco-cultural practices such as hunting, trapping, and fishing that would offend the sensibilities of many 'environmentalists'. For many of those in central Appalachia who are resistant to the harms of extraction, then, attachment to the 'environmentalist' identity is really just attachment to the idea that resource extraction harms regional ecologies, economies, cultures, and communities. It is, then, an identity not formed around a positive attachment to resistance or environmentalism, but an identity formed around a negative attachment to extraction. Perhaps, then, it is useful not to imagine colliding and competing cultures and identities of extraction and environmentalism, but instead to imagine competing cultures of extraction and *anti*-extraction.

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[23] It is worth noting that, to me, 'environmentalist' is a poor choice to capture and communicate the complexities of this identity. It is, for one thing, reductive, as most of the residents of central Appalachia that I know have relationships with the ecology of the region that are significantly more complex and nuanced than simply being 'environmentalists' implies. For another thing, as described previously, I do not find that 'environment' is an adequate category for the notation or description of non-human worlds. That said, for the sake of clarity and fidelity to discursive and cultural norms and recognisability, I will employ 'environmentalist' as a category of identity. An added advantage of that effort at fidelity is that it allows identities formulated around protection of the natural environment to exist in this work as they do in Appalachia: constituted in large part by opposition and antagonism towards them.

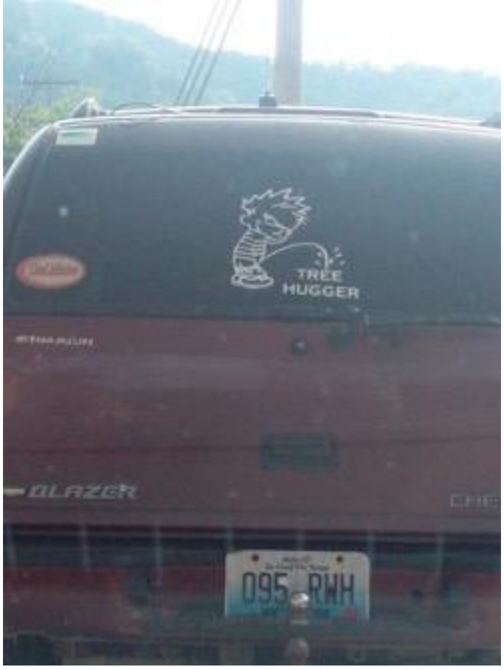

Figure 20. Bumper sticker in Hazard, Kentucky. Photograph by the author.

Prior to the rise of the modern environmental movement in the 1970s, most of the resistant cultural productions of Appalachia described the struggles of miners, their families and other extractive labourers against mine owners and operators. Songs, visual artwork, and stories (some written, but more often transmitted orally through the long tradition of Appalachian storytelling, a performing art in its own right) of this sort were frequently odes to organized labour and the unions and union men who fought against their own exploitation at the hands of ‘bosses’. Songs such as *Which Side Are You On?* and *Come All You Coal Miners*—written in 1931 and 1937, respectively—celebrate the resistant spirit of Depression-era unionized Appalachian miners. Other songs recorded and reported the local cultural response to the frequent human tragedies of extraction, such as Jean Ritchie’s bluntly titled ballad *West Virginia Mine Disaster* and Ketron, Crowder and Hall’s *Explosion at Derby Mine*. The struggles of Appalachian people were also chronicled, in this era, in the fiction of writers like James Still, Jesse Stuart, and Harriette Arnow and in the visual arts by painters, draftsmen and craftspeople—mostly anonymous—who produced work that either supported unionized labour (posters and handbills) or the sorts of crafts necessary to homesteading and mountain life (e.g. quilts, baskets, canning, and furniture).

Following the establishment of a global environmental movement, though, resistant cultural productions in Appalachia began to shift their focus from the plight of labour to the shared troubles of Appalachian miners and ecology. Recognizing the exploitation that each faced at the hands of coal operators, songs such as West Virginia native Billy Edd Wheeler’s *They Can’t Put It Back* draw parallels between the struggles of miners and nonhuman ecology in the Appalachian coalfields. More recently, issues of environmental destruction and labour exploitation in Appalachian extractive zones have been taken up by underground punk and heavy metal bands like Appalachian Terror Unit, whose songs *Armageddon Won’t be Brought by Gods* and *Sago* serve as calls for the radical environmental movement to turn its attention to the Appalachian mountains, and Panopticon, who in 2012 released a seven-song album dedicated to issues surrounding coal mining in Kentucky, including songs like *Black Soot, Red Blood* and *Bodies Under the Falls* that borrow heavily from earlier recordings of traditional Appalachian music, drawing a bold line connecting the anthropocentric concerns of earlier eras of regional mountain music and the ecocentric or biocentric concerns of much of contemporary resistant Appalachian culture. These new directions in regional cultural production—directions illustrating an emerging Appalachian eco-or bio-centrism—are also reflected in Appalachian literature produced since the 1960s and 1970s. Contemporary writers of Appalachia like Silas House, Wendell Berry, Dorothy Allison, Cormac McCarthy and Gurney Norman employ the regional landscape as a constant presence in their work, which often directly addresses the environmental and social harms of the dominant extractive logic. Similarly, contemporary visual artists in Appalachia now regularly incorporate themes of social and ecological justice into their work, with artists like Lindsay Barrick, Cynthia Ryan Kelly and Jeff Chapman-Crane creating work that directly addresses the human and nonhuman costs of Appalachian coal extraction. Photography, while having a questionable and sometimes problematic history in and with extractive Appalachia as discussed in the following chapter, has also contributed to the wider body of cultural work that communicates the complex social and ecological dynamics of the region; Ralph Eugene Meatyard, James Baker Hall and Daniel Shea—among countless others—have produced striking photographic images in and of extractive Appalachia that reflect the various dynamics of coal.

While the extractive identities that condition and configure Appalachian culture and cultural production are exercised on the registers of visibility and invisibility[24], Appalachian cultures of resistance to extraction appear, to me, to be more intensely reliant on visual cultural productions. As described in previous work (Natali and McClanahan 2017), communicating harms to natural ecologies often requires the use of the visual. In central Appalachia, visual communications of environmental change and harm operate on the visual register in parallel with cultural productions that support and celebrate extraction, highlighting again that the two dominant identities at work in the Appalachian coalfields are mutually constitutive, twin-opposites that require a tense symbiosis in order to mark their own territory in the social imaginary. Among the most recognized visual cultural productions that communicates the harm of coal extraction in Appalachia is sculptor and painter Jeff Chapman-Crane's *Agony of Gaia*, a mixed-media sculpture unveiled in 2004. The sculpture, which is roughly four feet wide and eighteen inches tall, depicts an Appalachian mountainscape carved from the side of a woman's form, lying on her side, with the mountains covered with draglines, excavators, trucks, and other tools of extraction, her head in her hands, and her face and posture contorted in pain. In the summer of 2015 I visited Chapman-Crane in his family's Kentucky studio and gallery, a space he shares with his wife and fellow artist Sharman Chapman-Crane. Looking at *Agony of Gaia*, I was moved—as I assume most audiences would be—but also struck with the ways in which the piece communicates an intensely gendered relationship between humans and nature, ecology and harm. As I have indicated in other work (Dunn and McClanahan 2016; McClanahan and Dunn forthcoming), the ways that some contemporary streams of 'environmentalist' discourse and cultural production entwine the related—but entirely separate—issues of gender-based violence and ecological harm seem to me to only detract from a critique that adequately challenges either set of issues (see also: Berman 2006; Beirne 1997). In the context of the Appalachian coalfields, a geography with its own peculiar and significantly complex gender relations, I can't help but feel that *Agony of Gaia* communicates a vision and version of the harms visited on the mountains that relies on its audience's acceptance of intensely problematic normative conceptualizations of gender.[25] Despite those questions raised by Agony of Gaia, though, the work of Chapman-Crane and many others offers a wealth of insight into the visual imaginary of the anti-extractive cultural identity.

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[24] Visibility in the sense of the iconography of extraction discussed above, and invisibility in the redaction of material geographies of extraction as discussed in Chapters 4 and 6.

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[25] As noted previously, the dynamics of gender at work in central Appalachia—and particularly in the mutually constitutive cultural spaces of extraction and anti-extraction—are hugely significant factors in the ways that the region is known, experienced, and constructed. There are, though, a wealth of voices far more qualified

These productions and performances—both supportive and resistant—are a central part of life in extractive Appalachia. With a regional history and present so dominated by the politics and practices of coal extraction, it is little wonder that intergenerational attachment to and participation in these forms of cultural expression is high, and that there is substantial affective power to be found in the collision of these cultural identities. It is also little wonder, then, that in some sense the end of coal mining in the region represents, in Appalachian imaginations both resistant and extractive, the end of a beloved culture. This is not, to be clear, to follow Jean François Lyotard's assertion that those who suffer the pains of capitalism often relish or embrace their own suffering—they 'enjoyed the hysterical, masochistic exhaustion of…*hanging on in the mines*' (Lyotard 1974: 214, emphasis added)—but instead to note that a strong attachment to a culture of resistant anti-extraction relies fundamentally on the presence of its twin-opposite, a culture of extraction. What is most interesting, then, are the many and significant moments when those two competing cultures converge, conflict, or overlap with one another. It is in those moments of collision that we find connections forged not by difference and power, powerlessness, and politics, but by the distinct ecological subjectivity of place—of Appalachia and the mountains.

Collision, Conflict, and Convergence

On my ninth day in the coalfields of southern West Virginia in the hot summer of 2015, I found myself driving aimlessly along state highway three, taking in the landscape and, essentially, letting myself wander in whatever directions I felt pulled in. I had, at that point, communicated only briefly by email with the people that would later come to be my friends,

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than my own to describe and analyse those dynamics. I will note here, again, that those descriptions and analyses can be found in the work of Shannon Elizabeth Bell, Rebecca Scott, and Kathleen Stewart.

confidants, and contacts in this part of the state, and so I mostly found myself on my own. Unsure of what to do with the day, but hoping to find my bearings in the area that surrounds the CRMW offices, I drove to the only address I had been able to find online for CRMW, on the main street of the small town of Whitesville, West Virginia. At the address, I found a midsized white cinderblock storefront, and from the sidewalk I could see that the building was empty and unused. Walking along the side, though, I encountered a large mural, facing the street so that it could be easily viewed by anyone driving into town from the west. The mural, which covered the building from the sidewalk to the eaves of the roof, consisted mostly of an idyllic Appalachian mountainscape with a blue sky above. Inserted onto the painted hillsides, though, were six pieces of heavy machinery—mining machines—stenciled in safety orange over the soft green of the painted mountains. Each of the machines had a small figure painted over it, and when I got closer I saw that these were illustrated activists, each chained to a piece of machinery and each holding signs bearing slogans like ‘Clean coal is a dirty lie’ and ‘Stop mountaintop removal’. To me, then, the mural depicted a moment in the struggle between the extractive and resistant identities that so intensely condition the cultural landscape of southern West Virginia and eastern Kentucky. Such moments, of course, are many, and many of them are legendary in their own right, operating as stories and mythologies that are told and retold in order to give meaning and history to the social conflict between various identities of extraction and resistance in central Appalachia.

Several days after first encountering the mural—which I would later learn was on the former offices of CRMW, before the organization had moved down the road to the Judy Bonds Center in Naoma—I would get the full story of the mural, a story far more complex and foreboding than I had imagined. Sitting on the porch of the Judy Bonds Center with Junior and Adam, our conversation wandered to Whitesville and the former office, and I mentioned the mural, noting that I was somewhat surprised that a public artwork critical of coal extraction had lasted in a town that felt, to me, to be so thoroughly captured by the logics of extraction. As it turned out, though, the mural had begun as a simple landscape, painted by Adam and a handful of other residents and CRMW volunteers. Several weeks after it was completed, though, CRMW staff had arrived one morning to find it vandalized with the unwelcome addition of the stenciled machinery. Here, I can only speculate about the intentions of the vandal; was the goal to communicate an Appalachian subjectivity and identity captured by extraction by implying that the mountainscapes of Appalachia are incomplete and meaningless until they are transformed by extractive capital into spaces of surplus value, or was the goal to present a resistant subjectivity and identity by correcting an erroneously idyllic presentation of an Appalachia that potentially ignored the ways that coal has and continues to condition the material geography of Appalachia? For Junior and Adam—whose instincts and intuitions on such matters, of course, I am inclined to trust over my own—the answer was clear as day: the mural had been vandalized by someone wishing to communicate their support for the coal industry. Knowing that, and faced with a mural that now communicated the exact opposite of what they had hoped, Adam and the original artists quickly mobilized, painting the activists and their chains and signs. The vandal did not return to add more machinery, or to somehow remove the activists added by Adam and the other CRMW artists. Junior tells me that some days later, though, he arrived in the morning and found a note taped to the mural, on top of one of the painted mountaintops. The note read 'Be careful, or this will be the next mountain we blow up'.

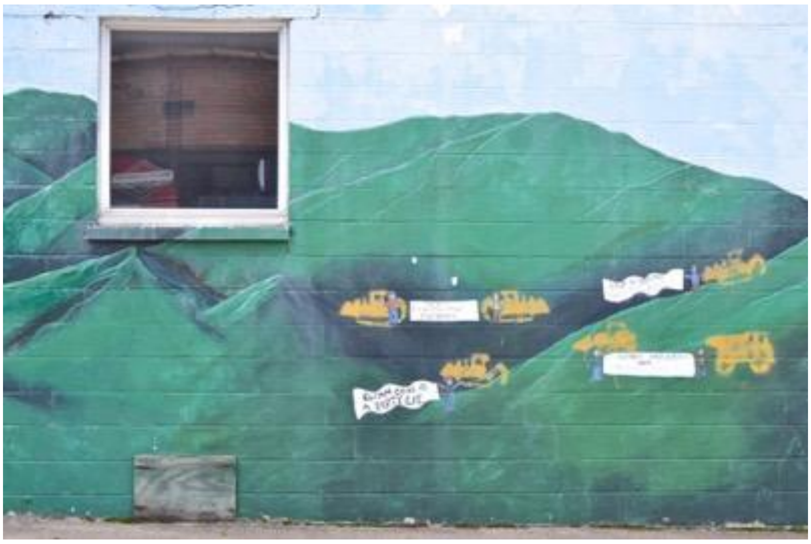

Figure 21. Defaced mural on empty offices of Coal River Mountain Watch. Photograph by the author.

At the center of the tensions between extractive and resistant Appalachian identities are tensions between different ways of knowing and conceptualizing ‘nature’ and ecology. Richard White (1996) notes that, among the issues that trouble the contemporary environmentalist movement, the most problematic are the positions that modern environmentalists take towards labour. White describes the ways in which productive work is conceptualized by most environmentalists as linked with ecological destruction, a position that ignores the ways that work itself can often be a ‘way of knowing nature’. White goes on to note that contemporary environmentalist movements often privilege leisure and play in nature over work, transforming nature into a place that humans visit for leisure, but not for life or labour[26]. In central Appalachia, these competing ways of knowing nature condition social relations at the intersections of the extractive and resistant identities, as evidenced visually by the vast and various ways that each identity constructs the other; the extractive identity positions itself in opposition to ‘tree huggers’ while the resistant identity positions itself in opposition to miners. Each of these two identities, then, exists in a mutually constitutive and necessary dialectic with the other.

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[26] These types of competing ways of knowing nature and experiencing central Appalachia are discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 5.

While White describes the ways that those who work in ecologically harmful industries often clash with environmentalists and activists because of their status—real or perceived—as ‘outsiders’, and while ‘outsiders’ are certainly a special and significant social category in Appalachia (e.g. in the presentation of clashes between ‘locals’ and ‘outsiders’ in cultural productions of Appalachia), I found very few outsiders in my time in the field. Quite the contrary, in fact, as the vast majority of people I met who could be accurately called activists, or who ascribed to some degree of an identity based on resisting the logics of extraction, were themselves former or current coal industry workers. With virtually no exceptions, the people I met most critical of the industry drew or had drawn a paycheck from the industry. The economic capture of central Appalachia described in the previous chapter, then, is again proven to tell only part of the story of Appalachia’s cultural attachment to and relationship with coal extraction.

Historically, some of the same works that culturally resist harms suffered by extractive workers also celebrate the extraction process; the classic coal-mining anthem *Which Side are You On?*, for example, does little but celebrate extractive labour, provided it’s unionized labour. Here, the lines between support and resistance are blurred, and so what appeals to the extractive logic might also appeal to the anti-extractive logic. Moreover, in cultural productions that support certain dimensions of coal extraction that might be easily reconciled with values of social justice, we can again locate examples of the same sort of dynamics that characterize the Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine’s side-by-side presentation of the histories of organized labour and contemporary extractive capital. What is made clear is that the moments in which the tensions between labour and management in the coalfields are ignored or concealed (e.g. as in the Friends of Coal campaign) in order to present a sort of cultural continuity and attachment are part of a focused effort on the part of the coal industry to present a version of history that redacts the vast ecological, economic, social, and material violence of extractive capital in Appalachia. Despite industry efforts, though—or, perhaps, because of them—the violence of extraction is routinely made clear in the cultural landscape of central Appalachia, brought to the fore by the efforts of resistant Appalachian identities.

In central Appalachia, it seems that most people exist in the gulf of difference between the extractive and anti-extractive identities—between knowing nature as a site of labour and production, and knowing nature as a site of affective connection and leisure or play. Only the most vocal and regionally disconnected environmentalists, for example, condemn the individual miner, and only the most antagonistic and aggressive supporters of extraction condemn the individual activist. It seems to me that one explanation for this is that many in central Appalachia experience their own subjectivity in the middle of these two poles, in a conceptual space formed primarily by the peculiarities of Appalachian ecological subjectivity, as is made clear in the prevalence, particularly in Eastern Kentucky but also in southern West Virginia, of cultural productions that support and celebrate extraction and ecology side by side, such as the ubiquitous bumper stickers printed with the slogan ‘I love mountains and miners’ beneath a simple outline of a mountain ridge.

Knowing Ecology: Hillbillies, Homesteading, and Biopiracy in Appalachia

Among the cultures and identities that most intensely condition and construct Appalachia in the social imaginary (both internally and externally), perhaps none has the persistence, salience, and complexity of the ‘hillbilly’ identity, stereotype, and subculture. Primarily configured around the qualities of laziness, ignorance, churlishness, and an untrustworthy character, the hillbilly stereotype first emerged in and from popular culture in the first decades of the 20th century. By 1920, though, the foundations for the construction of what would come to be widely recognized as the hillbilly had long been laid by literary and graphic productions from ‘as far back as the colonial era’ including ‘portrayals of the rural rube; conceptions of poor whites of the southern backcountry; and images of the inhabitants of the southern mountain regions’ (Harkins 2003: 13). What most obviously connects the origins of the hillbilly stereotype—and its contemporary usage and deployment in the construction and communication of a culture of difference—is rurality and an immersive connection to ecology. Here again we can locate tensions between the modern environmentalist movement and those people and cultures that live in and configure the rural landscapes of America’s frontiers and heartlands: it is that which contemporary environmentalists seem to prize most—a connection to nature—that most characterizes the hillbilly, yet little common ground can be found between the two in contemporary discursive and cultural spaces (see generally: Cronon, 1996).

The foundations of the hillbilly stereotype and archetype in rurality provide it with a certain stability, giving it a degree of continuity not enjoyed by many other cultural stereotypes; rurality is always there, lurking in the margins of the social imaginary, as competing conceptual geographies of idyll and horror[27], and so the hillbilly appears sometimes as the bearer of folksy wisdom and valid ecological knowing, and sometimes as the churlish and dangerous backwoodsman terrorizing outsiders. What is left uninterrupted, though, is the centrality of the hillbilly to the ways that we imagine, understand, and communicate Appalachia—and, more broadly, rurality—in a socio-cognitive furtherance of an American mythology of conquest and capitalist mastery of ecology. Because the hillbilly identity and stereotype are most closely related to the southern states and mountainous regions, we can accurately locate the Appalachian coalfields as the central site of the hillbilly, and so we can begin then to interrogate its significance, use, and power in the ways that central Appalachia is constructed, communicated, and experienced. Moreover, we can begin to seek and locate the various ways that the hillbilly identity often provides the connective tissue that binds the ecological knowing of the anti-extractive resistant identity and the extractive identity.

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[27] These conceptual spaces of rurality and Appalachia are discussed and described thoroughly in Chapter 5.

Before proceeding with a discussion of the meanings locatable in the contemporary employment of the hillbilly identity, I find it necessary to briefly establish and then promptly move away from the ways that the hillbilly has been employed as a negative stereotype of Appalachian cultures and subjectivities. There is, of course, no denying that the countless appearances of the hillbilly in popular culture are troubling and intensely problematic. From the most recognizable and earliest uses of the trope and archetype in pop culture—*The Beverly Hillbillies* and the villains of *Deliverance*, for example—the hillbilly has endured as a cultural site of earned derision, owing either to a fundamental ignorance, atavism, violent nature, inbreeding, or any combination of those tendencies. Those are, of course, all vastly reductive and inaccurately assumed traits for the people and cultures of central Appalachia, yet they continue to inform and structure the majority of cultural representations of Appalachia.[28] What is generally consistent in the derisive production of the hillbilly is, again, a deep and intimate connection to nature, and so we can locate in those productions the deep unease that contemporary subjectivities of bourgeois and urban/suburban social order experience when confronted with the realities of human life immersed in rural and mountain ecologies. The superabundance of representational misfires of the hillbilly as a stand-in for white low-class criminality across popular cultural productions has been widely and aptly critiqued (see generally: Young 2017; Linnemann and Wall 2013).

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[28] Exceptions exist, of course, and are in some ways just as powerful if not just as many. There is, for example, a culture industry that produces images and texts of an idyllic Appalachia that is every bit as fictional and ahistorical as the imagined Appalachia populated by atavistic, ignorant, and inbred hillbillies.

Having established that the hillbilly as employed in popular culture is, by and large, a fiction that cannot be found in the material and cultural space of central Appalachia—an obvious point, considering that the hegemonic hillbilly of popular culture is, first and foremost, ignorant, and that any form of survival in the economic and ecological spaces of central Appalachia requires a great deal of wisdom, intelligence, and ingenuity—I must now offer an essential point (and one I will return to more thoroughly in the final chapter) about the significance of whiteness in central Appalachia in establishing distinctly American social orders of race and class.[29] Central Appalachia is imagined most readily and frequently as a geography of whiteness, a space made by and for white people and unavailable at best, hostile at worst, to people of colour. While it is true that the demographics of much of contemporary central Appalachia reflect its status as a white space, to imagine the region in those terms in a fundamental way is to ignore and erase first the original population of much of Appalachia—American Indian tribal groups—and second the populations of black Americans in the southern slave-owning regions of Appalachia and, later, the population of free blacks in antebellum Appalachia. In contemporary Appalachia, though, forces ranging from the great migration of black Americans to the north following World War I, the transition from an agrarian society to an industrial one, and the more general depopulation of Appalachia following the decline of economic opportunity in the coal industry, have led to a geography that is whiter than national averages. Before the Civil War, for example—and, of course, before the other historical moments listed above—10 percent of Appalachia's population of 5.4 million was black, higher than the national average. By 1990, though, Appalachia had grown from 74 percent white to 91 percent white. Since 1990, however, Appalachia's white population has undergone a relative decrease, down from 91 percent to 88 percent between 1990 and 2000 (Pollard 2004: 1-2). What is most significant about the cultural production of Appalachian whiteness, though, are the various ways that the broad cultural category of the hillbilly has been employed in constructing categories of white difference and otherness that support the racial and class divisions required by bourgeois capital. Put simply, the hillbilly exists as a distinctly rural subcategory of 'white trash', itself a category constructed and employed in order to reify the intensity of social divisions based on class.

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[29] An essential and understated point embedded in discussions of the intersectionality of race, class, and gender is that geographic and cultural space matters (see generally: Jackson 1991; Valentine 2007; Nightingale 2011). Central Appalachia, as much or more than any other American space, illustrates the ways that the spatial placement of a person or community intersects with race, class, and gender in order to intensely condition place and opportunity in the economic and social order.

In central Appalachia, though, the historical and derisive meaning and power of 'hillbilly' is all but meaningless. Instead, 'hillbilly'—and the related 'mountaineer'—are accepted and applied lovingly and with a large measure of respect. In southern West Virginia, for example, I frequently encountered people who described themselves or others as 'hillbillies' in order to quickly establish a high degree—perhaps the highest—of ecological knowledge and know-how. Here, then, hillbilly implies a true capacity for living off the land and a deep ecological intelligence and sensitivity that connects the contemporary hillbilly identity to its generational forebears. The special ecological knowing of the contemporary hillbilly is manifest in contemporary Appalachia in subsistence practices like hunting for squirrel, rabbit, deer, and other game animals, fishing, trapping for pelts and meat, foraging for ramps, wild garlic, watercress, dandelion greens, and other vegetables, berries, and mushrooms. Ginseng hunting, though, illustrates what is perhaps the most illuminating and meaningful contemporary practice stemming from attachment to the specialized ecological knowledge of the hillbilly identity. Because wild American ginseng is in high demand on Chinese medicinal markets, and because it grows in relative abundance in central Appalachia—particularly in the mountains of southern West Virginia—prices for the root have skyrocketed in recent years, with a pound of dry ginseng fetching as high as $750 in West Virginia in 2016 (wildozark 2017). In West Virginia, the harvesting of wild ginseng is highly regulated, with a season starting on 1 September and closing on 30 November. Ginseng diggers—called, in regional parlance, 'sengers'—find the plant growing wild on hillsides and in hollers, spotting the bright red berries, and then use a ginseng hoe to dig out the roots, which are then dried, weighed, and sold to one of the countless buyers that descend on the region each autumn, their tents lining the usually empty backroads.

Ginseng and 'senging' offer a significant economic opportunity for many residents of central Appalachia, with ten or twelve weeks of work potentially netting thousands of dollars for diggers. In recent years, the practice has captured national attention with the popularity of reality television programs like History Channel's *Appalachian Outlaws* and National Geographic's *Smoky Mountain Money* following sengers through the season as they hunt, harvest, and sell the root. Both of those programs follow on the heels of other reality-television programs set in the mountains of central Appalachia that employ dimensions of the rugged and self-reliant hillbilly stereotype, generally focusing on the rural production of illegal homemade whiskey—moonshine—that is a hallmark of the Appalachian hillbilly stereotype. Common across all of these programs is the persistent tendency of mediated representations of the Appalachian hillbilly to ignore the historical economic, social, and ecological exploitation of the region at the hands of extractive industry. Ginseng digging and the ginseng economy, though, also highlight new contemporary modes of the exploitation of Appalachia's resources by outside interests and capital, as harvested wild ginseng is sold primarily to outside buyers who will sell the roots for a massive profit to a Chinese market always clamouring for wild ginseng. The seasonal ginseng economy, then, is illustrative of what many green criminologists have described as 'biopiracy' or 'bioprospecting', an essential part of a colonialist logic and architecture of the capitalist accumulation, exploitation, and commodification of indigenous and regionally-specific modes of ecological knowledge. In the ginseng economy, then, we can locate yet another example of Appalachia's place as an internal colony (or, following David Walls' critique of that framing of Appalachian subjectivity as a colonial subjectivity, an internal periphery within an advanced capitalist economy) and an ecology from which knowledge and material resources can be freely extracted in the interests of absentee capital.

Despite, though, the many problematic dimensions of the hillbilly identity and its use in constructing and configuring Appalachia as a geography of difference, it remains an affectively and materially significant force in the region, and one that many residents are significantly attached to. Attachment to the rugged and self-reliant dimensions of the 'hillbilly' identity, moreover, connects the intergenerational, collective cultural memory of pre-coal Appalachia to the geologically and economically realistic collective cultural understanding of a looming (or, perhaps, contemporary) post-coal Appalachia; many times in the field, I heard the sentiment that the coal operators and industry could disappear at any time, that such a disappearance would be welcomed, and that residents would happily return to a life built on less destructive and exploitative social and ecological relations. Those who identify with the self-reliant Appalachian hillbilly would, these residents hope, rely on small-crop subsistence farming, ginseng hunting, trapping, and other staples of early settlers of Appalachia in order to make not just a living, but a life.

Visualizing Appalachian Spaces, Cultures, and Futures

If the ecology, economy, and cultural identities of central Appalachia are constructed and conditioned by the tensions and dialectics of extraction (and resistance to extraction), those some ecological and social forces and relations are also configured, communicated, and represented most significantly in the production of visual culture. Following that, if a visual green cultural criminology is to emerge, it is of immediate necessity that we begin to interrogate the visual register—in all of its forms, when possible—for evidence of the construction, communication, and consumption of meaning. Across central Appalachia, the competing and mutually constitutive and constituted cultural forces of extraction and resistance employ the image—in terms of material images and visual metaphor—in an ongoing and dialectical conversation about the pasts, presents, and futures of the region's ecologies and communities. Those conversations, of course, are informed by the history of visualizing Appalachia from both within and without, a history that is often shot through with the same fundamental dynamics of exploitation, marginalization, and social death that has so intensely configured the ecological and social landscapes of Appalachia.

As the ecologies, economies, and cultures of central Appalachia continue to be captured by the forces of extraction and extractive capital, the region's places and people continue to be captured as well. Here, though, we can begin to think 'capture' as increasingly immaterial; rather than the territorial and ecological capture of the mountains, or the construction of an Appalachian political economy so thoroughly captured by the historical dominance of the coal industry, we can now begin to think capture in its most visual sense, the capture of people and places through the mechanics of the produced photographic image. As significant as the forces of the extractive economy have been in the construction of contemporary Appalachia, what is perhaps most essential for understanding and locating meaning in the intersections of Appalachian cultures and ecologies are the ways that the geography built by extraction is communicated, the ways that the peculiar material and cultural landscapes of central Appalachia function in and across the fields of culture in order to both affirm and challenge the production and reproduction of social and ecological order.

Among the challenges facing central Appalachia—challenges that range from the proliferation of drugs to the destruction of vast swathes of the mountain ecosystem, but challenges that all find their origin in the extractive history of the region—perhaps the most troubling is the challenge of imagining a future for the region. Because the past and present of Appalachia, as it is constructed and understood culturally, is so intensely configured and conditioned by the outsized economic, cultural, and ecological power of extractive capital, to imagine a future for central Appalachia that does not involve resource exploitation and ecocide at the hands of a voracious coal industry is all but impossible. Perhaps, though, we can work to locate an Appalachia that exists above and below the Appalachia we know—we have always known. Perhaps there is, in the margins of contemporary ways of knowing and experiencing the peculiar mountain subjectivity of Appalachia, a set of new possibilities and futures we can imagine. Before, though, we can begin to visualize and imagine new futures for central Appalachia, we must reckon with the ways that Appalachian people and ecologies have been visualized, conditioned, and configured by and within the distinctly extractive history of the region.

Chapter 4

'Another Form of Extraction': Capturing Images of Appalachia

I know I see a darkness

I know I see a darkness

I know I see a darkness

I know I see a darkness

-Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, *I See a Darkness*

In 1967, in Jeremiah, Kentucky, a small town in Letcher County, on the far south-eastern edge of the state near the border with Virginia, prominent Canadian documentary filmmaker Hugh O'Connor arrived on land owned by a local man, Hobart Ison, in order to film and photograph families living in rental homes owned by Ison. O'Connor and a film crew were in Kentucky to shoot footage for *US*, an exhibition film they were producing with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation that would show moments and social scenes from all walks of American life. Filming coal miners and their families in central Appalachia, O'Connor and his crew sought to capture everyday scenes of Appalachian life. On arriving on Ison's property, O'Connor and his crew obtained permission from tenants to film and take photographs, paying each of the households $10. Word of the crew's presence spread quickly through the small town, and when Ison learned that his renters were being filmed, he raced to the scene. Confronting O'Connor and his crew of camera operators, Ison stepped out of his 1947 Buick sedan with a .38 caliber Smith and Wesson pistol[30] in hand and angrily told the crew to stop filming. O'Connor was happy enough to leave, but began to argue that the crew needed time to collect their equipment. Hobart Ison responded decisively, shooting twice into the camera, and then at O'Connor. Hugh O'Connor was struck with two bullets in his chest. As he lay dying, O'Connor uttered his last words to the man who had shot him: 'Why'd you have to do that?' (Cameron, 2002).

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[30] The gun that Ison used to kill O'Connor would, incredibly, go on to take another life; in 2003, a housekeeper would use that same weapon—removed by its owner, a relative of Hobart Ison, from storage in the hope that Elizabeth Barret would purchase it for use in her documentary about the O'Connor murder—to shoot and kill a teenage boy during a dispute over a house fire (Lin, 2005). This legacy of violence and the ways that it is imbued into a single material artefact highlights the unique relationship between extractive violence and time that I explore and describe more thoroughly in the following chapter.

Hobart Ison, of course, did not have to shoot Hugh O'Connor. O'Connor's dying words, though, are a question that deserves consideration. Why would the camera pose such a threat? What, exactly, was Ison's objection to his land and tenants being captured on film? In order to locate the answers to those questions—and broader questions that surround the politics, power, and social relations that condition the production of photographic images—I will turn to a discussion of the ways Appalachia has been captured by the ocular mechanics of photography: the complex and contested history of the production of images in and of Appalachia, what historical and contemporary moments of the photographic capture of Appalachia reveal and obscure, and the ways that the dominant ways of seeing Appalachia are resisted through mindful photographic capture.

In 1963, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* was published. The book was a collection of Letcher County, Kentucky author and lawyer Harry Caudill's observations on the devastation and poverty left in the wake of a then-declining coal industry. *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* was published on the heels of a 1962 piece Caudill wrote for The Atlantic magazine, not so subtly titled *The Rape of The Appalachians*[31]. Caudill's book garnered major attention, finding itself on the shelves and reading lists of powerful men like President John F. Kennedy. Kennedy, who was so moved by Caudill's account of extractive exploitation and poverty in Eastern Kentucky, planned to visit the region to learn more, and to shed light on the plight of Appalachian residents. Before the president could make the trip, though, he was killed in Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963. His successor, Lyndon Johnson, in his stead, made the trip that Kennedy had planned. Arriving in Eastern Kentucky in 1964, Johnson brought with him and in his wake a cadre of journalists and photographers eager to capture Johnson's engagement with the social and ecological conditions described by Caudill (Williams, 2002: 338). Johnson's visit would ultimately lead to Appalachia's central place in his 'unconditional war on poverty'—declared in his State of The Union address in January of 1964—and to the earliest moments of what has since been an uninterrupted flow of images of Appalachian poverty and social and ecological violence and ruination.

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[31] For a discussion of the ways that ecological problems are often framed using the language of gendered violence, see: McClanahan and Dunn 2016; Forthcoming.

Among the photographers who made significant contributions to this newly emerging Appalachian visibility was John Dominis, who by the mid-1960s was already a celebrated photojournalist known for the breadth of his abilities in shooting everything from the Korean War to sporting events and celebrity portraits. Working in eastern Kentucky in 1963, Dominis produced a series of images which would be curated and collected into *The Valley of Poverty*, a 12-page spread that appeared in the January 31, 1964 issue of LIFE Magazine. Dominis' iconic images of life in rural extractive Appalachia—mostly taken in Letcher County, Kentucky—captured the national imagination with their depictions of the harsh social conditions of an oft unseen 1960s American geography that, as framed by Dominis' photographs, appears to be 'America in the grip of the 1920s Great Depression' (O'Hare, 2013). Dominis' images of Appalachia would contribute significantly to the construction of one of many visual Appalachias. The Appalachia communicated in and by Dominis and journalistic contemporaries like Billy Barnes, Homer Bigart, and Andrew Stern, though, has been sharply contested as 'transpos[ing] Appalachia into a marketable media commodity and help[ing] to establish a pattern of critical but superficial commentary' (Eller, 2008: 89). Despite critical intervention, though, the *Valley of Poverty* photographs contributed to the construction of an Appalachia that captured the social imaginary as a 'zone of difference'

(Cameron 2002: 412).

Behind Dominis and Johnson there would follow a steady stream of photographers and documentarians, each contributing to the construction of a visual Appalachia characterized by the same poverty, exploitation, and ecological and social violence captured by Dominis. Ultimately, this newly visible Appalachia would become, in the words of Appalachian filmmaker Elizabeth Barret, 'a place inundated with picture *takers'* (Barret, 2000 [emphasis added]). Here Barret highlights a fundamental problem of photography in Appalachia—and, perhaps, everywhere; images are *taken*, extracted from the social and ecological landscape. In a region so dramatically and negatively affected by the material processes of resource extraction and so heavily researched and documented, then, photography sometimes comes to feel , in the words of a local activist and former coal industry employee I interviewed in Whitesburg, West Virginia in 2015, like 'just another form of extraction'. Barret makes this point devastatingly clearly in discussing the flood of images extracted from central Appalachia during the War on Poverty era: 'Some [filmmakers] wanted to show ... a contrast to help bring about social change; others mined the images in the way the companies mined the coal' (quoted in Price, et al., 2000: 408) Following this, it is essential to keep in mind, when considering the relationship between photography and coal extraction in Appalachia, that the form of extraction with which Appalachia is most directly familiar—the extraction of coal—is fundamentally violent, and so the subtle extractive violence implied in the machinery and mechanics of photography takes on a special kind of weight in the region. In both historic and contemporary Appalachia, the violence of image-taking is often met with the sort of violence—both implied and realized—that, through the relationship the region has with the violence of coal extraction, so intensely structures and informs perceptions of Appalachia.

The Problem with Portraits: Photographic Discourse and the Truth of the Image

Whether the visual method is interrogative/conversational—e.g., photo elicitation, a method most prominently proposed for visual green cultural criminology by Lorenzo Natali (2010; 2013a; 2013b; 2016. See also Natali and McClanahan, 2017) —or mechanically productive—e.g., production of original images for analytical engagement—those engaging in the work of a visual green-cultural criminology must necessarily be aware and mindful of the political nature of the image (particularly in historically contested geographies like Appalachia). The necessity of a reflexive and carefully considered understanding of and approach to the use or production of images in the field (and, following work in the field, the use of images in the text) only grows when the field is contested. Contested fields—and it is worth noting that nearly all material environments are in some ways contested—may be unsettled in a variety of ways. Spatial and ecological fields may have contested meanings. For example, is a river a site of intrinsic ecological value, or a shipping channel? Is a mountain a natural wonder, or a potential source of extractive capital? While these meanings are conditioned and constructed by subjectivity, they may also be settled and reified, to some extent, by historical or material forces—a river can become a shipping channel, a mountain can be blasted into a mine, and so forth. Similarly, social realms can have highly contested meanings; individuals and groups can be endlessly categorized and subcategorized, each construction accepted or challenged. The image, of course, plays a central role in the construction of contested meanings, and so the researcher—in particular the green cultural criminologist seeking to employ a visual methodology—must remain mindful of and, in fact, reckon with the meaning of the images produced or used in the field.[32]

Alan Sekula (1982: 85) describes the image as functioning within a ‘photographic discourse'—an exchange of information—and so we must always understand the image as an exchange item, something that necessarily exists and functions in relation to other forms and objects. We must also, though, remain ever mindful of the particulars of 'exchange' as the foundational concept underlying communication; as Sekula reminds us, 'all communication is tendentious…all messages manifestations of interest' (1982: 85-86). Moreover, when considering visual methods in green-cultural criminological work (or, for that matter, any methodologically-visual sociology or criminology), the image must always be understood as discursive and contested—its meaning conditional and conditioned. The notion of 'photographic truth' is, in Sekula's words, a 'myth' (1982: 86). Noting the mythic properties inherent in the image, we can move forward with an approach to visual research that recognizes those limitations, and work reflexively to avoid the pernicious temptation of misunderstanding the production (or use) of images as the production (or use) of objective truths devoid of the marks of culturally-bounded and ascribed meaning(s) and the various other effects of social relationships. In extractive Appalachia, this means being aware of the tensions between local people and image-takers—tensions that span from Hobart Ison and Hugh O'Connor to more contemporary tensions that frame and condition the production and reception of images by photographers like Stacy Kranitz, whose work is discussed more thoroughly below.

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[32] There is, of course, a large body of literature addressing the responsibility and politics of representation from an equally large number of theoretical positions. My aim here is not, though, to provide a comprehensive overview of those literatures, but rather to discuss the responsibility and politics of image making in the particular geography of Appalachia.

While it is tempting to understand the image as 'natural'—a pure reflection of material ecology captured on film in an image of a landscape, for instance—the nature of the photographic image (at least, insofar, as it quickly developed) is, somewhat circuitously, not natural but *political*[33]. Sekula (1986: 4) describes photography as promising 'an enhanced mastery of nature,' in that it allows for the capture of nature, of the natural moment. That initial promise—the ideal of the camera as 'the pencil of nature' (Talbot 1844), or as a meaningful threat to the social order—was quickly broken. The captured image was nearly immediately employed not against the existing order, but in the interest of power, as the photographic image quickly became understood primarily as an essential tool for the reinforcement of property rights and class order, a formative shift that in Sekula's words both signified and ushered in 'a new juridical photographic realism' (1986: 5). It is of exceptional importance for a visual green-cultural criminology, then, given the historical development of photography, that photographic images of ecological landscapes and spaces not be mistaken as 'natural' in the sense that they capture an objective natural state. Rather, a visual green-cultural criminology should strive to always understand images and their production as fundamentally and devastatingly social.

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[33] For Roland Barthes (1977), even before the image or its production is political, the image itself is never 'natural', but only ever an analogy or copy.

The image, of course, can still be (and still is) very much understood as *evidence*. For the green-cultural criminological enterprise, the image may serve as evidence of environmental conditions, environmental harm, cultural response, resistance, ecocide, and so forth. Indeed, many of these conditions may be only adequately communicated by the image: understanding mountaintop removal, for example, requires a visual form of what Benjamin described as the 'dialectical image' (see Pensky, 2004; Benjamin, 1969; Auerbach, 2007)—a single image or composite that visually illustrates a historical dialectic, the passing of time and shifting material conditions. An image of what is materially and objectively an ecological harm—an image that captures one end of a temporal process—might take on a different meaning to a viewer detached from the temporal processes that gave rise to the harm, unless coupled with an image of the other end of that temporal line. Put simply, without understanding what once was, we can often not understand what is.

All of this is to say, essentially, that the image—its production, its use as a discursive tool or form, its meaning, the meaning of its production, and so forth—is not in any sense free from the political. Describing the political dimensions of documentary photography—

certainly the most conceptually accessible form at the intersection of criminological method and the production of images, particularly in green cultural criminology, with its fundamental interest in ‘showing’—Johnson (2011: 622) notes that ‘documentary practice allows us to bring compassion…into focus in one particular domain.’ Here, again, we can locate an idealized photographic approach—one that resonates with the empathic goals and foundations of cultural criminology: at its best, the production of documentary images is a form that seeks to elicit compassion for its subject.

The most obvious photographic interest for green cultural criminology is landscape—green cultural criminology seeks to ‘show’ and imbue with meaning environmental conditions, relations and change. But there is also significant reason to consider the dimensions and conditions of social and environmental change presented by portrait photography of human subjects. Portrait photography presents, in particular, a virtually endless series of issues for those producing images of Appalachia, as well as those using images as part of a broader interrogative or conversational method. While portrait photography can certainly arouse compassion, to return to a central (if idealized) photographic goal from Johnson (2011), it can also arouse derision. For the subject, a portrait may ‘read’ as a true, honest image of self, or, conversely, a portrait may ‘read’ as a distorted visual image, or as an essentializing and flattening reproduction of self. This is a particularly vexing problem when producing images in the field as a green-cultural criminologist—no one, perhaps least of all the empathic cultural criminologist, wants to produce an image of a stranger that the individual *con*tests or *de*tests. Photography of human subjects is an intimate act, and the spectre of rejection is an uncomfortable possibility lingering over the photographic moment. Thus, I again point to the significance of methodological choices in the field. Conducting research in any contested social and spatial geography requires the green-cultural criminologist to account for the historical and contemporary relationship between the photographer and the subject. In conducting research in Appalachia, that means accounting for an uninterrupted history of what is often understood by Appalachian people as visual exploitation.

In light of these concerns and conditions, and following an ongoing moment of methodological reflection, while conducting fieldwork I did not engage in the production of images featuring—or, whenever possible, including—human subjects. As Sekula (1981) describes, the image inevitably and intentionally is a part of a ‘photographic discourse,’ and the dominant and seemingly inescapable visual discourse of Appalachian people is, as described in what follows, so contested and problematic that a politically and ethically comfortable space within it could not be found during research. Moreover, as noted above, during a conversation with a lifelong-resident of the area, he described his feeling—one that he indicated was consistent across his community—that ‘having [his] picture taken felt, really, like just another form of extraction.’ Recognizing the fundamental violence of coal extraction, and learning from local contacts that being the subject of portrait photography often felt like extraction, I did not want any part of the subjective violence of photographic extraction, and so worked at every turn to avoid it. Those issues of ethics and methods that are peculiar to Appalachia, though, are of course structured by the region’s particular relationship with the image and its aesthetics, the image taker, and the archive. With that in mind, I will now turn to a discussion of the ways that Appalachia has been captured in the image and the archive, the ways that dominant images of Appalachia exist in conversation with other images and visualities central to the cultural and political project of the United States, and the ways that intimate and embedded regional knowledge of that capture continues to configure ways of knowing Appalachia.

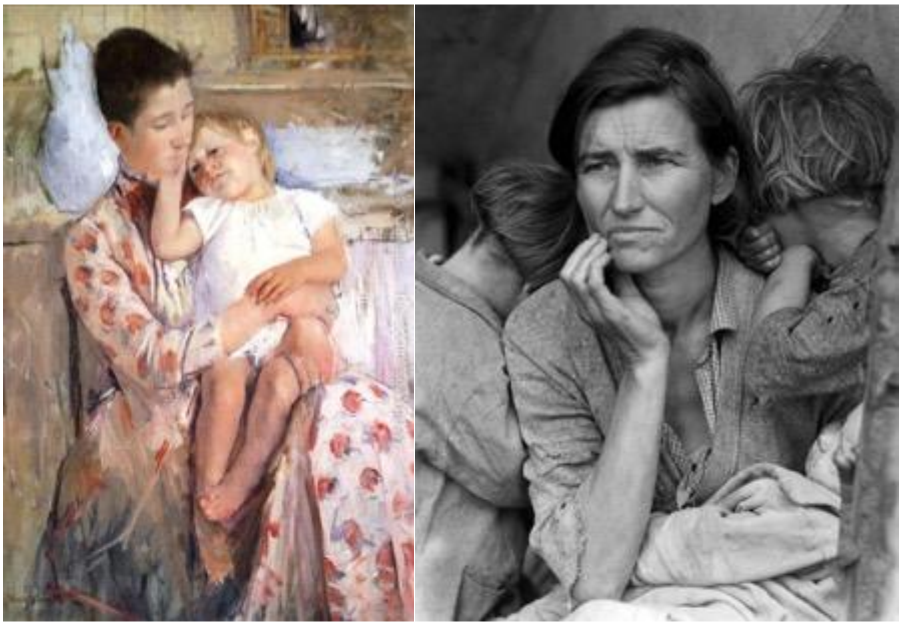
‘Please Don’t’: Capturing Appalachia in Black and White

As part of President Johnson's War on Poverty, in 1968 the federal Office of Economic Opportunity and the American Film Institute partnered to create the non-profit institution Appalshop. By the mid-1970s, Appalshop had established itself as a—or, more accurately, the—hub of filmmaking in the region. Expanding its mission to include the publication of books, the creation of major regional archives, the production of spoken-word and musical recordings, and the creation of a radio station, Appalshop has continued to guide, foster and catalog many dimensions of cultural production in Appalachia (Charbonneau, 2009; see also: Hanna, 1997). Appalshop has released over 100 films, including Elizabeth Barret's *Stranger With a Camera*, discussed above, and numerous other films covering topics ranging from the environment, to coal, to Appalachian music and culture. First and foremost, though, Appalshop is centered on visual media and culture, a focus that underscores the essential role of the image in the War on Poverty and the construction of Appalachia as not only the frontline in that war, but a 'geography of difference' (Pratt and Hanson, 1994; Cooper et al., 2011). Appalshop was a constant presence in the background of my childhood; vegetables were carried from garden plots to the kitchen in brown canvas bags with the Appalshop logo printed on the side, and when spending weekend afternoons in the kitchens and studios of my parents' Kentucky author friends, my sister and I would thumb through books of photographs, poetry, and prose published under the Appalshop imprint. I have vivid memories of the brown wood exterior of the Appalshop offices and studios, located in Letcher County, in Whitesburg, Kentucky. So when I returned to Whitesburg in the summer of 2015, with an interest in exploring the relationship between Appalachia and photography, Appalshop was my first stop.

After spending a few days sitting in a small room in the Appalshop offices, combing through stacks of old photographs and watching outtakes from various Appalshop documentaries while listening to the live broadcast of Appalshop's WMMR radio, I met and talked with Sarah, an instructor and facilitator with Appalachian Media Institute, an Appalshop affiliate program that works to foster local youth engagement with and production of media. Talking to Sarah in the AMI studios—an open and invitingly dishevelled large building just across the street from Appalshop's studios and offices in Whitesburg—I explained my research. Sarah and I talked about everything from the experiences of young people in the region to the ways that coal extraction conceptually links the tourist economy of east-central Tennessee to the extractive cultures of Kentucky and West Virginia. Nearing the end of our talk, Sarah offered me a request that would come to be the foundation of an essential framework that would guide not only my movement and practice in the field, but also the ways that I understand the historical forces that condition Appalachia's place and purpose in the social imaginary: 'Just…please don't take a bunch of black and white pictures, ok?'

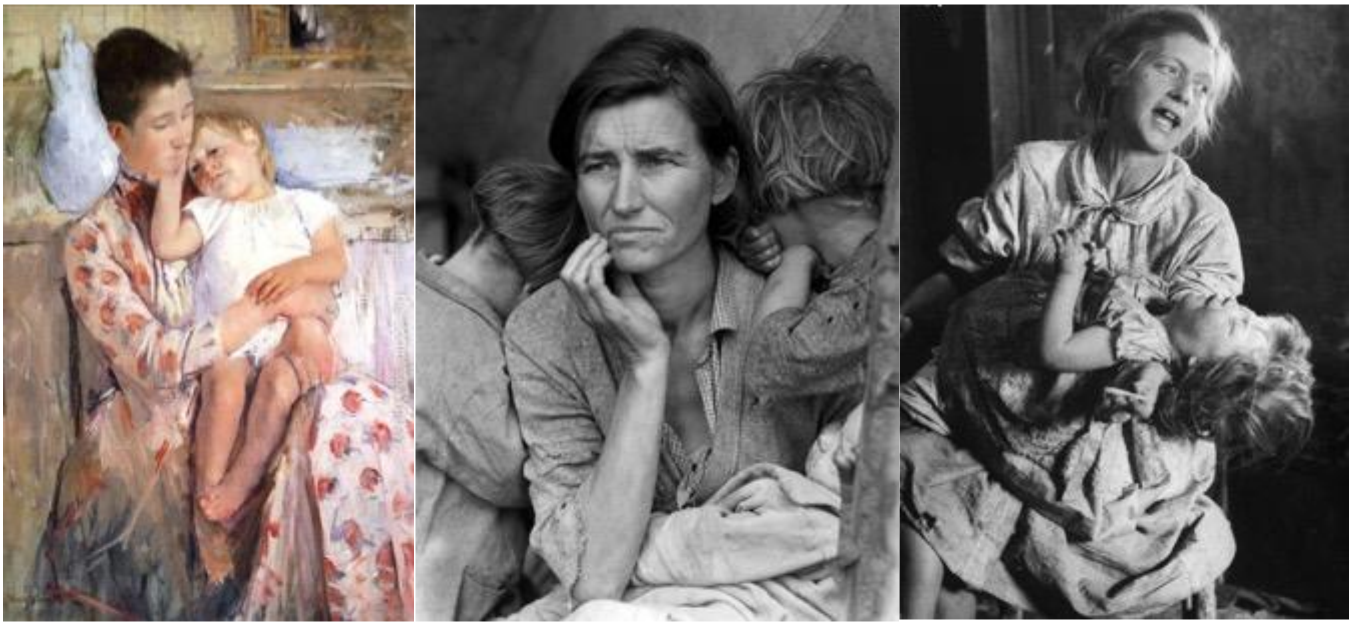
Central to the problematic visual economy of Appalachia is what Sarah highlighted: the construction of the region's place in the visual social imaginary through the proliferation of black-and-white images depicting Appalachian life, culture and ecology. Because so many of the various efforts to visually apprehend and communicate Appalachia have relied extensively on the use of black-and-white photographic techniques, the material and social landscapes of the region exist in the visual social imaginary, in many ways, in black and white. This visual Appalachia—what I will simply call 'black-and-white Appalachia'—communicates a region that is backwards, pinned to a bygone era of American rural life. While black-and-white Appalachia has been, perhaps, the most visually recognized Appalachia because of its historic significance in communicating Appalachian life, it is a visual Appalachia that is strongly contested and challenged within regionally grounded discourses: often lost in the stark aesthetics of a black and white Appalachia are the complexities and nuances of a region, its cultures, and ecologies. As Saskia Sassen (2011) describes, black-and-white photography holds the unique ability to ‘create distance’ and ‘unsettle meaning’, and surveying the landscape of black-and-white Appalachia as it exists in the social imaginary, Sassen’s assertions hold true: meaning, complexity, and closeness are in short supply, replaced with the stark difference and distance of high-contrast black-and-white images.

The images produced by John Dominis and others—including later photographers of Appalachia like Ted Wathen and Earl Dotter, discussed more extensively below—are part of a visual economy of American poverty that exists in large part on the visual register and in the visual social imaginary in black-and-white portraiture. The history of that visual economy, though, is firmly rooted in the images produced by Farm Security Administration photographers who took many of their cues from a broader understanding of art history. Art historian Eric Rosenberg locates the iconic FSA images of American poverty firmly in conversation with American painter and printmaker Mary Cassatt. Following Rosenberg’s suggestion, we can look at FSA photographer Dorothea Lange’s *Migrant Mother* (1936) and Cassatt’s *Mother and Child* (1890) side by side in order to tune and turn our attention to the conversation between these two images:



Figures 22 & 23. *Mother and Child*, Mary Cassat, 1890 and Migrant Mother, Dorothea Lange, 1936. Images courtesy of

Looking at the two images side by side, the various ways in which they rhyme is clear in the subjects, composition, and framing. Rosenberg notes that ‘despite the dramatic class and historical differences’ between the two images, Cassatt’s painting could ‘very well stand as a prototype’ for Lange’s photograph (Blair and Rosenberg, 2012: 85). If we extend the dialogue between these two images some three decades into the 1960s, though, we can locate both Lange and Cassatt as providing a prototypical aesthetic and composition for Dominis:



Figures 22, 23, & 24. *Mother and Child* (1890), Mary Cassat; *Migrant Mother* (1936), Dorothea Lange; Untitled (1964) John Dominis. Images courtesy of their respective owners.

Placing Dominis' image—the maternal subject of which is Delphi Mobley, from Neon, Kentucky, comforting daughter Riva, who was ill with measles—in conversation with the iconic images of American poverty produced by the FSA photographers, it becomes clear that much of the construction of black-and-white Appalachia is a result of artistic choice, rather than technological limitation. As established earlier, Dominis' photographs communicate a place 'in the grip of the 1920s Great Depression' (O'Hare, 2013) despite being produced over 40 years later. And while the Depression-era photographs of the FSA—which sought to transcend documentary practice, as captured in the motto shared by FSA photographers: 'not to inform, but to move'—were produced solely in black and white, FSA reliance on that mode of photography was entirely due to the technical limitations of the era; colour film would not become widely available until some twenty years after the final FSA photographs were produced (Blair and Rosenberg, 2012). Dominis, though, arrived in Appalachia in the 1960s, and by then colour processing and printing technologies had developed to the point of ubiquity (Wilhem and Brower, 1993). Nonetheless, Dominis and his contemporaries in photographing the War on Poverty era in Appalachia shot almost entirely in black and white—and for Dominis, this was hardly the only mode of photography he operated in; he also produced many iconic and full-colour images of African cats, celebrities, and significant moments in sports and political history (Loengard, 1998). The guiding aesthetic that characterizes Dominis' work in Appalachia—and, indeed, many of the images essential to Appalachia's place in the social imaginary during and following the War on Poverty era—is, then, an aesthetic born of artistic choice and vision, not the technological limitations that the aesthetic suggests. The images that came to characterize social conditions in Appalachia leading up to and during the War on Poverty era, though, would provide the foundations for an ongoing scopic regime (Falk, 1997; Ly, 2003) of Appalachia that communicates a social and material geography suspended in a temporal parallel with an era that, by the late 1960s, had long passed.

If Dominis extends the visual regime of the FSA's Depression-era images into the 1960s while retaining the essential visual signifiers of work by FSA-era photographers like Lange, picture takers like Shelby Lee Adams drag those same aesthetic signifiers into the contemporary moment. Adams, a noted photographer who has published three volumes of images produced in Appalachia, trains his lens on the impoverished residents of the mountains and hollers of Eastern Kentucky and West Virginia just as Dominis and others did 30 years before him. Adams work stands in sharp relief to Dominis', though, in that any illusions of documentary or verite ambition or practice are just that: illusions. In *The True Meaning of Pictures: Shelby Lee Adams' Appalachia,* a 2002 documentary film exploring Adams' work and practice, directed by Jennifer Baichwal, archival film footage taken during Adams' shooting in Eastern Kentucky in the early 1990s reveals the extent to which his images are illusory. The film opens with Adams shooting portraits of two young Kentucky girls, playing in the family driveway with hula hoops. Adams is seen and heard directing and posing the girls, and when one of them begins to smile, Adams instructs her to maintain a more dour expression: 'You're making a face again,' he says, as a smile slowly begins to spread across the girl's face. She quickly snaps the corners of her mouth back down, and Adams fires his flash and shutter. Later in the film, we see Adams staging a 'hog killing'—a typical, albeit somewhat bygone, rural practice involving a small gathering of family and friends slaughtering and processing a hog—with a family in the 'head of a holler' (Adams excitedly describes his practice of finding remote hollers and driving until the road ends, where he claims to find the perfect subjects for his photographs, the 'most poor and primitive' families). This particular event allows Adams to produce one of his most iconic photographs, an image of a family standing proudly before a hog hanging from its hind legs, its skin flayed open down the belly, its head removed and sitting in a bucket at the feet of the family.

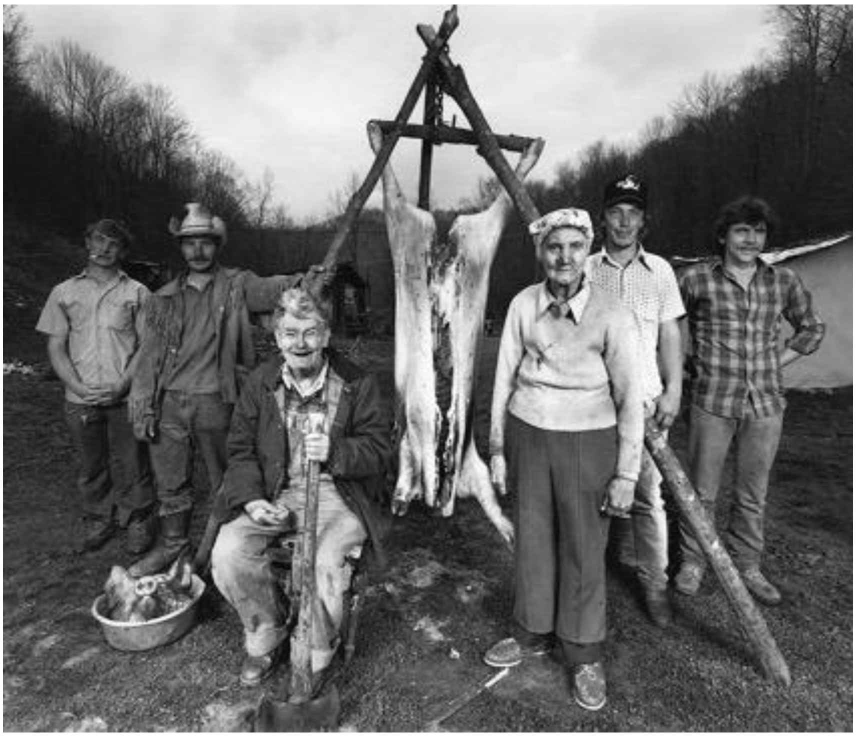
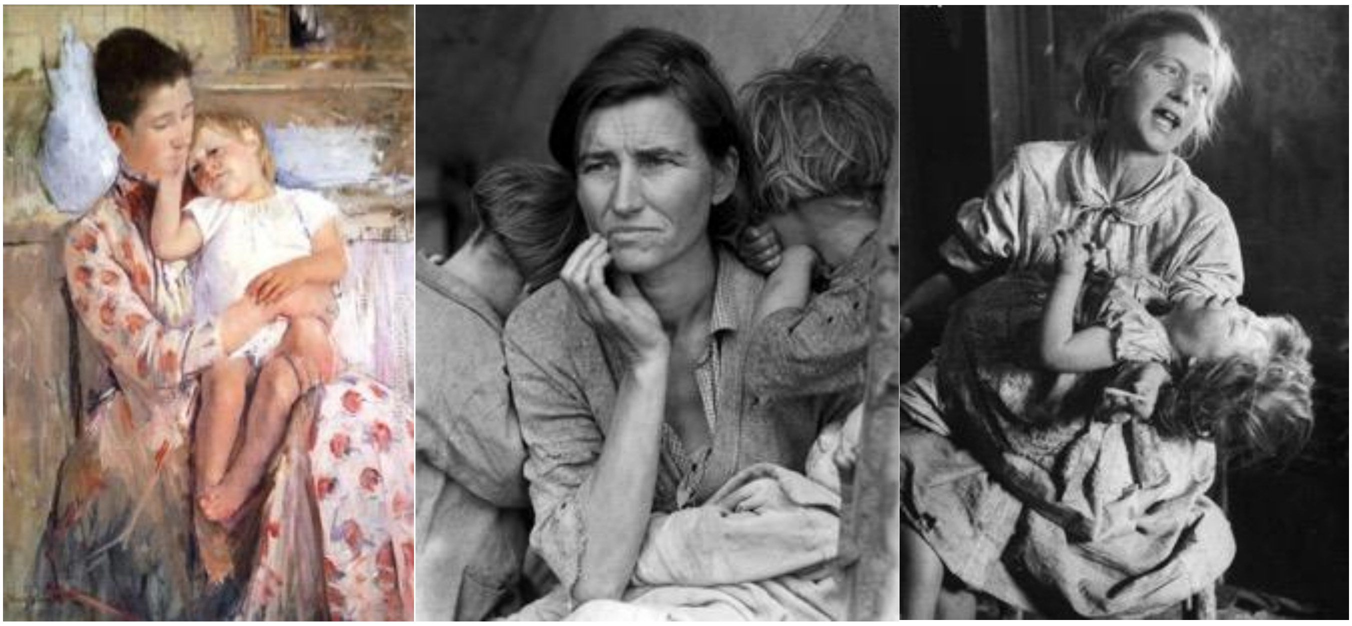
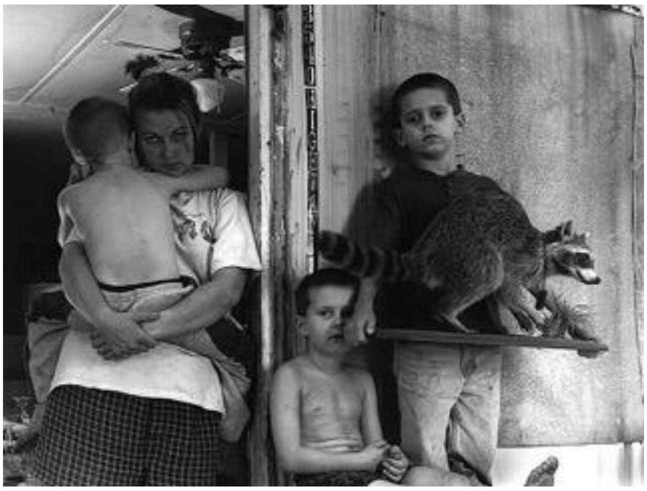


Figure 25. Shelby Lee Adams, *The Hog Killing*, 1990. Image courtesy of Shelby Lee Adams.

While the image above is striking, and not entirely without parallel in the lived experience of Appalachia—I fondly recall attending hog killings as a child in rural Kentucky—it is in no way representative of this family's life; Adams is shown suggesting to the family that he purchase and arrange for the delivery of the hog—the family is too poor to keep hogs—and photograph the killing. Adams talks at length about the resulting image, about how he could ‘see it perfectly, knew how [he] wanted it’ prior to the shoot. To know Appalachia through Adams is to know an Appalachia without the agency or ability to smile: the faces in his portraits are more dour than joyous, and smiles only appear when they provide a useful contrast to an image of Appalachian atavism or violence. In archival footage shown in *The True Meaning of Pictures*, though, we see a steady stream of smiling faces, quickly directed by Adams into the blank, sad, lurid or mournful images that characterize his work, and that place it in staged conversation with the work of Lange, Dominis, Dotter, and others. We can add, then, to the triptych reproduced above, Adams’ contribution to the conversation:





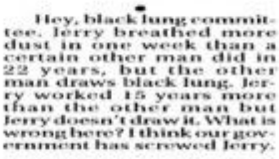
Figures 22, 23, 24, & 26.. *Mother and Child* (1890), Mary Cassat; *Migrant Mother* (1936), Dorothea Lange; *Untitled* (1964) John Dominis. *Teresa and Family* (2003), Shelby Lee Adams. Images courtesy of their respective owners.

What we get from Adams' work, then, is less an accurate or objective image of rural Appalachian life and more a glimpse into the vision of Adams the artist, a vision that seems to reproduce the same body of images, the same visual narratives, that were violently rejected by Appalachian people three decades prior when Hobart Ison confronted and murdered Hugh O'Connor. There is, of course, nothing fundamentally *wrong* with artistic vision, and artistic choice is exercised in every moment of photographic capture. Adams' work, though, is often presented as documentary—and, indeed, the images are framed and presented by Adams in a way and format that supports that interpretation, in part because of how intensely they draw on the aesthetic forms established by earlier efforts to photograph rural Appalachia specifically, and American poverty more broadly. Moreover, Adams' images take on the feel of images produced by anthropologists who offered images that affirmed the colonial perspective (Poignant 2004; Maxwell 2010). Reading Adams' images through the lens offered by critical interpretations of anthropological photography, then, reaffirms what I argue in Chapters 1 and 2 is central to the conceptualization of Appalachia as an internal resource colony. Adam's does not intervene in the black and white visual economy of Appalachia established by Dominis and others by training the contemporary photographic optic on contemporary social and ecological conditions. No, instead Adams' images stall the development of new ways of seeing Appalachia, suspending the region and its people in a time that does not exist. Through the work of Adams, then, we can begin to locate some of the visual dimensions of an Appalachia which has seen its historical and contemporary conditions merged into a monolith.

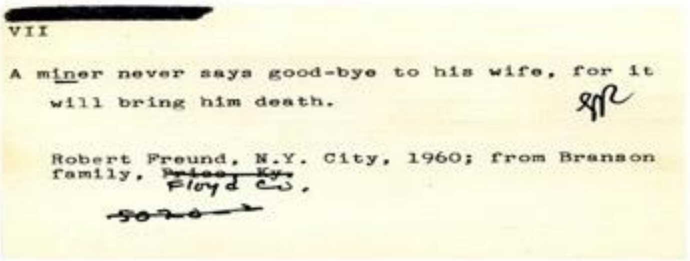
What is essential, though, is to locate the role of extractive capital in this process; as discussed at length later in this work, it is extractive capital that captures time and history here. The forces of that capital and the ways that it conditions social and ecological relations are evident in the work of Dominis and other important photographers of Appalachia like Ted Wathen and Earl Dotter; Dominis and Wathen by way of context, as their respective images were part of a broader visual corpus depicting conditions in coal camps, and Dotter more directly, as his images explicitly sought to render visible the dangerous and destructive work of Appalachian coal extraction.

Some contemporary photographic endeavours in Appalachia, though, reject the simplification or limitations of black-and-white Appalachia. Stacy Kranitz, for example, has assembled a body of Appalachian images that more accurately capture the complex web of social and ecological relations that characterize and imbue the region. In her series *As it Was Give(n) to Me*, Kranitz trains her lens on an array of Appalachian people and places, rejecting the stark black and white of Dominis, Wathen, and Adams in favour of a vivid palette, Kranitz presents contemporary images in direct conversation with archival materials, children's drawings, and other material ephemera of place. Kranitz's pictures, then, operate in a dialectical space where the historically established scopic representation of Appalachia collides with the visual reality of contemporary Appalachia. In Kranitz's work, also, the spectre of coal and extractive ecocide is always lurking in the margins, as in the images below, taken from Kranitz's *As it was Give(n) to Me*:

WV COAL
ESTIVAL, INC
ADISON, WV



Hey, black lung committee. Jerry breathed more dust in one week than a certain other man did in 22 years, but the other man draws black lung. Jerry worked 15 years more than the other man but Jerry doesn't draw it. What is wrong here? I think our government has screwed Jerry.



[redacted]

VII

A miner never says good-bye to his wife, for it will bring him death.

Robert Freund, N.Y. City, 1960; from Branson family, ~~Price, Ky.~~ Floyd Co.

~~5070~~

Figures 27-31. Selections from *As It Was Given To Me* (2013), images courtesy of Stacy Kranitz

In each of these images—some original photographs, some found images, some drawn from archival materials, and some textual presentations of messages delivered to Kranitz by her subjects—the significance of coal is clear: from silhouetted miners, to the visible signs of the health impacts of living and working in a geography of extraction, to the direct calls for justice in the wake of those negative health effects, Kranitz captures the significance of something which cannot be overstated, but is all the same conspicuously absent from so many visual depictions of Appalachia. Both the violence and culture of coal haunts Kranitz's work in much the same way that it haunts the lives and landscapes she photographs, and the archives, histories, and memory that mark the material geography of central Appalachia. Kranitz's work, though, is not without controversy. In 2012, CNN published a selection of 16 of Krantiz's Appalachian photos, and the images were met with scorn by critics, many of them Appalachian residents themselves (O'Hagan, 2015). The charge against Kranitz was a well-worn but legitimate one—that her images simply confirmed the worst of the many Appalachian stereotypes, showing a reductive vision of Appalachia through 'the KKK and strippers'. Kranitz, though, defended the series, charging that CNN had done a poor job in selecting the 16 published photos from a selection of 77 Kranitz provided. In a response to CNN's curatorial choice, Kranitz clarified that her series did indeed contain images that conform to common Appalachian stereotypes, but that the intention of the series was to 'offer a counter' to those stereotypes (Kranitz, quoted in: May, 2012). Indeed, offering those counterimages was a central goal of the project for Kranitz, who frames her work as 'a dialogue about stereotypes: the mythology they create, their value and their role in society' (Kranitz, quoted in: O'Hagan, 2015). Defending Kranitz, Appalachian photographer, writer and publisher Roger May—who has himself curated *Looking at Appalachia*, a vast and ongoing web archive and series of contemporary images of Appalachia—describes CNN's editorial process as a 'pattern' in which the editorial decisions are made by 'skipp[ing] over image after image of 'everyday lives of the people from Appalachia' and settl[ing] instead for the most common stereotypical images from our collective darkest preconceptions of this region. In short, they perpetuated the visual myth of Appalachia' (May, 2012). May's defence hints at two essential points: that there is a guiding and dominant visual myth of Appalachia and Appalachian people, and that images conforming to that mythology draw on our darkest imaginative capacities.

The Gun and The Camera

The moment of confrontation shared by Hugh O'Connor and Hobart Ison continues to reverberate through Appalachia in the work of various image-takers, revealing and illustrating something fundamental about the ways that the presence of the machinery of image-taking can condition and structure social relations. As Kaja Silverman notes in her history of photography, 'we have grown accustomed to thinking of the camera as an aggressive device: an instrument for *shooting* [and] *capturing* the world' (Silverman, 2015: 1, emphasis added). Annie McClanahan (2016: 118), similarly, describes the ways in which 'the camera has long colluded with the state' in 'introduc[ing] the panoptic principle into daily life' (Sekula, 1986: 7). McClanahan (118) goes on to sharpen the point of this critique, describing the ways that 'peering down the barrel of [a] gun echoes the photographer looking through his lens'. Filmmaker Colin Low, a colleague and contemporary of Hugh O'Connor's, notes in Barret's film that 'a camera is like a gun. It's threatening, invasive, exploitative' (Barret, 2000). Further historical evidence that highlights the fundamental sameness of the camera and various material tools of violence can be located in the history of Polaroid instant-film technology, a technology and brand name that is, perhaps, synonymous with 'picture.' Founded in 1937, Edwin Land's Polaroid Company developed a method to coat thin plastics with crystal arrays that would align when the plastic substrate was stretched, a technology that proved essential first to the development of polarizing and anti-polarizing lens coatings, and later to the development of instant film that allowed users to produce prints with no processing, enlargement, or developing (American Chemistry Society, 2015). Before

Polaroid's technology was employed in the production of photographic violence, though, it was employed in the production of the material violent technologies of war, as the company produced—before its iconic film and camera offerings hit the market in 1947—an array of gun sights, bomb sights, and pilot's goggles for the US war effort in Europe and Japan (Linderman, 2010). In a spatial, political and cultural geography like extractive Appalachia, particularly at the height of its prominence in the media landscape of photojournalism and documentary film in the 1960s and 1970s, the intrusion and violence of image-taking was keenly felt by residents, as evidenced in the moments in which Hobart Ison was called to account for the killing of O'Connor.

Arguing the impossibility of finding a suitable pool of impartial jurors in Letcher County, the Kentucky state's attorney who prosecuted Ison, Daniel Boone Smith, successfully argued that the trial should be moved to neighbouring Harlan County. Smith recounts that people in Letcher County widely supported Ison, although none denied that he had killed O'Connor. What is telling, though, about the ways that photographic intrusion into the social world of extractive Appalachia had affected and conditioned local responses to picture-takers, is revealed the defence of Ison by the Letcher County public. Because his guilt was not in question—in fact, it was unquestionable—the social defence of Ison hinged on the provocation of the camera itself. Smith recalls Letcher County residents approaching him to defend Ison, noting that, in their view, 'he [Ison] *should've* killed the son of a bitch' and that if Boone let them on the jury they would 'turn him [Ison] loose' (Trillin, 1987: 62). Over 100 Letcher County residents attended Ison's initial bond hearing, offering to help pay the bond to have Ison released to await trial. These sentiments arose from the feeling, seemingly widely held in Letcher County and across Eastern Kentucky, that O'Connor and his crew were in the region to carry on a photographic project that started with Dominis' Valley of Poverty, a project which 'made fun of mountain people'; 'They ought'nt to make fun of mountain people. They've made enough fun of mountain people, Boone' a Letcher County resident told Smith (Trillin, 1987: 64). Stock and Johnston (2001: 240) note that 'locals defended Ison not because they approved of murder and not because of an innate, clannish suspiciousness of outsiders, but because they perceived the prying eyes of reporters to be an assault on manners, common decency, and the integrity of their communities.' In the minds of the subjects of Appalachian photography, O'Connor's project was clearly a continuation of earlier projects of image-taking in Appalachia, projects that coalesced into the feeling of uninterrupted photographic exploitation at the hands of 'privateers and pirates', armed with cameras, notepads, and microphones, that had intruded on Appalachian lives too much to bear. While that history does not, of course, excuse Ison's murder of O'Connor, it does go some way to answering the question posed by O'Connor in his dying moments: 'Why'd you have to do that?'

Ison would ultimately be tried for murder in Harlan County in 1968. The prosecution, led by Smith, argued that O'Connor and his crew were not the sort of exploitative image-takers that local people were so fed up with, but rather that they were respectable documentarians, and that their film was intended to be a look at the entire United States, not the lingering and lascivious photojournalistic gaze that had so turned Appalachian people against photographic intrusion. Smith, in fact, argued that the film O'Connor was making would only feature short and fleeting scenes of Appalachian life, highlighting that what Appalachian residents were resistant to were the sorts of long-form photojournalistic portrayals of Appalachia that had been previously produced by Dominis and others. To counter Smith's arguments, Ison's defence sought to establish that the crew intended to film only the impoverished parts of Appalachia in an effort to contribute to a history—albeit a recent one—that had so visually exploited rural Appalachia that the confrontation between camera and gun, O'Connor and Ison, was inevitable if not understandable. Both arguments, it seems, held sway over the jurors: the trial resulted in a hung jury. A week before the second trial was slated to begin, in March of 1969, Ison pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of voluntary manslaughter and was subsequently sentenced to serve 10 years in prison. After serving one year of his sentence, Ison was paroled. He never publicly expressed any remorse for the murder (Morfitt, 2003).

While I was conducting fieldwork in West Virginia and eastern Kentucky during the course of this project, there were several moments in which the history of photographic exploitation and the tensions between image-takers and local communities and people were revealed, moments in which the presence of the camera inserted tensions into interactions and conversations. Fiddling with my camera while waiting on the banks of a small river in southwestern West Virginia for a contact to arrive for an interview in the spring of 2015, I was approached by a slow-moving, late-model and expensive pickup truck. Pulling up beside me, to effectively box me in between the truck, on one side, and the river, on the other, the truck slowed to a stop. The passenger window rolled down, and the driver leaned over the empty seats, ducking his head to meet my eyes. Like many young men driving expensive pickup trucks in this part of Appalachia, this particular young man is, obviously, a coal miner: he wears the navy-blue jumpsuit emblazoned with reflective orange and silver stripes—known here as 'mine stripes'—and his hands and face are covered in the flattening black of coal dust. He pauses to give me a slow look over before speaking. 'You waitin' on Junior?' he asks, indicating that he has either already seen me here with Junior—we've been in and out of this alley several times in the previous two weeks or so—or that he is accustomed enough to Junior bringing in outsiders that he feels safe in assuming I am here visiting Junior. I answer affirmatively, adding a quick comment about the height and speed of the river, which is currently near to bursting following weeks of historically heavy rain that had fallen on central Appalachia over the season. Ignoring my effort to break the ice with an offhand comment about weather, he gets right to the point: ‘Well, once Junior gets back out, y’all better go ahead and *pack up the cameras* and move along.’

A year later, in the winter of 2016, I again found myself on the banks of the same river, again waiting for Junior. This time, though, we had plans to take a small all-terrain vehicle across the river and up the ridge on the other side, hoping to ultimately find ourselves at the summit to experience and photograph the site of the 2010 Upper Big Branch mining disaster. This time, the river was not so high and rough—in fact, it was now at historically low levels for the season—and so we crossed it on the ATV, wet to our knees and the large tires of the vehicle churning the water while the two-stroke engine struggled for air. Once on the other side of the river, we turned west to climb the steep and deeply rutted trail to the ridge, the 4-wheeler nimbly hopping and climbing over the rocks and frozen ground. After 20 minutes or so of climbing, we reached a peak, and found the trail blocked by an aluminium pipe rail gate suspended by chains between two 5-foot-tall bois-d’arc fenceposts. A steel sign posted prominently on a tree told us that this was the entrance to the section of this ridge owned and mined by Massey Coal. Getting around the gate proved simple, and we continued up the path, which was now a small gravel road, dropped and graded to allow work and security vehicles access to the boundaries of the mining permit. As the path hooked to the left, a large vista opened below us, a scene of extractive ecocide stretching out before our eyes, hills transformed by mining and reclamation from densely timbered ridges into flat slopes covered with invasive non-native grasses and plants like Autumn olive and tall fescue instead of the mountain laurel, wild bergamot, ginseng, and witchhazel native to the region. All the growth on the slope is from hydroseeding, the process of mixing the seeds of fast-growing groundcover plants with water and liquid growing mediums, which are then sprayed on the slope from giant hoses, and the result looks like a hillside of gravel that’s been spray-painted green. Which is essentially what it is; the hydroseeded grasses generally only last long enough on the hillside for the permit-holding mining company to certify the reclamation, thereby collecting the reclamation bond. In time they wash down into the valleys where the invasive plants take hold for good, leaving the rocky post-extraction slopes. We shoot several pictures of the site and the surrounding ridges before noticing security vehicles rumbling along the perimeter road—a sight that, by now, I have learned to interpret as a sign that it's best to stop photographing and move along—and we pack up our cameras and reload the ATV. On the way out, once we are off the permit and again on the other side of the gate, Junior asks over his shoulder 'Hey, you wanna shoot that Massey sign?' I've amassed a relatively large library of photographs of signs marking mine entrances, property lines, and ambulance roads, and am eager to add to my collection, so I quickly nod an enthusiastic yes. We again stop the 4-wheeler on the side of the trail, and I hop off and begin to unpack my camera and tripod, while I assume Junior does the same. When I turn around, though, he hands me a handgun, a 9mm Makarov pistol, and only then do I realize he means *shoot* the sign. There were already several bullet holes in the sign's face, although I didn't count the number when we first passed the sign, and I didn't count the number when we left for the day.

Visibility, Knowing, and Visuality in Appalachia

The story above reveals more, however, than the fundamental violence of photography and the various ways that the gun and the camera occupy parts of the same space in the imagination. It also reveals the ways that the violence of Appalachian surface mining is hidden from view, rendered invisible by the colliding forces of absentee land ownership, the ecological fact of the mountains, and the social processes of redaction and disavowal. Similarly, as described above, the various forces that extractive capital exercises on and in social and ecological relations in Appalachia are rendered invisible in the images taken from the region by photographers like Shelby Lee Adams. Shannon Bell and Sean Bemis (Bell, 2016: 109-118) describe the geography of Appalachian extraction as an ‘industrial landscape that is out of sight of most local residents’ (109), noting that in Boone County, West Virginia—to take but one of the many counties affected by surface coal extraction—18 percent of the land has been directly affected by active or recent surface mining (232 square kilometres out of the county total of 1,302 square kilometres), but only 23 percent of active and recent mining sites are visible from public roads. Bell explains that, because of the extent of absentee land ownership in southwestern West Virginia—and, indeed, across central Appalachia—it is ‘entirely possible for large tracts of land to be mined without local residents knowing, or *seeing*, how much land is being disturbed’ (111: emphasis added).

Here, Bell raises—perhaps unintentionally—an important question about the relationship between seeing and knowing, a question that is, or should be, at the heart of visual research in green cultural criminology: to what extent is the visibility of harm essential to knowledge of that harm? Pat Gish, publisher of the Mountain Eagle, the long-running Whitesburg, Kentucky newspaper that reported extensively on, among other significant moments of extractive violence, the murder of Hugh O’Connor, explains clearly in *Stranger With a Camera* that, in her opinion, seeing is essential to knowing:

> ‘We did not use pictures of poor people in The Eagle, because we did not want to put local people in embarrassing situations in front of their neighbors. If it happened that there was a strip-mine slide, and the house was poor, that…that was a different issue, so we would use it, but just in terms of picturing poor people, we didn’t. But I don’t see what the other people who came in, what they could’ve…how they could’ve done anything else, I don’t know what could’ve been done.to show the problem. *I mean, you can talk about it, but it doesn’t actually come through until*

> *you actually see it*.' (Barret, 1999, emphasis added)

For Gish, then, knowing and seeing are one and the same. Bell underscores this perspective, noting the ways that Appalachian resident and former coal miner Chuck Nelson perceived extractive ecocide in his own community: 'I didn't really *know* the scope of how big mountaintop removal was, because it's not nothing you can ride up the road and *see'* (Bell, 2016: 110, emphasis added). The relationship between seeing and knowing, though, is not quite as clear as these expressions of experience might indicate: we often know exactly what is hidden from view or rendered invisible, but chose to not know it. In describing various conditions of knowing and not knowing, Stan Cohen (2013) famously characterized denial as, at certain stages, the arts and processes of hiding the truth from oneself. McGoey (2012) contends that efforts to remain 'in the dark' are strategic, asserting that disavowal or ignorance 'serves as a productive asset'. In the case of the socially facilitated conceptual invisibility of Appalachian geographies of extractive ecocide and harm, disavowal produces the assets of bourgeois sociospatial order and fossil capital. Here, the wilful ignorance or disavowal of the ongoing harms and horrors of increasingly quotidian technologies of ecocidal power facilitate the uninterrupted construction of social order through the normalization of Appalachia as a geography of harm. In not 'seeing' the Appalachian spaces of extractive ecocide, we 'seek to preserve ignorance rather than dispel it' (McGoey 2012: 554) through 'strategic ignorance' (555).[34] In order to preserve ignorance, to effectively disavow knowledge of Appalachian spaces of ecocide, we engage in Taussig's (1999)

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[34] McGoey's strategic ignorance and Cohen's states of denial, share some overlap with Slavoj Žižek's take on the Lacanian disavowal. Explaining the concept through the specific example of the suffering and indignities of factory farms, he asks, "Who among us would be able to continue eating pork chops after visiting a factory farm in which pigs are half-blind and cannot even properly walk, but are just fattened to be killed?" The answer, for Žižek is of course, that very few people could willingly participate in a system of such open cruelty, but because subjects feel some sense of powerlessness to intervene in the horrors that surround them, they have developed a way to forget or ignore that which they know to be true, if only to carry on living their lives as they wish. Here the subject admits, "I know, but I don't want to know that I know, so I don't know."

‘knowing what not to know’.

For those living in the midst of Appalachian extraction, though, it is unlikely that the invisibility of extractive practices is the result of a cognitive process of disavowal. While it may be the case that extractive harm in Appalachia is relatively invisible to those outside the region, the invisibility of Appalachian mountaintop removal and other ecocidal extractive processes are invisible to residents like Gunnoe and Nelson because of the industry’s ability to operate in materially hidden geographies. While many people living in the extractive regions of southwestern West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, and across central Appalachia will see and experience the impacts of coal extraction—they are everywhere, after all, from the discoloured water that flows from the spigot to the coal dust that coats nearly everything—the extractive sites that produce those effects are less visible. There are exceptions, of course, to this invisibility; the ridge of Black Mountain, on the Kentucky-Virginia border, for example, looms over the landscape and is easily visible from the scenic roads winding through Kentucky’s Pine Mountain State Park. But it became clear to me while conducting fieldwork that those moments of extractive visibility are exceptional, and that their exceptionality reinforces their visibility by way of contrast—Black Mountain is so intensely visible because it is the only denuded and blasted peak visible from the road. To say the least, Black Mountain sticks out, asserting its own visibility by appearing in such sharp relief. The majority of land visibly affected by current and previous extractive efforts, though, is as difficult to see as Bell’s work describes.

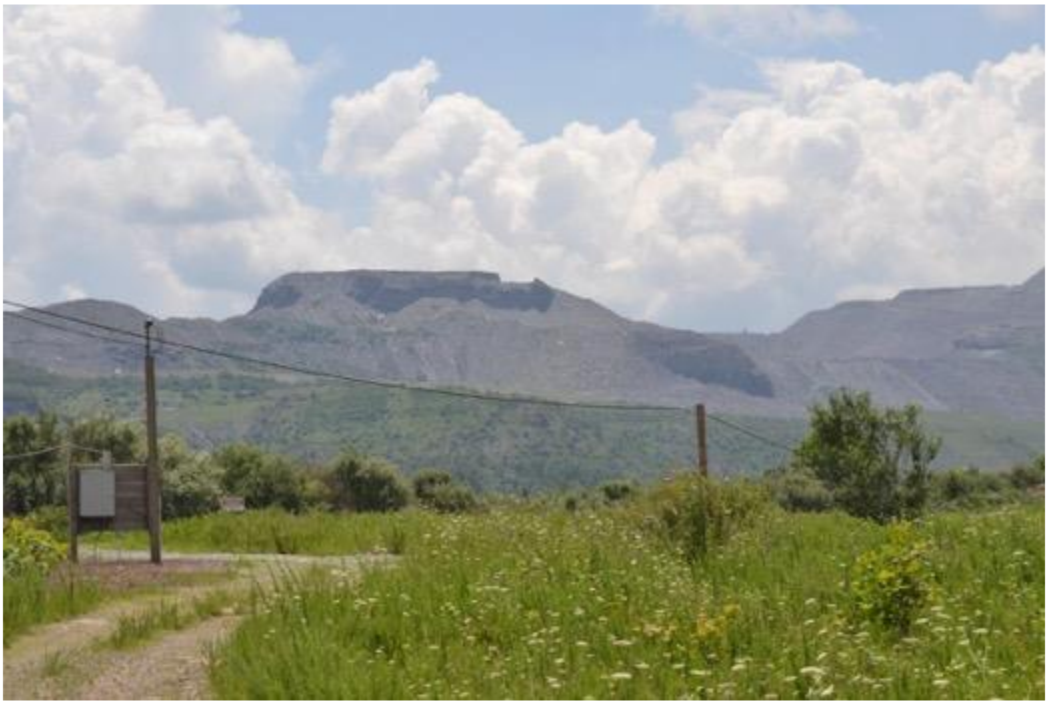

Figure 32. Black Mountain as seen from the Kentucky-Virginia border. Photograph by the author.

To me, then, Appalachia is a place that exists on the visual register only in strictly bounded forms; black-and-white Appalachia is intensely visible in the historical corpus of images provided by Dominis and his contemporaries and followers, Appalachian spaces of social and ecological horror (discussed more thoroughly in the following chapter) are visible in various forms of rural cinematic horror, and all of the corresponding and reifying stereotypes and tropes of Appalachian life are visible in the CNN-curated presentation of Kranitz's work. Absent from the visual space of Appalachia in the social imaginary, though, are coal, extractive ecocide, and the countless harms of fossil capital. Those forces, though, are always lurking: as Sarah, the teacher at Appalachian Media Institute, told me when describing the results of a 2010 'photovoice' project in which Appalshop gave cameras to local second- and sixth-grade children and asked them to photograph 'home' (with no further instruction given), 'even when it [coal] isn't in the picture, it's there.' Looking over the images that came from the photovoice project that Sarah shared with me, I saw coal sometimes in the foreground but always in the margins. Images the children took of their bedrooms, for example, included shelves stacked with trinkets carved from coal, and corkboards with pins and cards from coal advocacy groups like Friends of Coal.

The various moments and processes that render Appalachian social and material geographies of extractive harm invisible in the social imaginary have, somewhat conversely, contributed to the construction of a visuality of Appalachia. Nicholas Mirzoeff (2011; 2) describes 'visuality' as 'the visualization of history' through assemblages of 'information, images, and ideas', a force that is reserved for and that reaffirms authority and power. Describing the visuality of prisons, Judah Schept details the ways that visuality 'configures our ability to perceive', 'the available vocabularies with which to speak' and the 'contexts in which to place' the particular object of visuality. What matters to Mirzoeff, however, is the imaginary, not the perceptual, and what exists in the social imaginary is an Appalachian visuality that de-centres extraction, focusing instead on the competing and mutually constitutive dialectics of Appalachian idyll and anti-idyll (a dialectic explored in depth in the following chapter). Appalachia, then, is in many ways a geography absent from the assemblage of visuality, an absence that happens in part through the centrality of black-and-white Appalachia in the social imaginary.

Aerial Photography, Counter-Visuality, and Visualizing the Invisible

If visuality is, as Mirzoeff asserts, 'the opposite of the right to look', the technologies of visuality itself are rendered visible in material space by the blackness of redaction. Katherine Biber (In Press) notes that redaction is the art of a 'bureaucratic creativity', and that redaction and its tell-tale markings (most commonly conceptualized as the black bars hiding text, but also thinkable as the social, legal or material barriers to visibility present in my central sites of analysis and exploration) 'enable us to glean the existence of the secret, but not its contents'. In the material worlds of Appalachia, Biber's 'arts of bureaucracy' are manifest as arts of extractive ecocide, as the mountains and ecology are reconfigured by the subtractive production of coal extraction, leaving behind a landscape made in the imagination of extractive capital. Connecting the material process of redaction to the conceptual and cognitive subjectivity of visuality, Mirzoeff similarly describes 'the right to look'—a right sometimes asserted in moments of what Mirzoeff describes as 'counter-visuality'—as 'confronting the police who say to us 'move along, there's nothing to see here', only there is, and we know it and so do they'. While Biber offers a central insight into redaction—the practice produces a clear example of what Donald Rumsfeld might call 'known unknowns'—it seems to me that, often, redaction is a failed (or, perhaps, unnecessary) effort; despite concealment, we regularly know what lurks behind the black bars of a redacted document, or the ecological barriers constructed around the Appalachian mountaintop removal site. In the social imaginary, the complexities and historical realities of relations that configure and characterize Appalachian life are similarly redacted through another blackness, the blackness of black-and-white photographic capture. Work by photographers of Appalachia like Kranitz constitute, then, a form of counter-visuality; by pushing against the dominant visuality of black and white Appalachia that redacts and conceals the historical and contemporary power and effects of extractive capital, Kranitz and others offer a more complex and comprehensive Appalachian visuality, one that insists that there is more to see and know of Appalachia. The 'right to look' at Appalachian ecological conditions and extractive ecocide, though—the looking that affirms that there is, in fact, *something to see here*—can be asserted by yet another counter-visuality, one that employs the power of verticality; from the windows of an aircraft, the extent and destruction of mountaintop removal is revealed.

Returning to Maria Gunnoe's description of 'watching the horizon disappear around' her because of the relative invisibility of mountaintop removal in Appalachia (Quoted in Bell, 2016: 110), we can begin to locate the power of adjusting the visual field by way of verticality. Gunnoe reports to Bell that ‘when you get up there and see how huge it [mountaintop removal] is, that’s something else. I never realized it was so bad. My first flyover was with Southwings [non-profit aviation organization], and that right there is really what fired me up’ (Bell, 2016: 110). Chuck Nelson, the former coal miner, echoes the sentiment: ‘It’s [mountaintop removal] more or less back from the highway, where people can’t see it unless you get in a plane…it’s a whole different world up there’ (Bell, 2016: 110). When I arrived in southwestern West Virginia in 2015, I knew the extent of mountaintop removal’s impact on the landscape and ecology—I knew it from books, articles, conversations with friends in the area, reports from activists and residents, and a lifetime spent living on the spatial margins of extractive Appalachia. Driving through places like Boone, Mingo and Kanawha counties, though, the direct ecological dimensions were hard to see. As the wonderful series of maps of visibility produced by Bell and Bemis (2016) illustrate, and as Nelson affirms, it’s ‘not nothing you can ride up the road and see everywhere’ (Bell, 2016: 110). Even on the backroads through extractive spaces like Naoma and Whitesburg, roads that are crisscrossed by mine-access roads, dominated by coal trucks, and surrounded by the highwalls that mark landscapes of extraction, seeing the actual spaces of mountaintop removal is nearly impossible. At times during fieldwork, those spaces became visible—as in the case of Black Mountain and the ridges surrounding the UBB mine, discussed above, or in the misty extractive vistas of Kayford Mountain, discussed in the following chapter—but for the most part they remained out of sight, eluding visibility through their position in the ecological density of the mountains and forests. These spaces were only visible, in fact, by *leaving* the highways, either on foot or on an ATV, in excursions that sometimes took hours or required backcountry camping. So when on the 16th of July, 2015, after several efforts—many of them fruitless—to get a comprehensive view of mountaintop removal extraction, I made contact with a Southwings pilot who offered to take me up in his plane to get a look, I jumped at the chance.

I arranged to meet the pilot, Scott, at the small private airport that sits on a ridge directly adjacent to the Charleston, West Virginia commercial airport, on an early morning with suitable weather forecasted. After making our introductions, and a few brief pointers from Scott on how to take photographs from the air, we boarded Scott's small single-engine and single-propeller plane. After just a few minutes of southbound flight, we left behind the borders of Charleston, with the mountains stretching out below and beyond. After another few minutes, the landscape below began to change as the summer green of the mountains gave way to the dusty tans and gravel greys of extractive space. Small surface-mining operations quickly began to coalesce into a larger landscape of extraction. What seemed to be small surface-mining operations, though, may well have been larger than they appeared from above; a curious trick of aerial visibility is that what seems small from the ground becomes big from the sky, and what seems small from the sky may actually be big. The space below us was the 'Hobet permit' complex, a network of surface mines operated by Patriot Coal that directly impacts 12,000 acres of land and annually produces up to four million tons of thermal coal.

Seeing Hobet from above affirmed Chuck Nelson's comments about the fundamental power of vertical ways of seeing: the extractive world was, indeed, a whole different world from up there in Scott's airplane[35]. It looked to me like pieces of southwestern desert had been simply lifted from the earth and dropped onto and into the usually verdant mountains of West Virginia, highlighting with unsettling clarity the boundaries between the two distinct ecologies. As we flew over the Hobet complex and the nearby Twilight permit mine, Scott pointed out wastewater-containment ponds containing arsenic, selenium and other toxic by-products of mountaintop removal—some ponds with houses on the few remaining hillsides directly beneath them —draglines, exposed coal seams, employee parking lots that as testament to mechanization held only a handful of pickups, and family cemeteries—one of the only categorical spaces generally spared by surface extraction, owing to a state law that requires a 100-foot buffer between mining operations and cemeteries (Walters, 2013)—jutting from the greys and browns like defiant green islands.

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[35] The various and dialectic 'worlds' of Appalachia—some idyllic, some horrifying, some extractive—are discussed thoroughly in the following chapter.

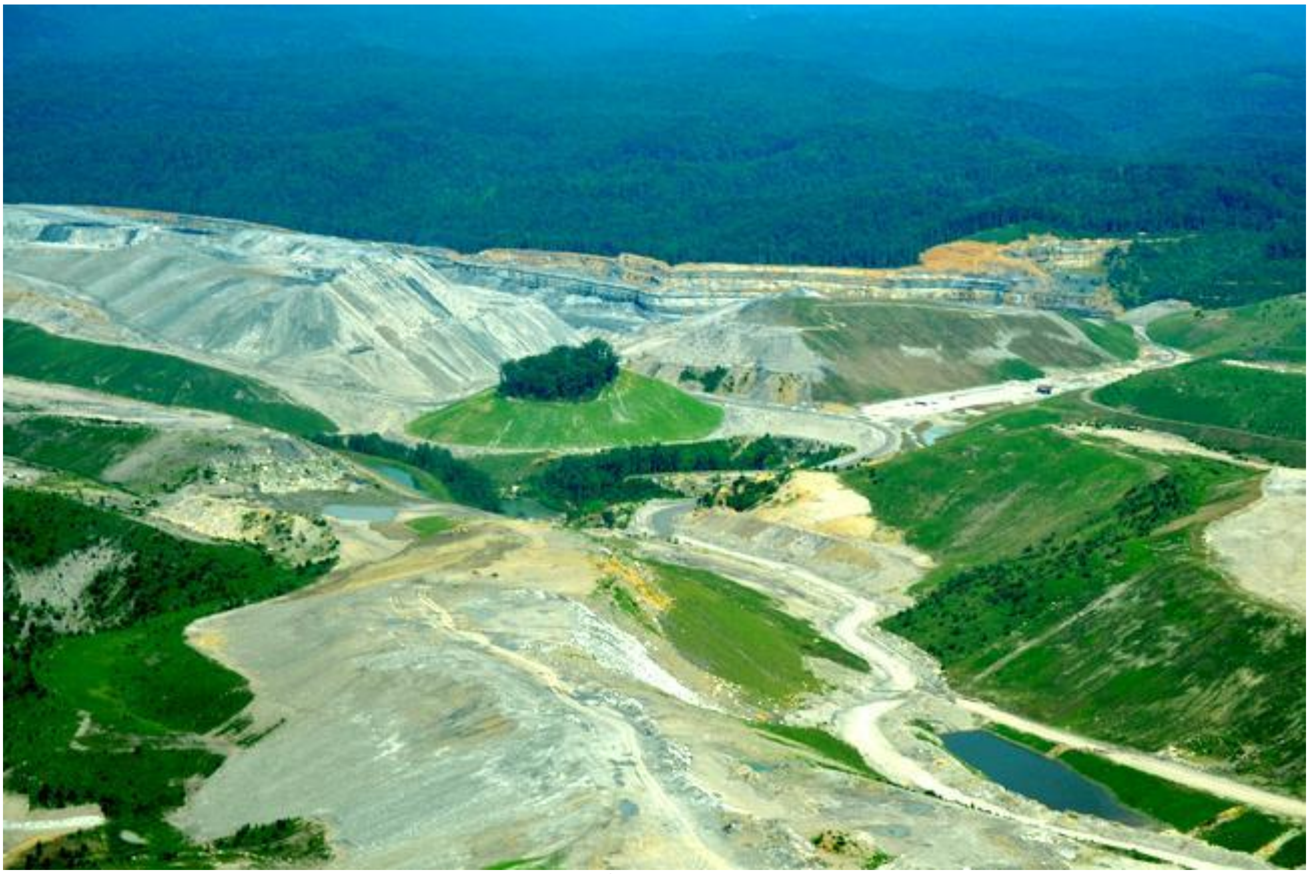

Figure 33. Hobet mining permit complex surrounding family cemetery, July 2015. Photograph by the author.

When Hobart Ison shot Hugh O’Connor In 1967, in Jeremiah, Kentucky, a small town in Letcher County, on the far south-eastern edge of the state near the border with Virginia, Ison confronted more than a Canadian film crew. O’Connor and his crew aren’t, of course, to blame for what happened; Ison never contested his own guilt, and O’Connor was by all accounts a sensitive photographer and documentarian. But what Ison faced was not just a small crew and cluster of cameras. Even in 1967, the cameras represented an already too-long history of photographic exploitation, a history that had already flattened Appalachia into a visual narrative that failed—and still fails—to locate and critically interrogate the fundamental role of extractive capital's effects on the Appalachian land, people, and cultures. That history, that Appalachian visuality, runs uninterrupted from Dominis and the war on poverty, to Shelby Lee Adams and his hog killing, to CNN's curation of Stacy Kranitz's work. While the moments of counter-visual knowing that can be attained from practices like aerial photography, or glimpsed in the thoughtful images of Appalachian photographers like Stacy Kranitz, Ted Wathen, or James Baker Hall, provide a more comprehensive and complex version of visual Appalachia, those moments are fleeting; there are only so many small planes, only so many thoughtful photographers, and only so much time. Before long the mines that are seen from those planes, each a material testament to the wholesale ecocide that has persisted for over 100 years, will be left behind. The last trucks in the employee parking lots will vanish along with the paychecks that finance them, and the invasive species of 'reclamation' will advance, choking out the mountain laurel and the native ginseng and witchhazel and magnolia, all too fragile to compete with the prolific Asian grasses. The dams will break, and the selenium and arsenic and lead-poisoned water will crash down the hillsides, wiping away whatever is left of the homes and communities and ecologies that currently sit in their shadow. When the historical and late-modern mists of extraction clear, what will remain—what is on the horizon—but an Appalachia that is not an Appalachia with us, but an Appalachia without us and against us, an Extractive Appalachia understood, visualized, and communicated not in colour, not in black and white, but in horror?

Chapter 5

'It's Hell Down There': Capturing the Horror of Appalachian Extraction

Ain't no joy down yonder, don't wanna go there

There's a hell down yonder, don't wanna go there

Don't wanna go, no I don't wanna go, said I don't wanna go down there

-Hell Down Yonder, Traditional mining song, circa 1920

In August of 2015, I toured a preserved underground coal mine in Beckley, West Virginia, the same exhibition mine described in Chapter 3. Leaving the mine tour after 90 minutes underground, sitting on a small motorized cart with six other tourists and our guide, Marvin, I reflexively gasp for air as the tram broke into daylight and the oppressive West Virginia heat and humidity. I walk inside the gift shop, located in the old company store building just adjacent to the mine entrance, and gather a brochure that promises to guide me on a driving tour of the West Virginia coalfields from the friendly women working the till. I can't, though, make sense of it, but it matters so little that I just toss the map in the backseat and start to drive. This sort of rural dérive, I quickly learn, promises plenty of serendipitous contact with the history and present of Extractive Appalachia. Driving along a two-lane highway, I pass a sign guiding me toward the UBB [Upper Big Branch] memorial, a massive (48 feet, end to end, and seven feet top to bottom) slab of black granite bearing the life-size silhouettes of the 29 miners who lost their lives in the collapse[36]. I pull off the side of the road to take some photos, and within the two or three minutes I am out of the car I am passed by five or six pickup trucks and passenger vehicles of various vintage and value, each prominently displaying at least one Friends of Coal sticker. These vehicles don't bother me a bit. Not, at least, compared to the coal trucks that dominate these roads, travelling at speeds unimaginably unsafe, spewing diesel smoke and rumbling their jake brakes, leaving a visible wake of coal dust behind.The roads in southwestern West Virginia are dominated, like so much of the visual landscape in this region, by the coal industry. Coal trucks, often overloaded and barrelling into the mountains, are common enough that they fade, eventually, from the remarkable. Processing plants, gravel and rough-poured concrete slabs topped with storage mounds, silos, and tipples appear, it seems, around nearly every bend, while the sky overhead is crisscrossed with the alien geometry of elevated pipelines. Dedicated ambulance roads and memorials to lost miners, both official and ad-hoc, serve as a constant reminder of the human cost of coal extraction. Even beyond these visible markers of the material work of coal that dot the landscape, the cultural work of coal is everywhere here[37]. Small businesses—diners, roadhouse bars, feed stores—employ the visual and discursive language of coal, marking themselves with silhouetted images of miners, pick axes and shovels, hardhats, lanterns and bearing names like ‘Coal Miner’s Diner’ and ‘Coal Miner’s Daughter Café’. One layer deeper, too—in those liminal spaces between visibility and invisibility, past and present, known and unknown—coal is always there, lurking in the belly and shadows of the mountains. It is in these hidden Appalachian geographies of extraction, the dark spaces lost to time and the relentless competing appetites of the mountains to reclaim their ground and the coal industry to take it all away, that the most haunting and horrifying ghosts of coal make themselves known. They are here in the mountains, these spectral spirits of coal, and I can hear and see the horrifying scripts they inscribe on the social and spatial landscape[38].

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[36] The UBB tragedy and the memorial—among other tragedies and memorials—are discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 6.

That is only one Appalachia, though. There are, of course, different Appalachias, coexisting and overlapping within the broad geography of the Appalachian range. As described in Chapters 1 and 2, the cartographic and cultural boundaries of Appalachia are contested and changing, with the region sometimes imagined along the bureaucratic and official—if outdated—boundaries crafted by the Appalachian Regional Commission, sometimes along the contours of the famed Appalachian Trail, and sometimes along the fuzzy boundaries of the visual black-and-white Appalachia discussed in the previous chapter. For the purposes of this chapter, I will imagine two of these Appalachias, although I do not consider these imagined Appalachias to be at all constitutive of the limits of possibility; there are infinite imagined Appalachias, the outer boundaries of which are limited only by experience and imagination. Similarly, what I conceptualize as 'the field' in fieldwork is infinite, stretching from the material ground of Appalachia to the virtual space of the archive, the article, and the imagination. There are two primary Appalachias that exist in the historical and contemporary context, and that I encountered in the material and conceptual field: idyllic Appalachia, and anti-idyllic Appalachia. The first of these—idyllic Appalachia—is the pastoral landscape of mountains and forests, inhabited by rural people bearing folksy wisdom and a welcoming spirit. The second is anti-idyllic Appalachia, the region of Appalachia captured historically by extractive industry. This anti-idyllic Appalachia—what I will call Extractive Appalachia—can be most simply understood in a spatial-historical context[39]: it is the areas of southwestern West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, southern Virginia, and east Tennessee that have a long history of cultural and economic reliance on coal extraction[40]. These two conceptual geographies—idyllic Appalachia and Extractive Appalachia--when considered as material and visible geographic contexts, frequently intersect; they are intertwined spatially and culturally, weaving in and out of one another in both material ecology and the imagination. Just as the landscape of Extractive Appalachia has changed significantly with the development of new practices of industrial extraction, so have the ways that Extractive Appalachia has been written and read on the visual register of rural/mountain horror.

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[37] The cultural work of coal—and the various ways that coal extraction is culturally productive while being simultaneously ecologically destructive—is discussed and described thoroughly in Chapter 3.

[38] This chapter describes the ‘ghosts of coal’ through the lens of an emergent poetics of Appalachian mountain rurality in the register of horror cinema. The following and final chapter, Chapter 6, maintains interest in the spectral ghosts of coal, but locates those ghosts in the historical archive, the museum, and the memorial.

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[39] Extractive Appalachia, however, can also—and must also—be imagined and located in the cultural-spatial context and representation of this same region.

[40] Other areas within the broad context of Appalachia, such as Ohio and Pennsylvania, are also in many ways 'extractive', in that they have a historical relationship with extractive industry and labor. What sets these areas apart from what I conceptualize as 'Extractive Appalachia', though, is the degree to which these forms of extractive industry and labor dominate the region-within-a-region. It is also true that extraction itself in Appalachia is undergoing contemporary changes; natural gas extraction—fracking—is on the rise in the region, and has already had a significant impact on the spatial, cultural and ecological settings of Ohio and Pennsylvania. Because, though, fracking in Appalachia lacks the uninterrupted historical dominance of coal extraction, this paper will focus only on coal, and will only conceptualize extractive Appalachia in the terms of the spatial context described above.

Appalachian Rurality: Idyll and Anti-Idyll

Thinking about rurality and rural spaces invariably produces problems of definition: that is, what is rurality, and how do we locate the edges and boundaries of 'the rural'? That these questions beg asking is, of course, evidence not only of its importance, but also what I find is its answer; rurality exists in many spaces, both material and imagined. In social science, rurality has been defined variously: for Paul Cloke (1977) and others (Cloke and Edwards 1986), rurality can be precisely measured using various sociospatial and demographic data and indices. For Raymond Williams (1973), the rural exists as a material space conditioned by cultural traditions and communication. For Ferdinand Tönnies (1887) and Louis Wirth (1938), the rural is part of a binary category of social organization, rendered legible in relation to 'the urban' (the relationship in horror cinema between 'the urban/suburban' and 'the rural' is essential, and will be described thoroughly in this chapter). For Kevin Halfacree (1993), the rurality of a place is confirmed through the processes of social representation, and so is less dependent on the spatial, demographic and categorical dimensions of rurality. Finally, in the field of criminology, we have the definition offered by Walter DeKeseredy and Joe Donnermeyer (DeKeseredy and Donnermeyer, 2012; Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy, 2013), one that follows, in many ways, Cloke's demographic understanding of rurality, leaving it woefully bereft of any significant accounting for those essential dimensions of cultural criminological inquiry and investigation: political power, culture, and meaning. Despite the various deficiencies in and across these definitional efforts—Williams' cultural focus might ignore some of the material dimensions of rurality, for example, while Tönnies and Wirth's efforts are hindered by the difficulty in establishing a definition of 'the urban' with which to compare 'the rural'—I find, of course, that some definition is necessary, although that is not the central aim of this chapter. For me, then, the rural is only adequately and usefully defined by accounting for the essential dimensions of each previous effort to define it; it is not the urban or suburban, it is often (although not always) a site of primary production (e.g., agricultural production or resource extraction), and it is characterized by the presence of social forces and forms peculiar to what we know as rurality, and is socially and culturally represented as such. I realize, of course, that my definition here is a bit like that offered by Justice Potter Stewart when faced with the task of defining obscenity: *we know it when we see it*. What I am concerned with here, though, is precisely when and how we see the mountain rurality of Extractive Appalachia when we read the visual register of horror cinema, and what those horrifying representations of Extractive Appalachia might tell us about contemporary extraction and the emerging ecological and social anxieties.

Appalachia is, in many ways, what is often conceptualized as a rural idyll, a pastoral and bucolic space and landscape of the sort envisioned and communicated in the fiction and poetry of writers from Thoreau to Wendell Berry—with many, of course, in between—, the nonfiction of Bill Bryson and other writers of contemporary naturalist memoir and travelogue, and the countless photographers and filmmakers (both amateur and professional) who have used the visual landscapes of ecological Appalachia as a backdrop or setting[41].

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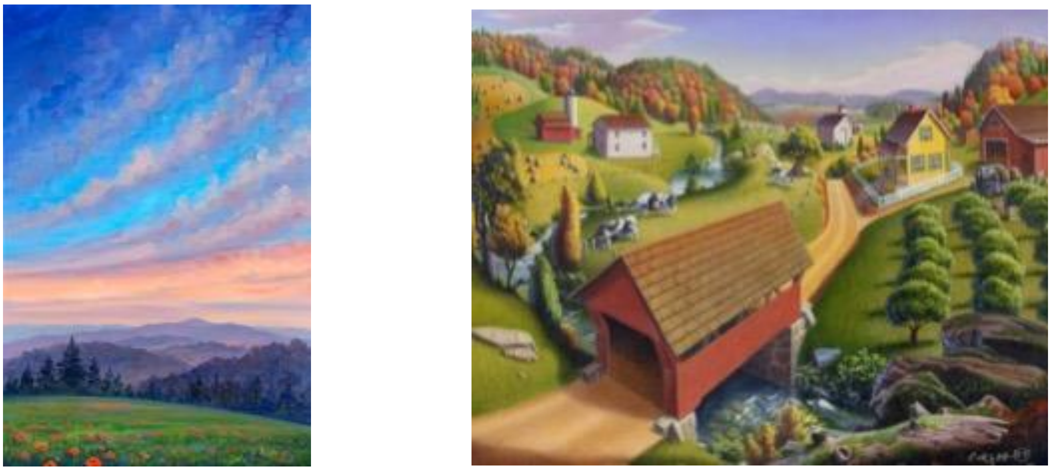
[41] Images of idyllic Appalachia, of course, occupy an entirely different position on the spectrum of photography from the images and photographers described and discussed in the previous chapter. Idyllic Appalachia is captured and communicated most prominently in landscape photography of the sort that adorns office walls; the images of Shelby Lee Adams or John Dominis, for example, are well outside of the visual corpus of idyllic Appalachia, while the work of painters like Michael Creese, Walter Curlee, and Jeff Pittman and photographers like George Masa, David Allen, and Michele Sons more firmly occupies the visual space of idyllic Appalachia.

Here, idyllic Appalachia is constructed through the image or the use of visual metaphor as a pristine wilderness, untouched and open, a place to fulfil the human desire for a leisurely or adventurous connection to 'nature'. While the peculiar mountainous topography of Appalachia—and particularly the region of Extractive Appalachia that covers the bulk of southwestern West Virginia, portions of eastern Kentucky, and smaller portions still of east Tennessee, southeastern Ohio, and southern Virginia—does not mark the boundaries of 'the rural', it is all the same a social and ecological space that welcomes, if not demands, the rural label. Thus, an application of geographer David Bell's (1997; 2006) consideration of the cinematic concept and trope of the 'rural idyll' is fitting.

In exploring the concept of the rural idyll, Bell describes that particular vision of rurality as characterized, 'ever since there has been a distinction between the country and the city' (1997: 94), by the rural's conceptualization as 'an innocent idyll of bucolic tranquillity and communion with nature—a place to retreat from the ever-quickening pace of urban living and to join in with 'authentic', rustic community life' (1997: 94). While this description is fitting for all manner of rural social and environmental landscapes, from the homesteader's farm to the rolling hills of middle-American suburbia, it is particularly apt as a description of the unique Appalachian mountain idyll imagined by significant swathes of popular culture and its creators and consumers. This version of Appalachia, with its arms, streams and mountains open to fulfil the desires of those seeking a particular mix of leisure and (tame) adventure—or, in the case of Bryson and other fetishists of rurality, a mix of adventure and some sort of redemption—maps directly over what philosopher Eugene Thacker calls the 'world-for-us', an imagined earthly space that is just as it sounds; a world that exists solely for the experiential pleasure of humanity. Here we can consider paintings by folk artists Jeff Pittman and Walt Curlee, who despite their vastly different and distinct styles present two visual versions of idyllic Appalachia:



Figures 34 & 35. Jeff Pittman, *Appalachian Wildflowers* (2015) and Walt Curlee, *Appalachian Covered Bridge* (2007). Images courtesy of the artists.

Pittman's *Appalachian Wildflowers* (2007) and Curlee's *Appalachian Covered Bridge (2007)* each present images of Appalachian life that plainly reflect dimensions of the Appalachian mountain idyll, of Appalachia *for-us*. In Curlee's Appalachia, tidy farms dot the equally tidy and ordered landscape while cows graze peacefully next to a blue and tranquil stream. For Pittman, the Appalachian idyll takes a decidedly more mountainous turn; the recognizable contours of the southern peaks of the Appalachian range roll in the background, while tall pines and wildflowers dot the fore. While each image has its merits—Curlee's in its almost cartoonish qualities highlighted by exaggerated colours, dimensions, and perspective, and Pittman's in its fairly accurate representation of those corners of Appalachia lucky enough to be spared the ecological devastation of coal extraction—each equally presents Appalachias that exist more prominently in the bourgeois social imaginary than in the material and ecological realities of the region.

Thacker's 'world-for-us' is the subjective world that 'we interpret, that we give meaning to', that we, as humans, are 'at once a part of that is also…separate' from humanity. This world-for-us, though, is not without its dangers; Thacker notes that while the world-for-us is, of course, *for us*, it does not exist entirely ‘within the ambit of human wants and desires’. It is a world that is actually two worlds, in that the world-for-us relies on a sibling world, one that ‘bites back’—this is the objective ‘world-for-itself’[42], and its presence is essential to our enjoyment of the world-for-us. Put simply, without the world-against-us and the challenges it promises, the world-for-us is less for us; it is the knowledge of the capacity of the world to turn on us, to bite back, that makes existence in the broad world-for-us so precious, so leisurely. And just as the world-for-us requires the world-against-us as its partner in a mutually constitutive relationship, the rural idyll requires its own twin-opposite, what Bell calls the ‘anti-idyll’. What these competing but mutually constituted and constitutive worlds of Appalachia offer is a material and spatial version of Bell’s ‘doubleness’ (Bell, 2001: 7). For Bell, though, ‘doubleness’ is a problem of cognition and longing, made up of the competing emotive interests of ‘desire and dread’. Similarly, Mark Fisher (2016: 17) describes ‘the weird’—a category that he employs in his analysis of the broader category of horror—as something that ‘cannot only repel…[but] must also compel our attention’. Applied to the material landscape of Appalachia, the two parts of doubleness are the material ecological parallels of desire and dread; we desire the idyllic Appalachia for us, and we dread the anti-idyllic Appalachia against us. Dread aside, though, it is in the anti-idyllic world-against-us were we can locate the foundations of an Appalachia that is constructed in symbiotic and intertwined opposition to the idyll of leisure Appalachia.

Idyllic Appalachia is part of what ‘the world for us’, in that it exists in the social imagination first and foremost as a place for human recreation and enjoyment. In idyllic

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[42] Here it might be useful to alter Thacker’s terminology somewhat. While Thacker posits that the world-for-itself is a ‘world’ that is at times necessarily hostile to humanity and the world-for-us, in applying his tripartite framework in a consideration of ecology, the world-for-itself label can be a bit misleading—unless we accept the perhaps-dubious prospect that a world-for-itself would find its own destruction useful. Here, then, it can be useful to simply reframe Thacker’s world-for-itself as a world-against-us, a world that recognizes humanity, and is in many ways concerned with humanity, but that ultimately finds itself in opposition to common human wants and needs. That is, a world that we create for ourselves by imagining it, but that nevertheless comes out hostile to ‘us’.

Appalachia, the dangers and unwelcoming elements are likely ecological or animal—harsh weather, difficult trails, and even curious bears present, essentially, the limits of 'horror' in this Appalachia. These components of leisure Appalachia might, one could argue, be more of a feature than a bug: leisure Appalachia as used by hikers and outdoorspeople requires these elemental challenges. Here I again call attention to the assertions of contemporary ecotheory and ecocriticism (Morton 2007, 2010, 2013; Bryant 2013; Buell 1996. See also: Watson 1995) that despite the dominance of the myth of rural tranquillity, darker understandings of nature play a significant role in our relations with nature, particularly in the ways that knowing 'dark natures' challenges the limits of humanity's mastery of the planet and provides desire through dread. But as described above, the idyll relies on knowledge of its alternative, the anti-idyll. And because the promise of adventure feeds so cleanly into the idyllic promise of the mountains—what, after all, is the essential 'mountain experience' without a bear encounter, or a capsized canoe, or a trail emergency, so long as there is, of course, a happy ending?—there must be a cultural thread running opposite to Bryson and Thoreau's idylls[43], a thread that is nevertheless intertwined with the idyll. This thread, the anti-idyllic (but necessary for its role in constituting, by way of contrast, the idyll) 'world-against-us' can be located squarely in the literary, visual and cinematic forms of rural and mountain horror. It can also, though, be found and made visible outside of cultural production and products, in the material real and lived world of Extractive Appalachia.

If we return to the photographic histories and Appalachian visualities of the previous chapter, we can locate again the dialectics of idyll and anti-idyll. While the dominant corpus of images of Appalachia offers a visuality of the anti-idyll, it is precisely the ways in which that anti-idyllic corpus of images contrasts with the perceived idyll of rural Appalachia that gave it its initial social power. John Dominis and others photographing the front lines in the war on poverty, along with contemporary image-takers like Shelby Lee Adams, offer images that are intended to shock their audience, not only with stark social difference, but also with the uncomfortable knowledge that such abject poverty, exploitation, violence, ecological devastation, and horror exists in the very heartland of the nation.

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[43] As literary critic and Thoreau scholar Richard Bridgman (1982) describes, Thoreau was more keenly interested in the 'dark side' of human relations with nature and ecology than the dominant selective reading of his work might imply. Despite this acknowledgement of Thoreau's interest in and engagement with the darkness of ecology, the selective reading of his work as only ever affirming the pleasantness of nature is, in fact, entirely dominant: it is the Thoreau that exists in the social imaginary, informing ideas of the pastoral, and so it is *that* Thoreau that I am primarily interested in here.

Horrifying Landscapes: Rurality, Ecology, and Cinematic Horror

The cinematic genre of rural horror has a rich (if relatively short) history, one that has and continues to simultaneously construct, reify, and reflect popular cultural conceptualizations of American rurality. As Victoria McCollum (2017: 1) describes, since the dawn of the urban-rural divide, the horror genre has ‘exploited the badlands of rural America.’ These cinematic representations of rurality, in general, and Appalachia, in particular, have contributed significantly to the ways in which residents, natives and outsiders alike understand and know the region. Beginning with *Deliverance*, the 1972 Film adapted from the 1970 novel by James Dickey, the mountains of Appalachia have been portrayed in cinematic rural horror as the likely site of unspeakable violence, most often visited upon wandering outsiders, in over their heads in a vicious place untouched and unpacified by the forces of order and civilization. While these portrayals of Appalachian people and places are intensely problematic for their role in constructing the stereotypes that, to this day, endure in the popular imagination, they also reveal some very real—and often very uncomfortable—truths about the region, and about the ecological and social violence and turmoil of a history of exploitation at the hands of extractive capital.

To begin, though, I will step back from the particular subgenre(s) of rural and mountain horror in order to consider the broader cultural field of ‘horror’. At its heart, horror—whether the gothic horror of literature, the cinematic horror of the contemporary mediascape, the photographic horror of photographers like Richard Misrach and others working in ‘new topographics’ (Foster-Rice and Rohrbach 2013), or the poetic horror of ‘weird poetry’ (Joshi 1997) and science fiction—relies on collisions of ontology. The fundamental strength and efficacy of horror, for Thacker, happens in the moments of confrontation with the monstrous or otherworldly, moments that raise tensions between two ontological positions: was it real, or was it imagined (Thacker 2014: 6)? Similarly, Robin Mackay (2008: 4) locates horror in ontological uncertainty, noting that ‘the overriding affect connected with what we ‘know’ – but still do not really know – about the universe and our place in it…[is] one of horror’. While horror, then, exists first and foremost in the mind—it is an ontological problem of subjectivity without much to ground it in the objective material world—it really must be imagined in a material landscape. The landscapes onto which horror is written are either then visual or made visual through metaphor and analogy[44]. For Slavoj Žižek, ‘deep horror’ is a ‘vortex that threatens to swallow everything[45]’ (2000: 78). Freud found *unheimlich*, or ‘the uncanny’ or ‘unhomely’—a cultural mode that is not quite horror, but is plainly horror-adjacent—in the relationship between the novel and the unfamiliar (Freud, 2003: 124-25), while Mark Fisher extends that interest and concern out of the strange and uncanny and into the ‘weird’ and ‘eerie’ (2016). Fisher locates in these modes a ‘certain apprehension’ that exists within the cognitive tensions between what we ‘enjoy and what scares us’, tying those unsettling modes to ‘the outside’, a category of space frequently employed by Lovecraft and linked closely to the material spaces of rurality (Fisher 2016: 8-9; see generally: McClanahan and Linnemann, in press).

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[44] As Kaja Silverman (2015: 6) describes, and as seems somewhat self-evident, the captured image is ‘pure and miraculous analogy’. Silverman here breaks from Sekula, who asserts the impossibility of photographic ‘truth’, while at the same time joining him: analogy offers clarity and new modes of knowing, but does not offer—or purport to offer—‘truth’.

[45] Žižek, despite the materiality implied in his description of ‘deep horror’, negates its significance by describing what lies beyond it as ‘*true* horror’ of human autonomy. For my purposes here, though, his concept of ‘deep horror’ offers a more useful device with which to read horror than does his ‘true horror’.

Landscapes of horror, then, can be analogous to any material or conceptual landscape we can think or see, from the urban to the suburban, the cosmic to the rural. Among these landscapes, though, it is the rural that I am particularly interested in. For one, I am concerned first and foremost with the various ways that Appalachian rurality—and the conceptual ecology of 'the mountain(s)' more broadly—has been imagined and visualized as a landscape of horror. Moreover, though, while conducting fieldwork in central Appalachia—Extractive Appalachia—I regularly encountered landscapes, relations, and histories that rang out with the conceptual echoes of horror. In my experience in the material field of Appalachia, horror was a near-constant thematic thread in my experience and in the experiences of those I talked to. At times, it was the sort of uncertainty that merges ontology and economics in the subjectivities of late-modern capitalism, as illustrated by a conversation in which a young West Virginia resident hoping for a job in the coal industry told me that 'It's scary trying to work here. I don't know if I'm gonna get hurt or die, or if I'm even gonna make enough money'. At other times, the dread came from the material world of Extractive Appalachia, as illustrated in multiple conversations about, for example, the ways that the extent and siting of environmental harm cultivated an atmosphere of fear: 'It's real scary, even as a kid, to go to school when you know that there's that big pond of coal slurry up on the hill'.

In the scopic regime of horror, then, these rural landscapes—and in particular Appalachian mountain landscapes—both environmental and social have long provided a singularly terrifying backdrop for cinematic horror. Mountains, rivers, deserts, fields and nearly every other significant component of the rural have served as the cinematic home of any number of monsters, psychotic killers, rapists, and other assorted horrors. While the thread of the rural as a uniquely terrifying landscape runs uninterrupted through horror cinema since the 1970s, it functions as one side of a horror dialectic that places the anti-idyllic, world-against-us rural landscape, empty and foreboding, in a mutually-constitutive contrast with both the idyllic rural and the urban and suburban world-for-us landscapes, populated visual worlds with their own terrifying dimensions. That is to say; the rural is horrifying, in a cinematic sense, for both what it is and what it isn't. In horror cinema, the rural only is the rural because it is not the urban/suburban, and vice versa. While the anxious horror of urban and suburban life and landscapes is portrayed primarily in a visual language that reflects contemporary political anxieties relating to outsiders coming in (the home invasion fantasies of *Funny Games*, or the political and cathartic violence of *The Purge*, or—perhaps most aptly—the horde-invasion fantasy of the vast majority of the wildly popular zombie genre), rural horror relies first and foremost on the perspective of the terrified outsider, confronted by an entirely unfamiliar world. While the rural of rural horror can encompass fields, deserts, forests and more, in the visual world(s) of horror, the rural can be taken most simply to mean that which is neither urban, suburban, or cosmic. The rural in horror cinema reveals itself through the use of certain atmospherics, aesthetics, and themes; *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, for example, is clearly rural horror—wide shots of the barren landscapes of rural Texas abound, and the main barrier to escape presented to the victims is the very vastness of the world in which their antagonist lives; in the rural, as in space, there is no one to hear you scream. This stands in sharp relief to the atmospherics typical of urban and suburban horror; consider, for example, *The Purge,* wherein the victims and antagonists all live in a distinctly urban setting, and where the challenge of survival comes not at all from a lack of population, but rather the exact opposite. Among these unfamiliar and horrifying rural worlds, the mountain landscape of Appalachia—and in particular the ecological and social landscape of Extractive Appalachia, and even more particularly the coalfields of West Virginia—has long captured the imagination of the architects and audiences of rural horror.

Seeing the World(s) of Appalachia: Visualizing the Idyll and Anti-Idyll

What do the idyll and the anti-idyll look like? How might the Appalachian world-for-us and the Appalachian world-against-us appear? In the popular imagination, the Appalachian idyll appears as a leisure landscape, ripe for human enjoyment and reflection, and sometimes teeming with the promise of possible redemption through communion with nature. It is a world that, although rugged, offers the challenges and opportunities that come, if we recall Bell, with 'authentic' 'retreat'. Here, the rural maintains its status as a site of primary production, with the product merely shifting from a material one to a conceptual or affective one. As an inviting leisure landscape that offers or promises a communal relationship with nature, 'authentic retreat', and adventure at the edges of danger, the Appalachian idyll imagined as world-for-us looks either like the cartoonish productive rurality of Curlee's painting above, or like this:

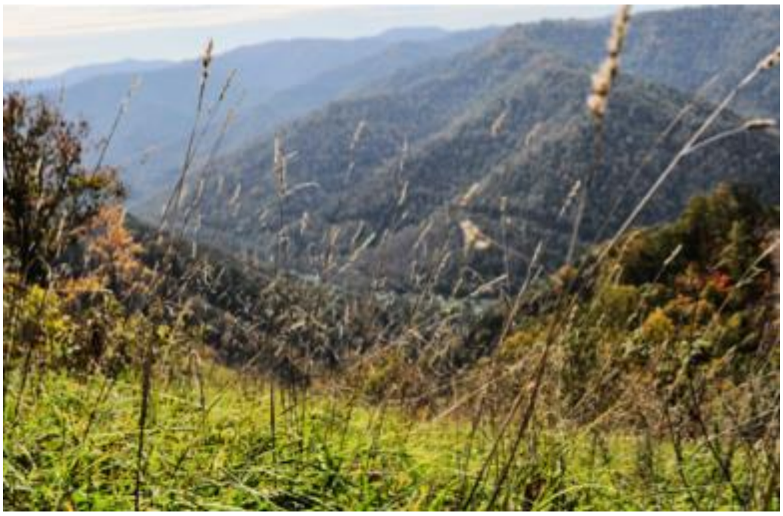

Figure 36. View from Kayford Mountain, July 2015. Photograph by the author.

I captured the image above while conducting fieldwork on a peak near Kayford Mountain, in West Virginia, in the summer of 2015. Kayford is an active mining area, with strip-mining operations extracting coal using mountaintop-removal methods. In 2015 and 2016, after travelling to the top of what locals simply call 'Kayford' on the back of a 4-wheel all-terrain vehicle driven by Junior, I took the above photograph. The gently rolling mountains, lush grass, and the barely-visible town in the valley illustrate the popular image of the Appalachian ecological idyll[46]; this is a landscape we can enjoy, one in which we can commune with nature, face challenges, and come out the other side with stories, or with an enhanced appreciation for life and the world, or, possibly, even with redemption. The above image, as is the case with all photographs, only tells part of the story, though. The above image is the world-for-us, divorced from its dialectical twin-opposite, the world-against-us. As part of this mutually constitutive pair, though, the opposing and imposing world-against-us is never far off. On Kayford, I had only, essentially, to pivot on my heels to capture its image:

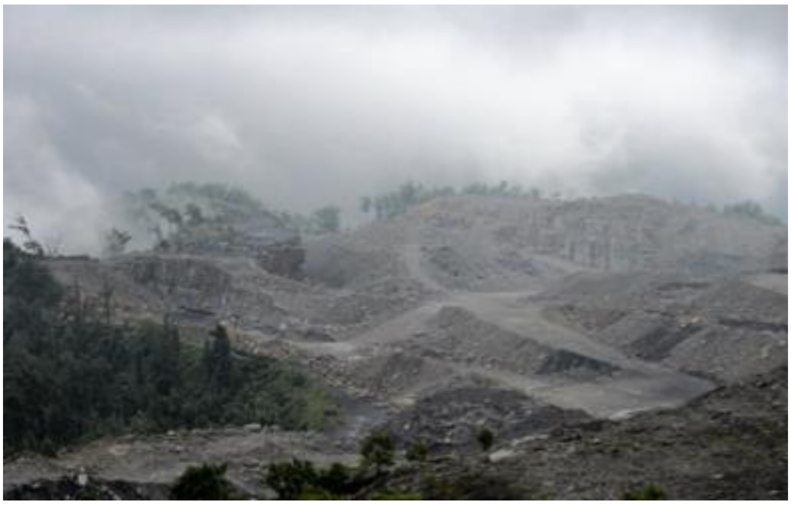

Figure 36. View from Kayford Mountain, July 2015. Photograph by the author.

While these two images were captured on different days—perhaps five or seven days apart—they are nonetheless illustrative of three of the issues particularly essential to my own consideration of Extractive Appalachia. First, both illustrate the competing contemporary ecologies of Appalachia: the lush and verdant natural landscape, and the grey and barren extractive landscape. Despite their creation in what is relatively the same temporal moment or epoch, in these two images we can find a visual and decoupled—in the sense that it appears in the visual image rather than in text, and in the sense that it is, ultimately, not one but two images, placed in conversation with one another—form of Benjamin's 'dialectical image': taken side by side, they illustrate significant historical change, a form of ecologically regressive/destructive industrial and political 'progress'. Second, when taken in aggregate, these two images illustrate two of the competing visual and conceptual worlds imagined in Thacker's tripartite framework of 'worlds' and Bell's dualistic vision of the idyll/anti-idyll; these are the world-for-us and world-against-us, the idyll and the anti-idyll, rendered visible and forced into reckoning. Finally, when viewed in tandem, these images reinforce the necessarily dialectic relationship between idyll and anti-idyll, for-us and against-us; without the first picture to inform the viewer of what *should* be, the second image, with its horror of what *is,* is left unclear. That is, we can only understand what is *left* by first understanding what once *was*. This prods sharply at the central problem of extraction, whether Appalachian or otherwise—extractive industry is an ecologically subtractive force, in that it does not merely extract value and material, leaving behind an acceptable facsimile of what was, but instead subtracts from all it encounters (see generally: Schaniberg et al. 1996; Schnaiberg and Pellow 2002; Stretesky et al. 2013). In this subtraction, what is left behind is often left empty, and in emptiness is ecological and existential isolation. In isolation, fundamentally, is horror.

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[46] Here we can return to the paintings of Pittman and Curlee, discussed above. Pittman offers a painterly vision of the Appalachia ecological idyll (and here, if only here, we can collapse 'idyll' and 'ideal'), while Curlee offers a painterly vision of the Appalachian social idyll. Despite the vast aesthetic differences in the two images, they rely equally on culturally produced notions of ecological and social Appalachian idylls.

It is that central component and motif of rurality—isolation—that gives rural horror its anti-idyllic teeth. As noted above, the archetypical rural horror of films like *Deliverance* hinges on entry into a world that is not adequately inhabited—not for-us enough—to protect us from the violent urges of humanity or the uncaring violence of an ecology for-itself. In films like *Deliverance*, Bell notes, the horror is there waiting in the wings, lurking in the shadows: it is a feature of ecology. This central theme of rural horror, the sort of horror that maps over the world-for-itself, is made visually apparent in the promotional material surrounding *Deliverance*. Take, for example, this popular poster for the film:

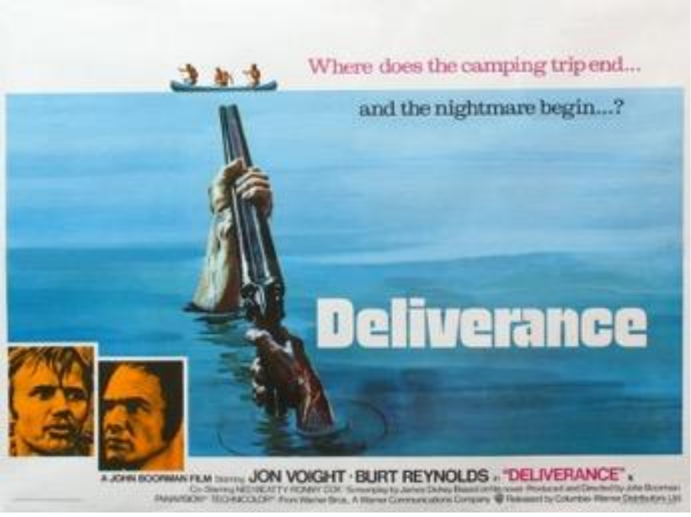
Where does the camping trip end...
and the nightmare begin...?
Deliverance
A JOHN BOORMAN FILM
JON VOIGHT · BURT REYNOLDS
"DELIVERANCE"

Figure 37. Promotional poster for *Deliverance* (1972). Image courtesy of Warner Brothers Pictures.

In this image, the source of the horrifying threat is fairly unambiguous: it is human—the hands gripping the shotgun—but it is waiting in the very landscape that provides the characters with a stomping ground full of the promise of pleasure, adventure, retreat and redemption. In many ways, then, the image calls to the viewer to fear, first and foremost, the unseen horror of the supposedly-idyllic rural landscape itself. Similar visual and narrative use of an isolated rurality runs across much of early rural horror, from *Deliverance* to *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* to *Straw Dogs*. This body of images, and its meaning, stands in sharp contrast with the body of images surrounding contemporary urban and suburban horror. In these more contemporary urban/suburban films, the horror is not in the landscape, but in its human inhabitants. Consider aforementioned films like *The Purge*, which appeals to contemporary political anxieties[47] by relying entirely on the promise of a human horror coming from friends, neighbours, and family members. More significantly, though, the urban horror of films like *The Purge* and the suburban horror of films like *Funny Games* does not *wait*, it *arrives*. This is the horror that rings the doorbell, an emerging trope made abundantly clear in this image, taken from *The Purge*:

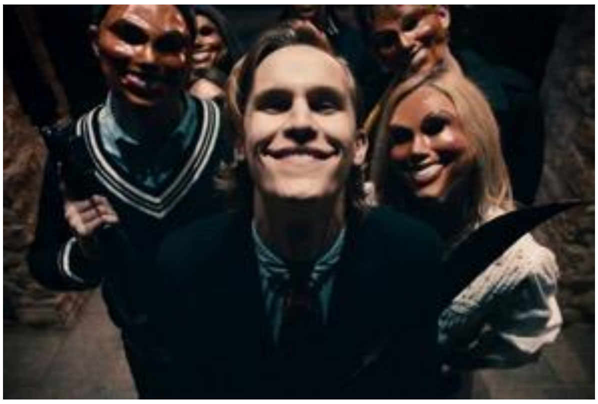

Figure 38. Promotional image for *The Purge* (2013). Image courtesy of Blumhouse Pictures and Universal Pictures.

In this image, and in the bulk of the visual corpus of urban/suburban horror, we can locate a departure from the waiting and embedded horror of the rural. Still, though, both images—and both tropes—signify visual attention to and interest in a world-against-us. The central difference, then, is whether the ecology of that world hides or reveals the teeth that aim to bite us.

If the horror of *The Purge* and other cultural productions of urban and suburban horror reflects contemporary political anxieties relating to immigration, economic collapse, crime and insecurity, though, rural horror is frequently distinctly 'about' anxieties relating to ecology, ecological insecurity, ecological destruction, corporate exploitation of agriculture, and collapse. Even in early examples of the cinematic genre like *Deliverance* and *Texas*

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[47] Fiddler (2013), Williams (1995), Rafter and Ystehede (2010) each describe the emergence of 'the gothic'—which, of course, simultaneously describes the emergence of horror as a literary and visual form—in terms of a response to various political anxieties.

Chainsaw Massacre, the true source of the horror is not in the rural people who torment the protagonists, but instead in the various forms of ecological exploitation and destruction that threaten the antagonists' particular rurality. In *Deliverance*, a proposed dam not only gives the protagonist group the impetus for the trip—'one last chance to see nature'—it also gives their attackers something to be angry about. Similarly, in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre,* the grotesque family of murderers who systematically kill the hapless 'city kids' engage in their trademark brutality only after the sole local employer—an industrial hog-and-beef farm and slaughterhouse—is shuttered. For the family, this micro-scale collapse not only destabilizes them economically, it provides them something to justify their horrifying application of the tricks of the slaughter trade to their human victims. While, then, the divergent forms of rural and urban/suburban horror point to different sets of anxiety and fear, they each grant significant conceptual space to a social fear of crime, whether the state-corporate crimes of ecological harm and ecocide, or the 'street crime' of murder.

Criminologists have considered the various forms and productions of rural/mountain horror in various ways. Walter DeKeseredy and his colleagues describe the prominence of the rural landscape in horror cinema as evident of a relationship in which the rural is constructed as horrifying owing primarily to the ignorance of an outsider's perspective that fails to fully comprehend the nuance of rural life. In these authors' estimation, rural landscapes and rural life are not only *constructed* by horror, but *mis*constructed *as* horrifying. For these authors', the rural is *made* horrifying by a process of 'horrification' undertaken and driven by media representations of the rural. It is important, though, to consider an alternative understanding of the meaning, prominence and appeal of the rural horror genre; what if, instead of the rural being made horrifying by media representations, the rural truly *is* horrifying? And, extending the question, what if the horrifying reality of the rural is purely the result of the ways that rural landscapes and people have been exploited and harmed by capital? While DeKeseredy et al.'s analysis is consistent with certain strands of critical criminological theory, and while on its surface it may seem to present an analysis favourable to the aims of critical, green and cultural criminologies, it is lacking in that it fails to apprehend the cultural and ecological significance of the historical and contemporary effects of capital and its attendant social and environmental harms. A green cultural criminology has already attuned itself to the ways that the ecologically destructive powers of capitalism, as evidenced by Nigel South's assertion that the basis for contemporary ecological anxieties reflected in contemporary horror is 'real in terms of public health dangers, environmental harms and accumulating toxicity' (South, In Press) like those found, known, and experienced in Extractive Appalachia.

When Junior, quoted above, told me about how in his mind—as both a child and an adult—there was a thread connecting fear ('it's scary') and the processes and effects of extractive ecocide ('that big pond of coal slurry'), he revealed something essential about Appalachian experience in the ecological frame: horror and dread are useful and necessary categories to understand contemporary Appalachian subjectivity. As Timothy Morton aptly notes in proposing and defending what he calls a 'dark ecology'—an ecological mode of thinking and aesthetics that reasserts the utility and centrality of fear, irony, uncertainty, and hesitation into 'the ecological thought'—'ugliness and horror are important' (17). Moreover, Morton asserts that only through thinking ecology in parallel with horror can we 'create frameworks for coping with [ecological] catastrophe' of the sort that Extractive Appalachia has long faced, catastrophes that are not only 'imminent' but that 'have already occurred'. I reject, then, the assertions made by rural criminologists like DeKeseredy and others, who find that horror and dread are written erroneously onto the rural landscape in and by the cultural productions of horror: not only are the ecological horrors of Extractive Appalachia (and other rural landscapes of ecocide) lived and real, thinking those horrors as part of a broader project and exercise of the ecological thought is fundamentally necessary in the development of 'a more honest' ecological knowing that 'lingers in the shadowy world of irony and difference' (Morton 2010: 55). If, as Morton (2010: 56) describes, 'loneliness is a sign of deep connection', we can interrogate the loneliness and isolation of rurality, horror, and rural horror for signs and affirmations of our intimate connection to infinite ecologies and natures.

South joins Hwang (2013) and Bosky (2014) in locating these anxieties of toxic ecology—an ecological world-against-us—in underground spaces. In the particular and peculiar Appalachian world-against-us anti-idyll, there is one fundamental underground space: the coal mine. If the underground coal mine, the extractive world-against-us with its dangerous labour and ecological devastation, is the cradle of our collective horror, though, what would we find if we removed its earthen cover? What if we removed not only earth—in the literal form of dirt, rocks, trees, and all other terrestrial material—by literally blasting it away, and at the same time removed humanity from these material and conceptual spaces, as much as possible, by replacing human labour with mechanized labour, toiling men with ceaselessly chugging machinery? That is, if the underground mine allows us special conceptual access to the horrors below, what might we find if we allowed what was below to rise to the surface? If we locate Morton's connecting loneliness and isolation in the underground coal mine—that loneliest of places, what former deep miner Sam Hatfield described to me in a 2015 interview as a 'Hell down there, it's just so lonely'—we can begin to excavate the ways that contemporary surface mining techniques demand the emergence of new ecological thought, meaning, and horror.

Mines, Mist, and Ooze: The World *Without* Us and the Hyperobject

The emergence of a cinematic horror of rural ecocide as represented in contemporary scopic forms is, of course, occurring alongside the emergence of mountaintop removal mining; the loss of jobs to mechanization, the resulting social conflicts, and the destruction of the landscape and ecology attendant on mountaintop removal are all equally implicated in the ecological themes of rural and mountain horror. The emergent frameworks of dark ecology, black ecology, and melancology offer the opportunity to darken the edges of green criminology and green ecological thought, imbuing human engagement with the ecological with the darkness, fear, pessimism, and isolation central to both cinematic horror and the experienced horror of Extractive Appalachian subjectivity. In what follows, then, I will place dark ecology and new ecological thought (Morton, 2010) in conversation with cinematic horror in order to locate and interrogate the ecological and cultural meaning and experience of Extractive Appalachia.

There is an emerging form of rural horror cinema that reckons with the surfacing of the extractive monster, a new cosmically-minded supernatural horror, with a temporal lineage traceable in one direction to the horrifying and unearthly 'weird fiction' of HP Lovecraft, and in the other to the contemporary fiction of Thomas Ligotti, the dark philosophical pessimism of Thacker, and the Luciferian Marxism of Evan Calder Williams. For these creators and conceptualizers of a new horrifying ecological reality, the locus of fear is a bigger isolation, one that does not necessarily mean we—as individuals or as a species—are alone, but only that we have no useful or fulfilling relations. Theirs is a cosmic aloneness, one that ranges from an ontological isolation and insecurity born from capitalism and bourgeois social structures (Williams), an anti-natalist and pessimistic philosophy (Ligotti), and a pervasive feeling of the existence of a parallel universe not fit for human survival (Lovecraft). Uniting each of these philosophies[48], though, is an attention to the third component—following the ‘world-for-us’ and ‘world-against-us’—of Thacker’s tripartite typology of conceptual worlds: the ‘world-without-us’. This world, for Thacker explicitly and for others implicitly, is the breeding ground of our deepest fears, the most horrifying of the many horrors we know. It is a conceptual geography entirely unconcerned with humanity—not for us, not against us, but *without* us in both conceptual and material terms. It can sometimes be a post-human world (although such a post-human version has never been depicted in any visual form; even cinematic efforts at visually illustrating a post-human world, such as *I Am Legend*, tend to feature at least one human), and sometimes a parallel world, in the Lovecraftian tradition, that human explorers happen across through accident or alchemy. In the case of the possible world-without-us vision of Extractive Appalachia, we have happened upon it by alchemy—the alchemical power of capital to make something out of nothing, or perhaps more aptly, nothing out of everything. In Appalachia, the constructive power of capital, the power that historically both exploited workers and, conversely, provided some sense of place, space and economic security while also serving to assist in the cultural construction of a incomparably beautiful landscape, the power that gave us both the world-for-us and the world-against-us/world-for-itself, is now giving us a horrifying glimpse at the world-without-us, the world in which the limitations of human labour and kilometers of earthen cover are no longer obstacles to accumulation-by-extraction. The world without us is plainly evident in Extractive Appalachia, as it creeps in the margins of the extractive site. Returning to the distinct visuality of aerial photography discussed in the previous chapter, consider the alien ant-ecology of the Hobet permit, and its virtually-empty employee parking lot: acre upon acre of ecological ruin, for just a handful of jobs. The mechanization of extraction, then—which is really the mechanization of ecocide, just as wars fought following the dawn of industry were the industrialization and mechanization of death—ushers in the world-without-us.

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[48] Halsey and White (1998) and others in green criminology have theorized conceptual frameworks of ‘ecophilosophy’ to describe the various ways that humans relate to nonhuman nature. In many ways—owing to their frequent concern with ecological issues, their frequent setting in ‘green’ landscapes, and their creators’ frequent use of stylistic tendencies borrowed from naturalist writers—those working in this tradition of cosmic horror offer an ecophilosophy as-yet unexplored in green criminology. Even at his most cosmic, Lovecraft’s own stories were often intensely considerate of space and ecology, even when ‘space’ in the cosmic sense—the world outside of earth’s atmosphere—itself is the ecology. Similarly, ‘black ecology’, an emerging concept in ecocriticism, considers ecology as something with the potential to extend beyond the prismatic limitations of ‘green’ in an effort to account for the vast spatial expanse that currently lies outside the grasp of science. It makes sense, then, to consider the work of Lovecraft, Thacker, Williams, Ligotti and others as indicating a form of ecophilosophy, albeit a form that picks at the frayed edges of the concept.

If, as Thacker describes, the world-for-us is the subjective domain of meaning and purpose (the 'World') and the world-for-itself/world-against-us is the objective domain of science and data and materiality (the 'Earth'), to what domain of knowing and experience does the world-without-us belong? Thacker responds to his own categorical and definitional problem by noting that by necessity of his framework 'there are other characteristics that are not accounted for, that are not measured, that remain hidden and occulted', and that 'anything that reveals itself does not reveal itself in total'. For Thacker, then, despite becoming visible at the margins, the world-against-us does not emerge in entire. How could it, after all, reveal itself to human optical apprehension when its very existence requires humanity's nonexistence? Similarly, Heidegger (1977: 10) describes that 'technology' was initially understood as more than means or instrument, but rather as a revelatory mode. Heidegger notes, though, that 'bringing-forth-hither brings hither out of concealment, forth into unconcealment'[49]. In other words, 'every unconcealment of reality is also by necessity a concealment of another reality' (Campbell and Saren, 2010: 154). If, then, we return to classical understandings of technology as a force which reveals—which deoccults the conceptual and material spaces occulted by the limits of human understanding, vision, and knowing—we can begin to locate the ways that the technologies of late-modern extractive practice serve to reveal worlds previously unknown.

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[49] It is worth noting that Heidegger locates the thought of this process of concealment and revelation in the 'constantly concealed global mountain range', further illustrating that 'the mountain' as a conceptual and material space and object serves as a canvas on which we write culture, politics, meaning, history, and ecology (Debarbieux and Rudaz 2015; Debarbieux 2009, 1998; Debarbieux and Price 2008).

To return, though, to the problem of classification presented by Thacker's typology, we should again be urged towards the question of the world-against-us. For Thacker, the world-against-us is neither subjective *World* or objective *Earth*, but instead the remainder, *Planet*[50], a frame of understanding that 'moves the scale out from the terrestrial into the cosmological framework' (Thacker, 2010: 7). Once we begin to think in the terms of planet, we are again urged towards the sort of ecology-beyond-green imagined and proposed by Morton; the centrality of Earth falls away, leaving behind only horror: the loneliness and deep connection of more cosmic ecological thought. Morton, though, proposes a system and mode of ecological thought—one attuned to 'hyperobjects'—that, perhaps, helps to collapse Thacker's typology into a perceptible series of spaces, systems, and symbols. While Morton first proposes the hyperobject in *The Ecological Thought* (2010), he does not truly unpack the concept and its potential until *Hyperobjects* (2013), where he offers the following definitions and exemplars:

> '…hyperobjects refer to things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans. A hyperobject could be a black hole. A hyperobject could be the Lago Agrio oil field in Ecuador, or the Florida Everglades. A hyperobject could be the biosphere, or the Solar System. A hyperobject could be the sum total of all the nuclear materials on Earth…Hyperobjects, then, are "hyper" in relation to some other entity, whether they are manufactured by humans or not.'
>
> (Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects*, 2010: 1)

Perhaps, then, we can imagine many things as hyperobjects. This seems to be patently true, but that broad applicability only underscores that, pushing further, we can imagine Thacker's world-without-us (planet) as hyperobject. We can imagine Extractive Appalachia as a hyperobject, or a network of hyperobjects. Zooming in further, we can imagine the Hobet mining permit, described in the previous chapter, as a hyperobject. Thinking Extractive Appalachia, or Hobet, as hyperobjects, of course, begs that we place the concept of the hyperobject into conversation with horror, and more specifically with the supernatural and unearthly horror that I argue emerges in the public imagination in response to the parallel emergence of increasingly destructive forms of resource extraction. A central theme of cosmic horror—which is already uniquely rural because of its use of isolation and loneliness—is the 'Eldritch' thematic of horrors too materially vast to be taken in by human eyes. Like the Eldritch monsters and forces of Lovecraft and Ligotti and LaValle in literature, or the monsters of *Cloverfield, Silent Hill,* and *The Cabin in The Woods* in cinema, the spatial and material vastness of extractive spaces like Hobet makes them far too big to visually apprehend, even when employing the techniques of verticality described in the previous chapter. In the hyperobjects of Extractive Appalachia, then, we encounter piecemeal the assorted components of the emerging extractive horror—the denuded hills, the valley fills, the flattened peaks, the poisoned streams, the economic ruination, the school in the shadow of the slurry pond are each constitutive of the true horror of late-modern extractive capital.

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[50] Thacker is kind in conceding here that the status of 'planet' as subject or object presents an 'irresolvable dilemma'.

How, though, do we mark the moment at which the world-for-us and the world-against-us fall away, and the hyperobject world-without-us appears visually? Thacker contends that *mist and ooze* are the central visible vanguards of this cosmic world, that in the power of mist to visually obscure what we know as the world we can locate the power to reveal what we don't—and can't—know. Placing mist and ooze in a parallel relationship as the initial signifiers of an emerging unknown, Thacker notes not only their centrality to the world of 'weird' horror fiction and cinema, but to their earthly material origins in that brand of fiction as often being 'magic circles'—sites of alchemy, used to conjure the supernatural—

and ‘coal mines’. As Marx and Engels describe (1848), capital is always the sorcerer or his apprentice, ‘unleashing forces it cannot control’ (Noys 2013: 2)[51]. Here, the significance of mist in these visions of an emerging and horrifying world-without-us made manifest by the alchemy of capital and the significance of mist in visual depictions of Appalachia—particularly those coming from visual forms of horror—is not without meaning: a newly horrifying vision of the world is emerging in the mist of Appalachia.

Looking south from the peak of Larry Gibson’s camp on Kayford Mountain, Junior and I initially find nothing to see but a sea of fog. We decide to sit and wait for it to burn off, as promised by the radio forecast we both heard earlier in the morning. After 20 minutes or so, the mist suddenly blows down the mountain, and the view opens up. Just below where we stand on a high and plainly constructed berm of dirt is the Kayford mining permit, a vast mix of scrubby flats and craggy highwalls of rock, ribbons of coal visible at their base. Junior estimates the seams of coal at six feet tall, and it looks like about 60 feet of mountain have been removed to access them, a ratio that Junior says is about right for the site and the industry: 10 feet to one foot, removed mountain to exposed coal. The mist that obscured our view, though, is a central figure of the visuality of Extractive Appalachia; images—particularly contemporary images—of the extractive landscape of Appalachia regularly feature mist, clouds, or other obscuring ethereal forces. These obscuring forces are, of course, sometimes atmospheric (fog, after all, settles in the valleys) and sometimes a direct result of extraction (dust, after all, is an expected result of exploding rock). What matters, though, is less the origin of mist, and more the ways that its presence in the visible and readable captured landscape of Extractive Appalachia—particularly in cinematic horror, but also in landscape and portrait photography—imbues space and place with dread and meaning, and the ways that mist (and, to a lesser extent, ooze) configure and condition ways of imagining an Appalachian future just as they condition and obscure seeing an Appalachian present.

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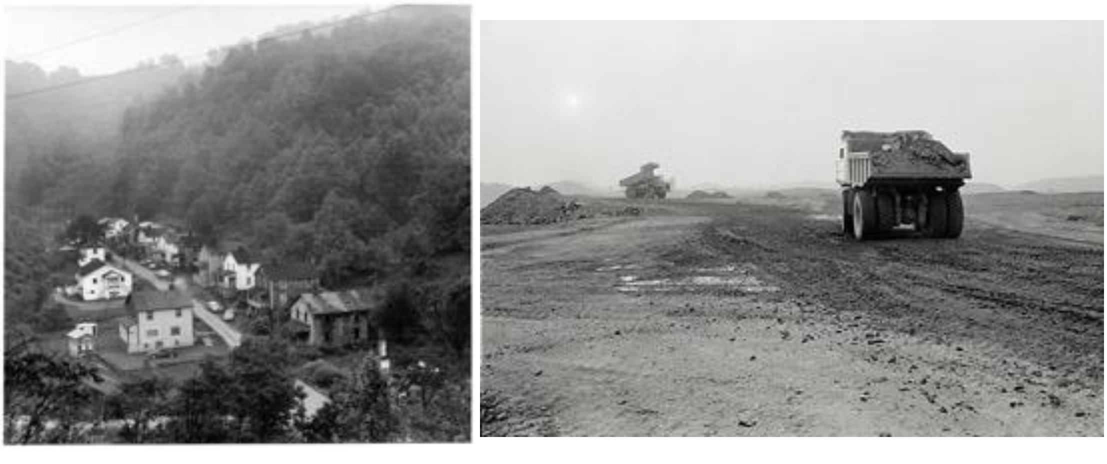
[51] As further evidence of the power of capital to unleash unknown forces in the industrial era and the epoch of the Anthropocene, we can look at the dramatic expansion of the very number of known minerals; as of 2017, over 200 new mineral species have been confirmed and cataloged as a direct result of industrial human activity (Hazen et al., 2017).

In Cormac McCarthy's *Outer Dark* (1968)—a very 'Appalachian' novel by a very celebrated writer of Appalachia—the miasmatic fog of Appalachia as imagined in and through visuality is made paradoxically clear. McCarthy describes 'the slow wash of mist over the glade, beyond which the trees rose blackly' (13), the landscape as 'washed with fog' (101), moments in which 'a black fog set in' (172), his protagonist with 'fog cold and wet upon him' (173) in a 'palpable miasma of rot' (113). The visual metaphor of fog is, obviously, essential to McCarthy's communication of his own vision of Appalachia. Fog and mist, though, are not located only in the metaphor and analogy of fiction. If we return to the images of life in Appalachian coal camps captured by Ted Wathen and Bob Hower in the late 1970s—just as surface mining began to fully supplant more traditional forms of deep mining—we can see mist as a constant presence, never far from the sites or communities of extraction:



Figures 39-40. *McRoberts, Kentucky,* Ted Wathen (1975); *Strip Mine Trucks, Breathitt County, KY,* Bob Hower, (1976). Photographs courtesy of the artists.

In these images, the blackened hands and faces that visually characterize the human labour of underground coal mining within Appalachian visuality are replaced with the blackened landscapes, obscured in the mist of mechanized surface mining, that characterize the contemporary visual landscape of Extractive Appalachia. The mist of extraction endures, as well; during time in the field, I captured countless images of misty Appalachian landscapes of extraction. Likewise, when I was accompanied by photographer Eric Brittain on several multi-week excursions into Extractive Appalachia, we found his ability to clearly photograph the landscape was hampered regularly by mist. Consider, for example, the image below, which Eric took from a road beneath an active surface mine in eastern Kentucky:

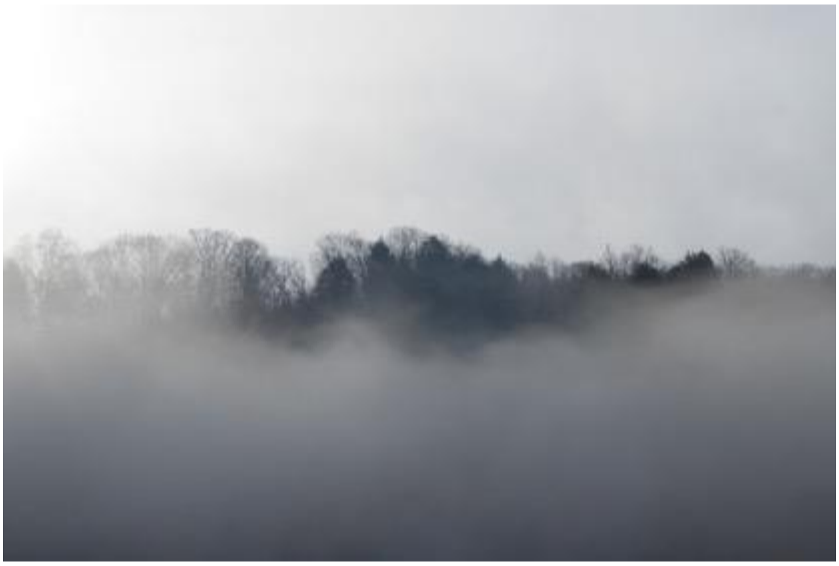


Figure 41. Hilltop Ridge, Kentucky-Virginia border, 2016. Photograph by Eric Brittain.

The fog of extractive rurality also reveals itself in contemporary horror cinema, further connecting rurality, ecocide, horror, and mist. The 2012 blockbuster horror film *The Cabin in the Woods* offers a misty cinematic vision of the hidden horrors of the underground place, and the risks involved and anxieties invoked in unearthing what lies beneath. The film begins, like most other films that employ the horror of rural isolation[52] and economic ruination, with a cadre of carefree college students stopping at a mountain gas station operated by an atavistic and poor man who offers vague warnings about the terrors that to come. Quickly, though, the film bounces rapidly from trope to trope before the big reveal: the students are being systematically sacrificed in order to preserve the sleep of ancient and vengeful gods, sleeping below the Earth's surface. That twist firmly pins *The Cabin in the Woods* in the Lovecraftian tradition, of course, but more significantly it invokes the fundamental horror of subterranean spaces—including, of course, the underground coal mine—and the hyperobjects of horror, the world-without-us, brought into being through the removal of the terrain that conceals them. Consistent with Thacker's point about the ubiquity of mist as the vanguard of the world-without-us, the aesthetics of the film are distinctly misty. Take, for example, the promotional image below:

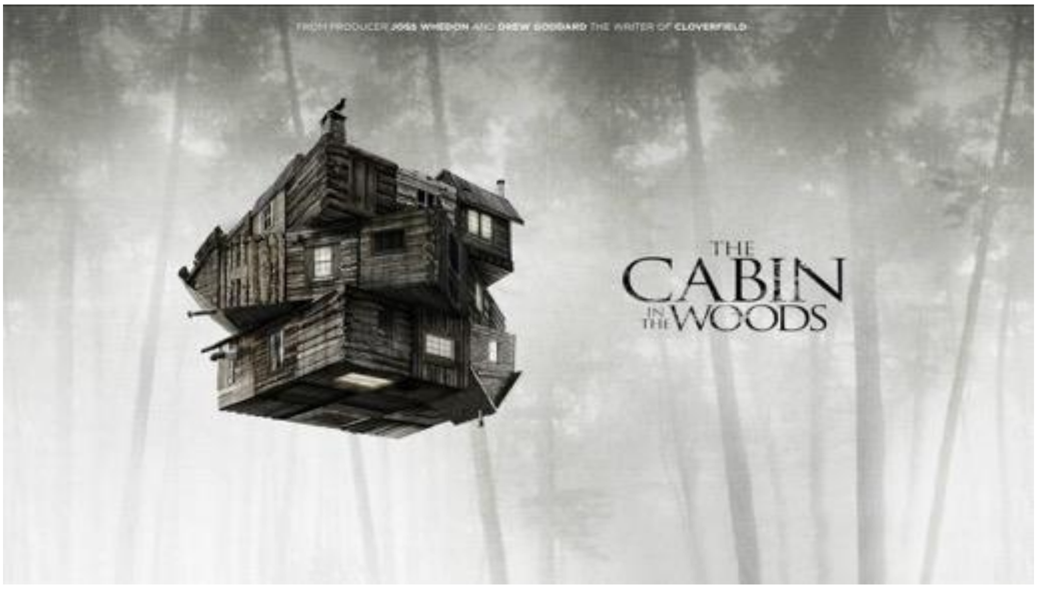

FROM PRODUCER JOSS WHEDON AND DREW GODDARD THE WRITER OF CLOVERFIELD
THE CABIN IN THE WOODS

Figure 42. Promotional poster for *The Cabin in the Woods*, 2012. Image courtesy of Lionsgate Films.

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[52] While it is never made explicitly clear, everything about the film indicates that it is set in Extractive Appalachia: the landscapes, topography, and accents all point squarely to the Appalachia so beloved by the horror imaginary.

In this image, the misty aesthetics of Appalachian horror are clear. Moreover, those aesthetics and signs are placed in conversation with the sort of impossible alien geometry of the cabin itself, an assemblage of parts that echo the Lovecraftian origins of the film's themes of fundamental isolation, dread, and world-without-us horror. We can read, then, *The Cabin in the Woods* as a contemporary film that reflects contemporary anxieties, ways of thinking ecology, and ways of seeing the distinct rurality of Extractive Appalachia. Those same thematics and poetics of horror are also visible in *Silent Hill*, the 2006 Canadian horror film based on the video-game series of the same title. In *Silent Hill,* the protagonists must enter and make their way through a subterranean world-without-us that exists just below the surface of the world-for-us and the world-for-itself. What makes *Silent Hill* a significant and meaningful contribution to the imaginary of Appalachian horror, though, is that the film's creators chose to set the film in the fictional town of *Silent Hill,* West Virginia, a post-coal town in which the mechanization of coal extraction led to the opening of a hidden portal to the subterranean hellscape. The film is, it goes without saying, pure horror fantasy, but it employs a very real geography in its worldbuilding: Silent Hill, West Virginia is based on Centralia, Pennsylvania, a small town on the outer edges of Extractive Appalachia. Formerly home to nearly 3,000 residents, Centralia was built atop a vast network of underground coal mines, mines that employed the majority of the town's residents. In 1962, though, a fire was set in a strip-mine site that had been repurposed as a landfill, and the fire quickly ignited seams of methane, coal, and coal gas in the abandoned deep mines beneath the town. Despite repeated efforts over the 55 years since the fire began to extinguish it, it continues to burn. Fire and smoke drift through cracks in the ground across the nearly 4,000 acres of land that sit over the burning mine tunnels, and the ground is often noticeably hot. In the years since the fire began, the town has become nearly entirely abandoned, with the 2013 census counting a population of just seven. Centralia, then, is as close as we have come to a post-coal geographic hyperobject, and as the fire is estimated to have adequate fuel to burn for another two and a half centuries, it is entirely likely that it will, in time, become a post-extractive geography entirely without humanity’s touch, an extractive world-without-us. Centralia is a popular destination among fans of both the film and video-game versions of Silent Hill, as well as hobbyist explorers of abandoned spaces, and so it is a heavily photographed geography. Images of Centralia—and of its fictional counterpart, Silent Hill—nearly all heavily feature the mists of extractive space.

Welcome to
Silent Hill

Figures 43 & 44. *Silent Hill*, promotional poster, 2006, Image courtesy of Sony Pictures. *Centralia, PA*. (2015), photograph courtesy of Dave Anthony.

Across Extractive Appalachia as both a material and experienced landscape and a constructed and imagined cinematic space, then, the world is seen through the mist of surface extraction. Unbelievably, though, Thacker’s second and usually more elusive vanguard of the world-without-us, ooze, is also seemingly a visible feature of the ecocide brought to Appalachia by extractive capital. In March of 2017, West Virginia’s Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) launched an investigation into the source of ‘mysterious foam’ appearing along Spruce Fork Ridge in Logan County in the southwestern part of the state. Tracing the mysterious foam to a surface mine permit near Blair Mountain (an especially significant space within the material and cultural geography of the region, as discussed in Chapter 6), the DEP determined the oozing foam to have originated in the spill of an industrial lubricant called Quik-Foam used in extractive drilling processes (Appalachian

Magazine 2017). While the DEP indicated that the foam posed no threat to public water supplies, its presence nevertheless indicates the creeping supernatural dread of the extractive world-without-us. Here again, we can turn to Morton's hyperobjects to further illustrate Extractive Appalachia as a hyperobject, an imminent world-without-us, and mist and ooze as indicative not only of the imminence of the world-without-us, but of that world's status as hyperobject: among the common traits of hyperobjects, Morton notes that they are 'viscous', that they stick to those who build or witness them.

When we note the central role that mist and fog—and, to a lesser extent, ooze—play in the dialectic conceptual and material landscapes of rurality, Extractive Appalachia, and horror, we can begin to consider again Heidegger's essential point about concealment and unconcealment. The mist of extraction at once occults and conceals the extractive landscape and reveals the dreadful horror of extraction. It lingers in the valleys between the mountains, lingers in the frame of Appalachian visualities and counter-visualities, and lingers in the mind and memory, always simultaneously showing and hiding.

Seeing Beyond Horror

If Extractive Appalachia exists as a special geography within the broader material and cultural space of Appalachia, and so within the American public imaginary, it exists in many ways and moments as a geography of horror. From the rural mountain atavism offered by photographers like Shelby Lee Adams, discussed in Chapter 3, and the horrifying vision of rurality offered by classic and contemporary cinematic rural horror, we can find cultural reflections of Extractive Appalachia as a material and cultural space of horror. Across the scopic regimes of photography and cinema, from John Dominis and Shelby Lee Adams to *Silent Hill* and *The Cabin in the Woods*, we can find ample illustrations of Appalachia's place in the social imaginary as a geography of horror, a world-in-itself/world-against-us. While not always reflective or mindful of the ways in which the lived horror of Appalachia is a result of an uninterrupted history of capitalist violence and exploitation, representations of the anti-idyll of Appalachia nevertheless reflect dimensions of the lived experience of Extractive Appalachia. These representations of Appalachian people, cultures, and ecologies operate in a dialectic with their constitutive opposite, the idyllic Appalachian world-for-us of the pastoral tradition. Both, of course, are ‘true’ Appalachias: I have seen and continue to see beauty and violence, both of unspeakable proportions, in Appalachia. This is the ‘doubleness’ (Bell 1997) of horror—desire and dread—and the doubleness of Appalachia.

While I am resistant, then, to understandings of Appalachia-as-horror that are informed only by the images and cinematic narratives of the history and contemporary of Appalachia, I am equally resistant to understandings of Appalachia as a rural idyll, understandings that fail to recognize the lived experiences of dread and isolation in the extractive landscape. Although I consider myself comfortably at home in Appalachia, and to a lesser extent Extractive Appalachia, I routinely wrestled during fieldwork with a fundamental and foreboding sense of loneliness, dread, and ontological unease and insecurity while conducting fieldwork. Particularly while backcountry camping, alone, in southwestern West Virginia, where the bloody material history and present of coal was never far from sight or mind, my frequent unease came from a place other than the less significant and more familiar unease of being alone in the woods. The woods of Extractive Appalachia are not, of course, overrun with atavistic and violent hillbillies, but they are also not just any ‘woods’: they are a special and spectral geography, rich with the spirits of people, cultures, and ecologies lost to the appetites of extractive capital.

Desire and dread, though, are the human dimensions of our uniquely horrifying condition. As extractive industry and capital make their final retreat from Appalachia, as mechanization and surface mining continue to empty the employee parking lots just as they empty the mountains, the towns and communities of Extractive Appalachia are left to wither. As places like West Virginia experience rapid and outsized population loss, who will be left to experience desire and dread but ghosts? What will be left of its native ecology? How can those who remain hope to glimpse a future through the occulting mists of extraction? What can be imagined to come after coal, and how will those imaginative visions be conditioned by the social and ecological scars that remain? How will the landscape of Extractive Appalachia accumulate, configure, and recall the scripts written on its ecological and social spaces?

Chapter 6

‘Sacred Ground’: Capturing Memory and Time in Appalachia

‘*That which is above,*

Is as that which is below.’

-Neurosis*, Locust Star*

Confronting the Ghosts of Extractive Appalachia

Off a winding and pockmarked two-lane road—highway 3, ‘the hard road’ to locals—there is a small gravel lot. A turnabout, really, just large enough for a small car or truck to reverse directions, to head east towards the relatively metropolitan city of Beckley, or west to state road 119, the four-lane thoroughfare that cuts a deep scar across southwestern West Virginia, providing easy access to the vast network of Hatfield-McCoy ATV trails. To make it from where we are to either of those destinations, though—Beckley or 119—a driver would pass through dozens of small towns, mostly unincorporated, like Comfort, Prenter, Sylvester, or Glen Daniel. But here in this particular gravel pull-off, we are closest to Naoma, Whitesville and Eunice. The ‘we’ is me and Junior. I am from the farmland region of Kentucky on the western edge of central Appalachia, Junior is from, more or less, right where we stand—Eunice, West Virginia. Earlier in the day we met outside Junior’s house, which is a stone’s throw from his mom’s and dad’s place, which is, in turn, shouting distance from his sister’s.

We stand now under the shadow of a massive beltline designed and built to carry tonnes of coal from the nearby ARCH mine, clear through a series of mountains, out to the processing plant on the other side of the ridge, miles away, the beltline running over our heads, supported by giant concrete pylons, painted a pale industrial-blue. The beltline, from below, is both huge and deceptively small, an optic trick familiar to anyone whose eyes have struggled to take in something giant; if we were closer—if this beltline wasn't what seems like thousands of feet overhead—we would see that it's wide enough to easily move tonnage of coal, with room left for a man walking upright on each side of the cargo.

But all of that is above, up in the intestinal machinery of the conveyance. Where we stand is below the mechanical vein of the beltline, below the towering mountains. Each bit of the extractive machinery—the draglines, the bulldozers and earthmovers, the beltlines and loaders, the overweight transport-trucks—coalesces into an extractive monster of coal and capital, an Eldritch creature whose fundamental violence cannot be visually apprehended in its entirety. We stand in a liminal space both below and above Extractive Appalachia: above us, the vast architectures of ecological exploitation, carrying away the mountains; below us, the bowels of the extractive landscape, and the bones of countless and uncounted and uncountable men and women, animals, and natures, all consumed here by the insatiable appetite of extractive fossil capital.

It is not, though, that which is above or that which is below that has our attention. We do not look to the beltline, or to the ground; instead, we look straight ahead, to the concrete pylon closest to us. This one, unlike the rest, is adorned. At a glance, this pylon is a relief—both visually and emotionally—from the fuzzy blue-grey of the eco-industrial landscape. Splashed with colour, this particular pylon gives my mind space to regroup, to momentarily forget what is above—the beltline. Catching my breath, letting my eyes and lens focus, I am quickly dragged back into the reality of this place. The colours on the concrete do not denote anything celebratory. No, this is Extractive Appalachia, Boone County, West Virginia, where Larry Gibson saw his ancestral land surrounded by the blasts routinely produced by coal operators, where striking miners felt the pulse of machine guns ripping through the trees and heard the whistle of falling bombs. Where Sid Hatfield's wife Jessie held his brains in her hands on the steps of the McDowell County courthouse after a daylight ambush and execution by Baldwin-Felts assassins. This—this very place, for the colourful pylon is, in fact, an ad-hoc memorial to the 29 men who lost their lives in the Upper Big Branch mine explosion, the pylon carefully decorated with their helmets, wreaths, and messages of love and loss from their families, wives and children—is the violent space of Extractive Appalachia, and these hills have eyes. There is a miniature cross and hardhat for each of the miners and some small plaques, left by loved ones, along with some plastic flower arrangements. Junior tells me that, recently, someone wishing to express a pro-coal message had spray-painted ‘god bless coal!’ on the pylon, but that the message has since been removed.

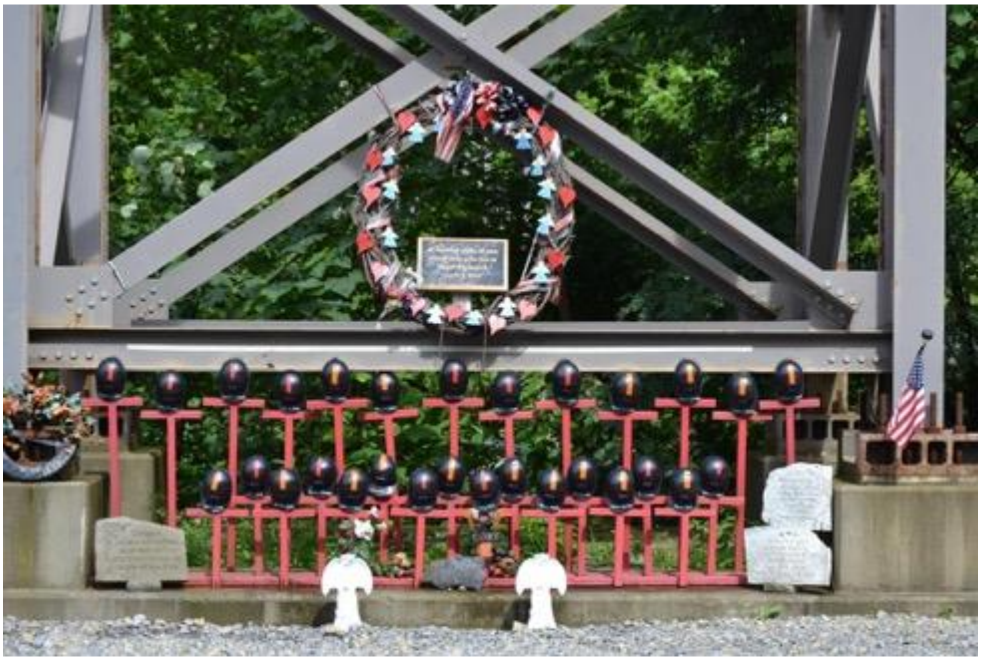

Figure 45. Unofficial memorial to Upper Big Branch mining disaster, July 2015. Photograph by the author.

Deep in the abyss of collective American memory and the social imaginary is buried the history and violence of extractive capital in Appalachia. It is a history that is uninterrupted, a thread running from the industrial settlement and colonization of the mountains to the contemporary moment. It binds not just above and below, but then and now.

Extractive Appalachia is a dark and redacted psychogeography of extraction and ecocide, and the memory of the tragic ecological and social violence of extractive capital here is the last thread left to tug, the only hope of making sense of what has happened, and is happening still, to the mountains, people, and spirit of this place. What is striking, though, in the landscape of extractive Appalachia, is that the collective memory of extractive violence and social death are embedded not only in the archive of social memory, but in the material landscape. Memorials both official and unofficial and the physical artefacts of conflicts past but not forgotten, all exist in parallel to the ongoing and contemporary ecological and social violence of extraction. The markers of the violence of resource capitalism that dot the landscape of Extractive Appalachia do not serve to preserve a violence that is over and done with, but one that continues in the contemporary moment. In what follows, I will describe and discuss the various ways that the social and ecological harms of extraction are preserved in the collective memory and landscape of Appalachia through memorials, museums, archives, artefacts, and ghosts.

The Upper Big Branch (UBB) mining disaster is just one of many tragedies of extraction that haunt the geography of Appalachia. On Monday, April 5, 2010--the day after Easter—29 miners were killed and one was seriously injured when a massive explosion ripped through the UBB mine, an operation owned by Massey Energy and operated by Performance Coal Company, a Massey subsidiary. A 2011 report to West Virginia Governor Ear Ray Tomblin, authored by J. Davitt McAteer and seven associates and commissioned by then-Governor Manchin’s Independent Investigation Panel, describes the various (and many) failures that led to the explosion, a tragedy that the panel concluded ‘could have been prevented’. Among the causes, the report identifies several ‘failures of basic safety systems,’ including faulty ventilation systems that failed to adequately vent harmful and explosive gasses from the mine; failures to meet federal and state safety guidelines requiring that rock dust be applied to mitigate the presence of volatile coal dust that ultimately allowed ‘the explosion to propagate through the mine’; and inadequately maintained water-sprays that would allow small ignitions to be quickly extinguished (McAteer et al., 2011: 4). The panel also concluded that, in addition to these mechanical faults, several stages of regulatory failure contributed to the disaster, including failures of pre-shift and on-shift examination protocols; failures to report, record, or correct potentially dangerous conditions; the failure of the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) to use all of the available tools to ensure Massey and Performance Coal were compliant with federal regulatory measures; and the failure of the West Virginia Office of Miners' Health Safety and Training (WVHST) to fulfil its role of enforcing state law and acting as a regulatory watchdog for coal miners. Each of the failures enumerated above indicates the extent of regulatory blindness, and when taken as evidence of criminogenic phenomena, illustrates the extent and costs—both human and ecological—of regulatory capture, callousness and carelessness in the Appalachian coal industry.

The panel that authored the Governor's report on the UBB disaster itself points out that ‘regulatory agencies alone cannot ensure a safe workplace for miners’, noting that, in the panel's view, it is ‘incumbent upon the coal industry to lead the way toward a better, safer industry and a culture in which the safety of workers is truly paramount’ (McAteer et al., 2011: 4). As the panel describes in its report, the construction of a culture of extractive labour that champions safety is the responsibility of all involved in that culture, from the worker ‘all the way to the boardroom’. In the case of Massey Energy, the owners of the UBB operation and its operator subsidiary Performance Coal Company, the boardroom—and, thus, the final stop for responsibility—was occupied by Don Blankenship, West Virginia native and Chairman and CEO of Massey and a controversial figure, to say the least, in the region. Following the disaster, Blankenship faced a long list of criminal charges relating to regulatory failure and malfeasance that could have resulted in a sentence of up to 30 years in prison. While the initial indictment of Blankenship included charges of *Conspiracy to Wilfully Violate Mandatory Mine Safety and Health Standards, Conspiracy to Defraud the United States, and Knowingly and Wilfully Making False Statements to a Grand Jury*, Blankenship was ultimately, in 2015—five years after the UBB explosion—found guilty of one misdemeanour count of conspiring to wilfully violate mine safety and health standards, and sentenced to one year in jail and fined $250,000. The fine, however, was likely of little worry for Blankenship, who was paid $17.8 million in 2009 and received a $27.2 million deferred compensation package in that same year. It would seem, though, that the prison sentence had more impact on Blankenship; in 2015, he released a brochure from his temporary home in the Taft Federal Correctional Institute in Taft, California, making the case for his innocence and describing the various ways in which he felt he had been wronged by the courts, regulators, media, politicians, and everyday opponents of the coal industry.

In preparation for the release of the document, Blankenship first established the website ‘Americanpoliticalprisoner.com’, a move that signals Blankenship’s foundational position that he has been abused by the legal system for political purposes, and that the charges levelled against him were guided not by his involvement and culpability in the death of the 29 men killed in the UBB disaster, but instead by political motives. Here, Blankenship makes himself a martyr in the so-called War on Coal. The War on Coal, of course, is not real—it is a war constructed by coal-company propaganda and accepted and communicated by those in and outside of Appalachia who are themselves captured by extractive capital and culture. During an interview with Larry, a former union coal miner and local resident whom I met and interviewed in Matewan, West Virginia in the Summer of 2015, Larry described to me the various ways that the War on Coal was a central guiding component in the constructed victimhood of coal operators like Blankenship in Appalachia. Larry noted that, in his opinion (which I am inclined to trust, given his lifetime of labouring and living in Extractive Appalachia) the War on Coal was wholly fictitious: 'There ain't no war on coal, that's horseshit. Coal's been at war against West Virginia for 120 years.' In his brochure, Blankenship, perhaps the single most influential figurehead of the coal industry in the region, clearly draws the lines that divide the sides in the so-called war, placing himself squarely as the victim of political machinations that elude his financial and cultural influence. The document itself is a bizarre and dizzying screed—in the introduction, for example, Blankenship references 'Naomi, West Virginia', a town that does not exist, when identifying the location of the UBB mine, Naoma, West Virginia—made up of various defences and counter-allegations, punctuated by Blankenship's ongoing insistence that he has been treated unfairly at every turn; Blankenship claims that he has been 'threatened with death several times', 'had urine thrown on [him]', 'had eleven bullet holes shot in [his] office', 'had two cars smashed with ball bats and clubs while [he] was in them'. If Blankenship, in his view, is on the righteous side of the coal industry in the war on coal, he clearly locates the other side as populated by regulators, political adversaries (Blankenship is a noted donor to Republican political causes and candidates), union miners, and environmental activists.

While the UBB disaster and Blankenship's ongoing efforts to tell his side of the story—a story that he claims 'is a little complex…but is a story that American's [sic] need to know'—are of unending interest to the criminological imagination, it is the UBB disaster itself, the efforts to memorialize and remember the miners who lost their lives, and what those efforts reveal about the temporal nature of extractive Appalachia, that guide this chapter. What I am interested in here are the ghosts of extractive violence and tragedy that haunt Appalachia, and how those ghosts might be rendered visible through the many memorials and archival efforts that preserve the history of extractive violence in Appalachia. What follows, then, is about the conceptual geography of central Appalachia, an unknown extractive rurality in which the spectral forces of the violence of coal are never far off. If, as previously discussed, there is a haunted psychogeography of extractive Appalachia that is communicated in concept on the visual register of cinematic horror, it is a geography that exists materially in a landscape of memorial, archive and artefact. It is in the Appalachian memorial landscape that I locate the ability of the extractive logic and the history of extractive labour to capture not only the material fields of ecology, economy, culture, and the image, but also the fleeting conceptual fields of time and temporality. Through memorials and the persistent social memory of the events they call to, time is flattened, becoming not a line but a circle, and the violence of extraction is revealed to be something that—without intervention in the dominant capitalist logics of extraction—will remain until nothing remains.

Haunting Sociology

Attention to the spectral and haunting forces that shape perceptions of the social world, while not prevalent, is not absent in the social sciences. Sociologist Avery Gordon describes haunting as ‘a paradigmatic way in which life is more complicated than those of us who study it have usually granted’, a ‘constituent element of modern social life.’ (7). Going on, Gordon notes that in order to ‘study social life one must confront the ghostly aspects of it’ (7). Rural sociologist Michael Mayerfeld Bell joins Gordon in calling for and engaging in a sociological engagement with the ghosts of space and society, noting that ‘we moderns, despite our mechanistic and rationalistic ethos, live in landscapes filled with ghosts. The scenes we pass through each day are inhabited, possessed, by spirits we cannot see but whose presence we nevertheless experience’ (813). Criminology, too, has joined the party, with culturally attuned scholars like Travis Linnemann and Jeff Ferrell exploring and describing the various ways in which the ghosts of the past are kept alive, conditioning the ways that we ascribe meaning to the forces of justice, crime, and control. Similarly, criminologist Michael Fiddler describes the ways that the stories of the past that surround us haunt the social imaginary. Indeed, the concept of ghosts, for lack of a better term, haunts social science writ large—who has not mentioned or heard mentioned 'the ghosts of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim'? All of this to say, simply, that there is robust precedent for sociological acceptance of and engagement with the unseen but intensely felt spectral forces that animate much of the social world.

Gordon makes it particularly clear that social haunting is often bound to rural spaces and capitalist exploitation of labour through her discussion of slave narratives and their persistent use of the spectral voice. Noting that there are those who 'are not graciously permitted to…control the often barely visible structuring forces of everyday life' (151), Gordon highlights the significance and necessity of an engagement with spectral space and place that is intensely concerned with the visual and visible. If what lurks spectrally in extractive Appalachia, as I argue, are the ghosts of moments both historical and contemporary, what is needed to capture and contend with those ghosts is a visual methodology that seeks to render them visible. While the mechanical photographic capture of certain dimensions of social and spatial landscapes—the memorial, for example, or the lingering scene of extractive ecological violence embodied in the active strip mine or the 'reclaimed' post-extractive landscape—can advance the researcher's ability to wrestle with the spectral, I suggest that perhaps a serious and mindful engagement with the techniques of 'spirit photography' can more comprehensively reveal the ghosts of place. Here, I do not suggest that visual social science research adopt the technologies of paranormal investigation—the 'full spectrum' camera, EVP and EMF meter, spectrometer, and so forth—but rather that social research in the oft-hidden geographies of extractive violence be mindful of the sociospatial histories of the spaces and places it engages with (see Armstrong, 2010).

For me, the approach that offers the most possibility of engagement with the ghostly, spectral, or invisible draws on the guiding observation that just as there is fundamental difference in seeing and looking, there is just as meaningful a difference between *not seeing* and *not looking*; While I may not always see the spectral, like the ‘ghost hunter’, I always look for it.

Memorializing Extractive Violence

In keeping with the broad methodological approach employed and described throughout this project, I made efforts to apply the lessons and suggestions of Ferrell’s ghost ethnography by seeking to visualize the diverse moments and places in which the spectral forces of Appalachian extraction and its concomitant violence are experienced. To that end, while conducting fieldwork, I travelled to many official and unofficial memorials, and at each I attempted to understand and analyse, in an ethnographic sense, the ways in which each site of the Appalachian memorialscape preserved the ghosts of the people and events it sought to memorialize. At the unofficial UBB memorial, described above, the feeling that the ghosts—the memories—of the killed miners was palpable; I could see in my imagination the hands of the bereaved as they laid wreath and cross, struggling under the weight of unimaginable loss to preserve the memory of the dead. I could also, though, imagine the hands of the vandal, scrawling ‘God Bless Coal’ on the pylon-cum-memorial in the dark of night. While vandalizing a memorial is a step beyond the pale of decency, I can understand the sociological and political significance of the message; it is not only the miners killed by Massey Energy in the UBB tragedy who have been lost, it is also the whole of the region and its industry and culture that, to many, needs God’s blessing.

Reflecting on the unofficial UBB memorial, and on the calls for the attention of God in the vandal’s message, sociologist and philosopher Maurice Halbwach’s observations on the ways in which collective memory is sustained (1952/1992: 34) seem particularly apt: ‘Just like God needs us, so memory needs others’. The ‘others’ that sustain collective memory in Appalachia are, it seems to me, often spectral or ghostly others, whose hold on the conceptual and memorial landscape is ‘sustained…by [the] social props’ of the memorial. Take, for example, the official UBB memorial, located just miles down the road from the unofficial memorial:

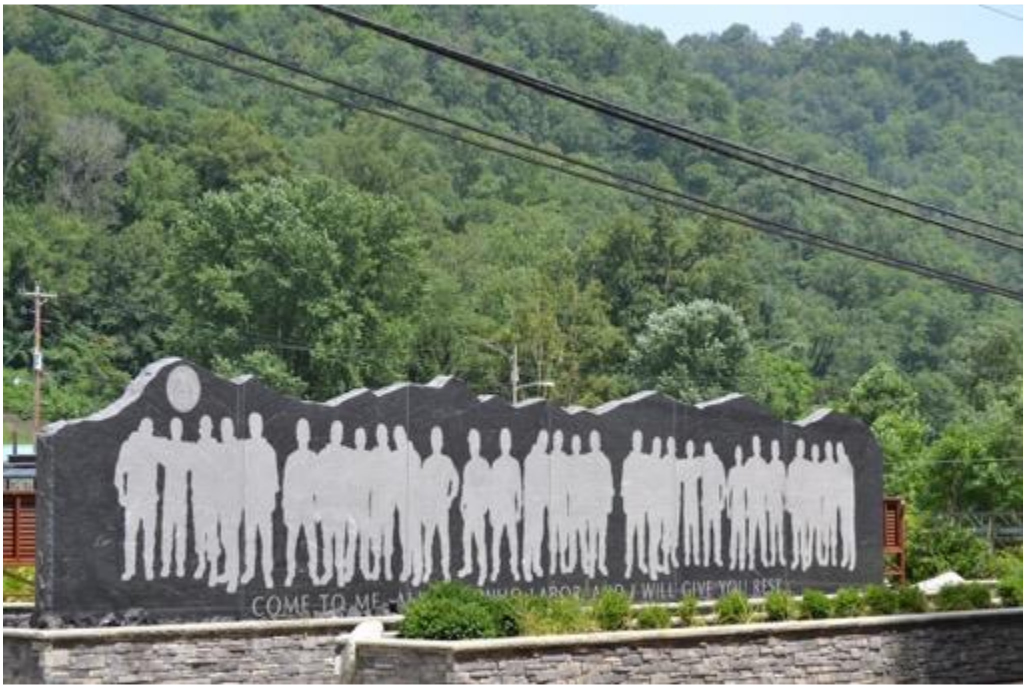

Figure 46. Upper Big Branch memorial plaza, July 2015. Photograph by the author.

The ‘memorial plaza’, which houses three distinct attractions—the central UBB monument pictured above, a bronze plaque noting the work of the emergency workers who serve as first responders in coal disasters like and including the UBB explosion, and an ‘interpretive signage area’ that introduces visitors to the UBB disaster—sits just on the side of the road through Whitesville. Although I had already stopped at the memorial plaza site late in the evening a week prior, Junior and I decided to make another visit so that I could see it in better light. Whitesville is all but abandoned, and Junior tells me that in its prime—even during his childhood—it was a bustling town, with a movie theater, bowling alley, and several bars. Now, it is dominated by boarded-up windows and bookended by two service stations and a small used car dealership. At the far-western end of the main street—state highway 3, just with a lower speed limit—is the UBB memorial plaza. We didn't stop, because Junior had some reservations about standing on the roadside here with cameras. I don't blame him.

The memorial plaza itself is, in its own way, beautiful. The central monument is a 48-foot-long and nine-foot tall chunk of black granite (illustrating once more the centrality of material blackness to the visual comprehension of Appalachia), mined from the Rock of Ages quarry in Pennsylvania. Its top is cut to mimic the contours of the Appalachian Mountains, its faces flat and polished to an unimaginably bright gloss. Etched on the road-facing side are the silhouettes of 29 miners, standing shoulder-to-shoulder and arm-in-arm. In a bit of aesthetic choice that seems almost inevitable, the entire monument sits in a raised box-shaped bed of riverstone, filled with bituminous coal extracted from the Upper Big Branch mine; this, to me, suggests that even in death and memory, these 29 men are only permitted to exist on a material foundation of Massey coal. Along the bottom edge of the monument is the inscription 'Come to me all you who labour, and I will give you rest'. The inscription, adapted from the biblical verse Matthew 11:28, seems particularly fitting, as labour—in the sense of the difficult and unending material labour of survival in these mountains, but also in the sense of the complex and significant history of the labour movement in Appalachia—is, in many ways, the thread that connects so many dimensions of various competing Appalachian identities discussed previously. What is most striking, though, are the silhouetted miners, etched in gray relief. To me, facing the monument here on the road in Whitesville, these are not so much images of men as they are images of *ghosts of men*, spectres of the 29 killed miners. Here, at the memorial plaza, their image is preserved not as they were in life, but as they are in death and the uncomfortable haze of memory: outlines of labourers, sketches of men who no longer live in their homes and with their families, but only in the collective memory of this place and those they left behind. If, then, as Halbwachs suggests, memory needs others, might it not be the case that those others can—and, in Appalachia, often do—take the forms of the ghosts embedded in the social props of memorial?

The ghosts of extractive violence are not, though, the only ghosts lurking in the UBB memorial plaza. Like so many other material reminders of the losses suffered by and in Appalachia, the plaza reaffirms what some have described as Appalachia's position as a patriotic sacrifice zone with the inclusion of a second, smaller monument, this one dedicated to the men and women from the area who served in the US military. This memorial—a triptych of stone cut from the same black granite as the central UBB memorial, although without the overwhelming size and mountainous contours that characterize the UBB monument—and its placement and inclusion in the plaza signifies the ways that coal extraction is constructed as inextricably linked to patriotic duty. Sociologist Rebecca Scott (2010) describes this as an easily observable phenomenon in the region, and one that echoes throughout Appalachian landscapes, discourses, and identities. In some versions of the extractive Appalachian social imaginary, mining coal and going to war for country and duty are intimately intertwined. 'War' here is vast and unending, with Appalachian souls enlisted and lost to international conflicts, the drug war, ecological catastrophe, and the dangerous work of extraction. Indeed, the very existence of Appalachia in the social imaginary is structured, in large part, by the iconic power of the War on Poverty and its attendant images, discussed previously in this work. While it is certainly true that patriotism is alive and well in Appalachia, it does not seem apparent to me, based on my time here as both resident and researcher, that those working in the coal industry are particularly inclined to consider their labour as answering a patriotic call. As David, a long-time Appalachian resident and social activist and organizer put it in an interview, ‘Nobody thinks they’re mining coal for the good of the country. Sure, you might hear that at a Friends of Coal rally or someplace, but for most of the folks working in coal, it’s just a paycheck and a cultural heritage thing, that’s it.’ If the central UBB memorial is a display of spectral others lost to extractive violence, and the adjacent war memorial is the thread that maintains the connections between the violence of coal and the patriotic sacrifice of the region’s enlisted men and women, it also separates the violence of domestic extraction from the violence of foreign conflict. In this part of Appalachia, though, the violence of war is not relegated to the collective memory of distant lands. Quite the contrary—this is a landscape that, in both the material and conceptual sense, knows war, knows the industrial slaughter of humans and nature.

Among the domestic conflicts that most plainly capture ways of knowing and being in Appalachia—which are too many to list or describe here—the most significant, in the collective memory and conscience of Appalachia, is the Battle of Blair Mountain (and the various events that precipitated and followed the battle, known collectively as the ‘West Virginia Mine Wars’).The area surrounding the site of the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain is a spectral geography haunted not by such open and visible ghostly representations of miners as the UBB monument, but by the materially embedded artefacts of the moments of conflict and violence that so roughly characterize Appalachia’s history of exploitation at the hands of extractive capital and the spectrum of the police power. Here, ‘the police power’ is used to describe not only the uniformed police office, but rather, following Mark Neocleous (2014) and others, the entire spectrum of powers afforded to agencies and actors with ‘the power to regulate social life’ (Linnemann 2016: 226). To be clear, the police power is a central force and figure looming large in the history and contemporary of Appalachian social and ecological relations, and its historical presence is captured in entire in the history of the Battle of Blair Mountain.

Stepping back in time from the contemporary moment to the 1921 battle in order to locate and interrogate the ghosts of Blair Mountain, we must first step back to a year prior, 1920. It was in 1920 that tensions among miners, unions, coal operators, and a range of representatives of the police power reached a boiling point[53]. On the 19th of May, 1920, the police power—in the form of private security forces from the notorious Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency, led by brothers Lee and Albert C. Felts and employed by coal operators to police miners in the coalfields of southern West Virginia—rolled into Matewan to evict roughly half a dozen men and their families from properties owned by the Stone Mountain Coal Corporation. Albert Felts, who was also a deputy sheriff of Mingo County, directed his men (who outnumbered the miners two to one) to remove the household effects of the miners from their homes in the coal camp, so that the property could be repossessed by Stone Mountain. The evictions had been ordered by Stone Mountain in response to local efforts to unionize. As the Baldwin-Felts detectives carried out the evictions, word spread in the county that the miners, their families, and their possessions were being roughly removed from the camp. With the evictions complete, the detectives went to the local Urias Hotel, where they ate dinner before walking to the Matewan Train Depot to board the evening train out of town. Before reaching the depot, the men were confronted by Mingo County Chief of Police Sid Hatfield. Hatfield, who was not just a local, but a Hatfield (a name that carried with it some lore, as well as a reputation for fast and decisive violence—he was known locally as ‘2 Gun Sid’), and a much-loved supporter of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) and its efforts to unionize coal miners in the region, had with him a cadre of armed miners. Hatfield, who was accompanied by Matewan mayor Cabell Testerman, produced a warrant, issued by the Mingo County sheriff, for the arrest of Albert Felts and his men for unlawful eviction. In response, the Baldwin-Felts men produced their own warrant for the arrest of Hatfield. It is unknown which of these competing warrants was legitimate. Like so many confrontations between the forces of extractive state-corporate power and organized labour in the early 20th Century, the conflict in Matewan on May 19, 1920 ended in gunfire.

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[53] It is essential here to note that these tensions reached *a* boiling point, not *the* boiling point; tensions between these groups had existed, by 1920, for some 40 years, and had ‘boiled’ before, countless times, resulting in the first moments of the instantiation of a geography of violence and conflict that ultimately would become Blair Mountain, and later coalesce into a broader contemporary extractive Appalachia.

Although who fired the first shot on May 19 is a contested point, the ensuing firefight left three miners dead, along with seven of the Baldwin-Felts men, including both Felts brothers and Mayor Testerman. West Virginia governor John Cornwell ordered yet another police agency—the West Virginia State Police—to take control of Matewan. Hatfield and his men complied, surrendering their arms, and union forces, supported by Hatfield and encouraged by the decisive but bloody victory against the Baldwin-Felts detectives and the coal operators they represented, retreated to redouble their efforts to organize workers. These new labour efforts resulted in a strike that again led to an eruption of violence. By July of 1920, miners in Mingo County were striking en masse, with families of striking workers living in tent camps paid for by the UMWA. Stone Mountain Coal and other Mingo County operators brought in scab labour—workers willing to cross the picket lines—who were routinely confronted, beaten and sometimes killed by the strikers. Of course, the striking miners were also on the receiving end of the violence, with union members targeted by strike breakers including the remaining Felts brother, Tom Felts, and Baldwin-Felts agents and an array of others working on behalf of the coal operators, often as undercover operatives working from within the union and its ranks of supporters to gather evidence against Hatfield, who was by July under indictment in nearby McDowell County for the killing of Albert Felts. Among those undercover was Charley Lively, owner of a restaurant in Matewan and a secret employee of the Baldwin-Felts Agency, who would go on to testify at Hatfield's trial that Sid Hatfield, not Albert Felts, had killed mayor Testerman, driven by a secret affair with

Testerman's wife Jessie.

In the summer of 1920, with violent clashes becoming increasingly frequent in the coal fields of Mingo County, martial law was declared, although it was used almost exclusively against striking miners, their families, and their supporters. Outside the tent camp at a place called Lick Creek, just on the outskirts of Matewan, a state trooper and a major in the state militia were shot at by a miner. In retaliation, the militia and Baldwin-Felts men—'gun thugs' in the regional parlance—machine gunned the tents at the encampment, wounding several and killing miner Alexander Breedlove, and closed and destroyed the UMWA office, arresting everyone inside. Hatfield, though, who was still Matewan's chief of police, refused to allow the militia to use the town jail to hold union miners. Following the attack on the Lick Creek camp, Hatfield went to Welch, in McDowell County, to stand trial alongside 22 other Matewan residents for the May 19 murder of Albert Felts. Arriving at the courthouse in Welch on August 1, 1921, Sid Hatfield and his friend and deputy Ed Chambers—accompanied by their wives—were shot down and killed by Baldwin-Felts detectives on the courthouse steps. In recounting this history, artist and author Bill Yund describes that their bodies were taken 'home [to Mingo County], then across the Tug River to eternal rest on a Kentucky hill. There'd be little rest in West Virginia' (Yund, 2000: 5) (Williams, 2002; Shogan, 2013).

Yund's assessment of the potential for rest in West Virginia is accurate. Following the murder of Hatfield and Chambers, which itself followed so many other murders and moments of violence in southern West Virginia's coalfields, miners across the state and region reached a breaking point. Gathering in Kanawha County, West Virginia, on Lens Creek Mountain, over 10,000 armed miners organized in preparation for a march into Logan and Mingo counties to confront deputies and private police detectives hired by coal operators. Famed labour activist Mother Jones, who had long been involved in the organization of Appalachian miners, strongly cautioned the miners against the march, fearing that they would find themselves severely outnumbered and outgunned. Ignoring the warnings, the miners set off for what was by then known as ‘Bloody Mingo’, planning to fight their way through Logan County and ultimately hoping to break the forces of the coal operators and free miners held in the Mingo County jail following Hatfield’s murder. As miners in Kanawha County commandeered a Chesapeake and Ohio freight train to ride west to Boone County, Logan County sheriff and committed ally to coal operators Don Chaffin, who was supported by capital provided by the Logan County Coal Operators Association, assembled a force of 2,000 armed private security personnel, the largest in American history. With the majority of miners still several miles from Blair Mountain, the frontlines of marching miners encountered Chaffin’s forces on August 25, and the battle began. After just one day, President Warren Harding threatened to involve federal troops in the battle, indicating his intention to dispatch MB-1 bomber planes to the region. Nevertheless, the battle raged on, with miners occupying the valleys and Chaffin’s forces on the hillsides above. The miners fought with old and non-standardized weapons, while the security forces fought with high-powered machine guns and modern weapons and ammunition. Privately owned aircraft, operated under lease and order by Chaffin, ultimately dropped several gas and explosive bombs cobbled together from stores leftover from World War I, while Army bombers were conscripted for aerial surveillance to aid Chaffin’s forces (Williams, 2002; Shogan, 2013; Yund, 2000). The power of aerial surveillance and bombing—a power and technology of verticality generally reserved for the state—and its use in suppressing the uprising highlights several essential points more generally underscored by the conflict: conflicts such as the Battle of Blair Mountain lay bare the fundamental sameness of the police power and the military power noted by Mark Neocleous (2014), the supremacy of aerial power and vertical visuality (Hippler, 2017; Elden 2013; Adey et al., 2011), and the willingness of the state to support the interests of extractive capital even in the face of significant bloodshed. Moreover, the aerial dimensions of the conflict again underline that in an Appalachia long-captured by coal, the power of extractive capital extends from the subterranean reserves of coal to the sky above, capturing all that lies between. In terms of the power of extractive capital, then, that which is above is, in fact, as is that which is below.

The confrontations in Matewan, on Blair Mountain, and across central Appalachia reveal not only the origins of the spectral and ghostly forces that continue to haunt the town and region, structuring relations and capturing the social imaginary of extractive southern West Virginia, but also the significant tensions between the police power, the forces of social and environmental justice, and extractive labour and labourers. To recount the history is to confront a labyrinthine complexity of state actors, corporate coal operators, union organizers, immigrant labourers, and descendants of settlers of pre-coal Appalachia. While it is a difficult web to untangle, the period of conflict between 1920 and 1921 in Matewan is a web that continues to capture the local social imaginary and Appalachian collective memory. And while it is difficult to make sense of the particulars of the conflict, it is far less difficult to locate the ways that the social memory of the conflict makes and structures various dimensions of meaning in contemporary southern West Virginia. The ghosts of the Battle of Blair Mountain and the Matewan Massacre, though, do not haunt only Mingo, Boone, Logan and Kanawha counties, or southern West Virginia; as a local writer and historian told me during an interview in the field, ‘there are many Matewans’ and that in each ‘the place, the ground, the story with its martyrs [is] indeed sacred ground.’ As Yund notes, underscoring the spectral power of local legends, while ‘Sid’s dead…but he ain’t gone’ (Yund, 2000: 1).

Visualizing the Ghosts of Extraction

Attempting to visually apprehend and attune myself, as a field researcher, to the ghostly presence of memory on the ‘sacred ground’ of Appalachia’s many Matewans, though, presented unique methodological challenges: how could I, after all, engage visually what felt to me to be a ghostly or spectral presence? Here, I learn and borrow from Jeff Ferrell in suggesting that the techniques of ‘ghost ethnography’ can aid in keeping the field researcher in tune with and open to the infinite possibilities of the unseen and intersecting spectral worlds of social and ecological extractive violence, oppression, and history (Ferrell, 2016:227). In remaining open to the infinite unseen of ghosts and other spectral presences, visual research begins to engage—intentionally or otherwise—with the significant forces of a haunted social memory and collective consciousness.

One way to remain mindful of the particular sociospatial history of a place is to employ the techniques outlined by Justin Armstrong (2010) in his exploration of the potential and possibility of a method of ‘spectral ethnography’. Here, Armstrong suggests that sociological meaning can be located through engaging in ‘a kind of ethnography of absence, an anthropology of people, places and things that have been removed’, left to ‘the flows of time and space’. This, for Armstrong, is an opportunity for sociological engagement with ‘haunted narratives’ that accumulate in spaces uniquely occupied by the ‘multiple layers of time and materiality’, an ethnography that aims to excavate ‘lives once lived’. Such an ethnography—an ethnography of the spectral forces that haunt the contemporary social memory of place—can, of course, take place in any number of sites, from the archive, with its remnants and reminders, to the field. In extractive Appalachia, I often found myself sharing space with the ghosts of a history of extractive ecocide, and followed Armstrong in seeking out engagement with the ‘traces, artefacts, and other resonances that people leave behind’, and like Armstrong, I found that those traces and the memory of those who left them ‘continue to reflect, and are reflected in, contemporary everyday life and culture’. Put simply, engaging in a sort of spectral ethnography revealed, to me, the various ways that the spatially embedded narratives of time, memory, space, and place continue to structure everyday life in Appalachia, imbuing the material and cultural landscape of the region with meanings excavated from the past. Just as the ecological scars of extractive ecocide linger in the material landscape, the historical scars of the human violence of extractive capitalism linger in the psychogeography of Appalachia, every bit as intimately intertwined with place.

The Ghost and the Archive

Describing the ways that photography and the photographic image has been perceived over time—from the initial threat the image posed to 'the citadels of high culture' to the mediums use as an evidentiary tool of power—Alan Sekula notes that the photographic image is a form of representation that functions both 'honorifically and repressively'. This is certainly an accurate description of the ways that the image functions in Appalachia; as I have described previously, images of Appalachian life are approached by Appalachian people with a cautious scepticism as those who take in the image sort out through a series of internal and social processes and assessments whether the image does, in fact, capture an 'honest' version of the social and material world of Appalachia, or if it serves to shore up and reify simplistic external understandings of the region. For Sekula, images coalesce into an archive, one with the power to support a form of 'juridical realism', a 'shadow archive that encompasses an entire social terrain while positioning individuals within that terrain'. Sekula goes on to describe the materiality of the archive and its intertwinement with the ocular mechanics of photography: 'the camera is integrated into a larger ensemble: a bureaucratic- clerical-statistical system of 'intelligence.' This system can be described as a sophisticated form of the archive. The central artefact of this system is not the camera but the filing cabinet.' In Morgantown, West Virginia, in the spring of 2016, I encountered an archive that served to do just what Sekula suggests the shadow archive does.

The collections of the West Virginia Regional History Center are housed in the main library of the University of West Virginia in Morgantown. Comprised of material collections spanning images, newspapers, literary notes and journals, books, paintings, printed ephemera, physical artefacts, oral histories, and field recordings of Appalachian folk music, the collection is a vast repository of Appalachian memories and history. I arrived in the archive with the intention of spending a week or two listening to oral histories, a task that I happily completed over the course of ten days sitting in the 'coal room' of the archive, surrounded by floor to ceiling bookshelves holding a seemingly endless selection of books, printed reports, and periodicals each relating in some way to the development of the Appalachian coal industry. The oral histories I came for were, not surprisingly, a rich and fascinating body of data that has proven instrumental to this project and my own understanding of the complexities of extractive Appalachia.

What was most compelling in the archive, though, were the materials delivered by the staff when I requested a viewing of some of the ephemera cross-listed in the subject index of the oral histories collection. I had been searching for oral histories that mentioned the Battle of Blair Mountain and the Matewan Massacre, and had noticed that the archive-wide index contained call numbers for 'non printed ephemera' related to those conflicts. On my fourth day in the archive, I was fatigued with the useful but slow task of listening through oral history recordings, and to take a break I filed requests to see some the archive's non-printed ephemera. Maybe an hour later, the archival assistant working that day rolled out a cart with 6 filing boxes—Sekula's 'central artefact' of the system of archival intelligence. Opening the boxes, I was shocked to find several smaller display boxes and envelopes containing artefacts ranging from bullets to blades of grass, each collected on the material battlefields of Mingo County. These artefacts had been gathered, mostly, by local resident Kenny King as part of a 20 year long archaeological project, driven in part by King's desire to see the battlefields of

Blair Mountain added to the national registry of historic places (NRHP). Following a project to map and collect artefacts from the various sites of battles that happened on and around Blair Mountain in 1921, King and archaeologist Harvard Ayers were successful in acquiring the NRHP listing, thus protecting the mountain from efforts to employ surface mining to get to the coal that would surely disrupt the site, effectively erasing the physical space of a significant part of regional and national history. Just nine months later, though, the site was delisted after efforts led by Arch Coal and Alpha Natural Resources—both companies with ties to Massey Energy, who brought the Upper Big Branch disaster to the region—proved successful. Noting the significance of the mountain, and the likely effects of mining it, historic preservationist and president of the advocacy group Friends of Blair Mountain, Barbara Rasmussen describes 'blowing up Blair Mountain' as 'just as violent a social action as the Taliban tearing down the Bamiyan Buddhas or [the prospect of] drilling for oil in Gettysburg' (Patel, 2012). Here, Rasmussen highlights not only the plain state-corporate violence of the processes of surface coal extraction; she also again underscores cultural understandings of the material ecology and space of Blair Mountain as sacred and hallowed. Opening envelope after envelope of leaves, twigs, and grass, and tray after tray of spent ammunition—all gathered by King and Ayers around the battlefields of Blair Mountain—the sacred nature of each of these physical artefacts of the mountain and the conflict was unavoidable. Later, on my fifth day in the archive, the staff would guide me to the original and handwritten transcripts and logs of Sid Hatfield's trial, a massive leather-bound book where I would find the original signatures of so many of the personalities that I had come to understand as central to the social memory of conflict in extractive Appalachia. If every Matewan is, as previously mentioned, 'sacred ground', these material bits of the conflict were just as sacred.

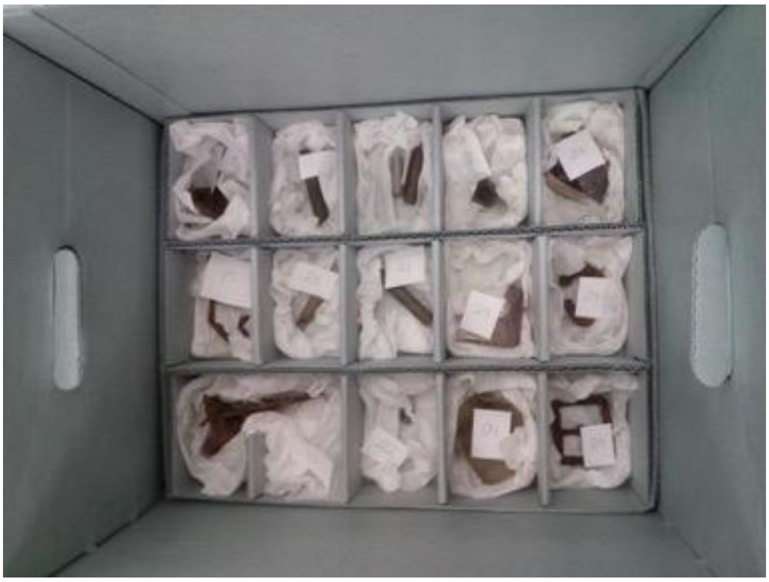

Figure 47. Archival box containing ammunition collected from Blair Mountain. Photograph by the author.

Returning to Mingo County, a three hour drive south from the archives in Morgantown, there is another archive of sorts. At the Mine Wars Museum, located in the heart of historic Matewan, I find another vast and thoughtfully curated and displayed collection of material ephemera that preserves historic Appalachian conflict in the cultural and collective memory. The museum is small—it occupies a storefront on Matewan's Main Street, no bigger than any other small town storefront. Inside though, the museum feels much larger. It is filled with glass display cases, the walls covered with maps, framed leaflets from the heyday of the UMWA, and photographs documenting the most significant labour conflicts of early 20th century Appalachia. Here, again, I encounter case upon case of ammunition, along with preserved and reconditioned firearms, mining equipment, coal company scrip, and other material reminders of the decades of intense violence and exploitation that characterize Appalachian places like Mingo County. As Eamonn Carrabine describes in his exploration of iconic power and its place in the field of 'dark tourism' or 'thanatotourism'—the emergent form of tourism that guides visitors to and through 'dark' spaces of death and suffering such as the penal institution, or the sites of the holocaust—the ‘museum effect’ structures not only the social construction and meaning of places and spaces designed to preserve and provide insight into the past, but also how they are experienced. Significantly, though, the Mine Wars Museum presents a vision of the extractive history of the region that is decidedly informed and guided by sympathy for the union miners—this is, for the most part, a curated memorial to the workers who fought and died in and around the coal camps of Mingo County and central Appalachia. Quotations inscribed on the walls draw on the work of American legends like poet Carl Sandburg, who was described by Lyndon Johnson as ‘more than the voice of America…he [Sandburg] *was* America’ (Goodwin 1991), and Mother Jones, the noted labour activist who supported striking miners, in detailing the struggle, hardship, and violence faced by those who laboured in the coal fields of early-mid Twentieth Century Appalachia. In many ways, then, the Mine Wars Museum is less exemplary of dark tourism or thanatotourism—despite the fact that the bulk of its artefacts and displays do indeed call on the collective memory of extractive violence—than it is exemplary of a sort of tourism that celebrates the strength, resilience, and important cultural work of organized labour and resistance in extractive Appalachia. For Carrabine, the museum effect ‘works by forging connections between past and present, where the sightseeing is intimately tied to place’. This way of working is plainly evident in the Mine Wars Museum; each display is placed, either through implication or overtly, in the context of Matewan, Mingo County, southern West Virginia and Eastern Kentucky, or extractive Appalachia. Moving through the museum, the intimate connections between past and present are made clear; visitors are guided around the space in a loop, starting with displays of early artefacts of extractive labour, through to displays of artefacts of the extractive violence of the mine wars, then displays of paraphernalia of contemporary extractive culture and labour before ending—or not ending—with the visitor’s re-entry into the starting point of the loop. The effect, then, is of viewing the artefacts of conflict and violence in the very spatial settings touched most deeply by those moments of violence, in a way that spatially implies the circular temporality of extractive violence and harm. Here in the Mine Wars Museum, the iconic power of coal and its attendant conflicts is curated, gathered and presented in a way that structures not only the ways that viewers take in the museum itself, but also the world of extractive Appalachia just outside the museum doors.

While conducting fieldwork in and around Matewan in the summer of 2015, I encountered just one of the ways that the memory of Matewan's violent history endures outside of the museum in the contemporary moment. Leaving the Mine Wars Museum after the first of several visits, I decide on the walk back to my car to stop in the Matewan Depot and eat. As I enter the door of the restaurant, I nearly collide with a young man in bib overalls, carrying at his chest a large blue steel handgun. As we meet in the doorway, I recoil from the pistol, and the young man clearly notices. He cracks an embarrassed smile and gestures with the barrel of the gun in a way that clearly indicates that it is either a prop or otherwise not intended to menace, and mutters an apology followed by the explanation that he is simply a participant in a dramatic re-enactment of the Matewan Massacre, and that the group is practicing for the annual event. Close on his heels are a cluster of 3 or 4 women and 3 other men, all of them part of the same group. The women are dressed in modern business attire, and the men each wear period-correct miner's clothes and each carry prop firearms. One man heads toward the counter of the restaurant to pay a bill, and one of the women calls after him: 'you ain't gotta pay, the city's got it!'. Talking to the group briefly on the curb, I learn that these women are city workers, the sort that make the bureaucracy of small town civics tick, and these men are locals hired to re-enact the conflict of Matewan's history, year after year, until the lore of the violence becomes indelibly etched into the memory, economy, and social fabric of this place.

Matewan, though, does not only draw on the Mine Wars and other dispersed moments and events of extractive violence in order to ground its own history in conflict. The social props that feed the collective memory of Mingo County also include images and ephemera relating to the notorious conflict between the Hatfield and McCoy families. The Hatfield-McCoy feud is the stuff of legend, and its history has been deployed endlessly in service of a number of narratives in, and of, Appalachia. Books, films and television dramas describing the feud abound, with titles such as America's Greatest Feud: The Hatfields and McCoys, Hatfields and McCoys: An American Feud, and American Legends: The Hatfields and McCoys. What is clear in surveying these dramatic and literary retellings of the feud—which, essentially, was a series of often-violent clashes between the two families taking place across the Tug River that separates Eastern Kentucky from southern West Virginia during 1863-1891—is that the feud occupies a special place in the lingering frontier imagination of America, and that the Hatfields and McCoys are, in many ways, representative of the social imaginary of Appalachia. Indeed, the cinematic genre of rural/mountain horror discussed previously finds much of its visual and narrative weight in the images and discourses that continue to surround the feud. While conducting field research, I spoke to three Hatfields and one McCoy, and each was quick to highlight the significance of their surname in establishing their deep-rootedness in the cultural and historic space of the region. As I have described previously, the construction of the Hatfield-McCoy ATV Trail Network is often touted as an example of potentially successful post-coal economic plans in central Appalachia, and Matewan has at least one local business—an ATV repair and supply shop—that is getting in on the action. The legendary feud as a social prop, though, is evident in Matewan in a number of ways that transcend the development of the trail network. Taped in the window of a junk and antique shop next to the Mine Wars Museum, I find a collection of posters, handbills, and newspaper clippings each bearing the name of the feud or its personalities. Most interesting among them is a brochure touting Matewan as a tourist destination which employs the Matewan Massacre and the Hatfield-McCoy feud side by side under the headline 'Historic Matewan, Mingo County West Virginia: Pride, Conflict, Tradition'. Here, it is clear that Matewan's collective memory and identity is tied to conflict and violence: whether it be the frontier feuds of the warring Hatfields and McCoys, or the extractive violence of the Mine Wars, it is conflict that structures and configures Matewan.

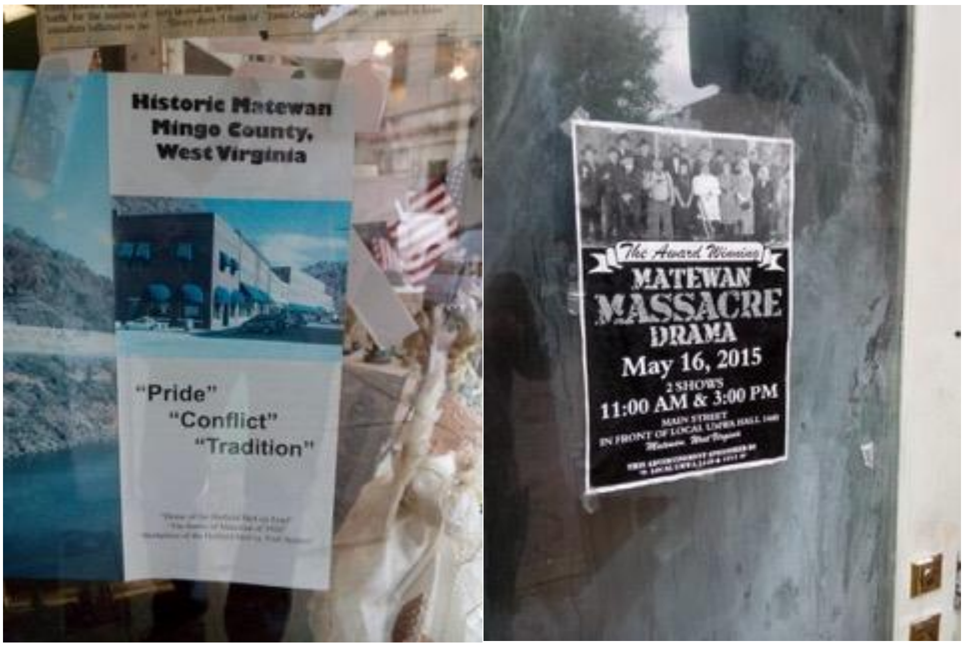
Historic Matewan
Mingo County,
West Virginia
"Pride"
"Conflict"
"Tradition"
The Award Winning
MATEWAN
MASSACRE
DRAMA
May 16, 2015
2 SHOWS
11:00 AM & 3:00 PM
MAIN STREET
IN FRONT OF LOCAL UMWA HALL

Figure 48. Leaflets and brochure in shop window, Matewan, West Virginia, August 2015. Photograph by the author.

While the past is preserved through the cultural work of re-enactments, museum curation, and the archiving of folkways, art, music, storytelling and other forms of cultural production, it is also preserved in the geography of the mountains through the no less cultural work of memorials, monuments, and placards describing and preserving moments of particular historical significance. The physical and material natural landscape, though, also contains memories and reminders of the past in the very ecology of the region. Embedded in the mountains are the artefacts of extractive violence. Most visibly, of course, in the deep scars left in the landscape by the material forces of extraction—the high walls, valleyfills, mine entrances, reclamation sites, and active extraction sites are each indelible reminders of the ecological violence of extraction. Some of these sites, like the ridge overlooking the beltline that runs out of the UBB mine, also conceptually mark the landscape of social violence and human loss. Beyond these scars, though, there lies another layer of memory embedded in the landscape in the form of the artefacts of historical conflict, artefacts of the sort collected catalogued and archived by Ayers and King. There is no Appalachian geography—at least none that I have encountered—where these artefacts are more visible or significant than here in the Spruce Fork Ridge region, home of Blair Mountain and the primary site of the Battle of Blair Mountain. Images documenting archaeological work conducted in the region by King and Ayers illustrate and underline the various ways that the spectre of extractive violence and conflict is preserved in the landscape itself. Nearly 100 years after the battle, the hillsides and hollers along Spruce Fork Ridge remain littered with ammunition, rifle parts, canteens, axes, hatchets and other material reminders of the conflict.

Embedded Memories of a History of Conflict

For Jacques Derrida (1974; 1994; 2012), the spectral or the ghost is always a revenant; it does not simply, come, it comes *back*. The ghosts of conflict that haunt the conceptual and material geography of extractive Appalachia are no different—these ghosts do not appear, ever, for the first time. Their appearance, rather, signals their return. Spectres of Appalachia's history of extraction and conflict rise forth from the psychogeography of the archive, and of the knowing and memoryscape of the place, but also from the material geography of the physical landscape of extraction. Detailing the spectral forces that haunt the fiction of Austrian writer W.G. Sebald, geographer John Wylie describes the spectral as 'the very conjuration and unsettling of presence, place, the present, and the past.' (2007: 172) In

Appalachia, the seemingly bucolic and idyllic landscape is unsettled and transformed into the anti-idyllic extractive Appalachia through, in part, the haunting of the landscape by the ghosts of extractive violence, ghosts which are located, unearthed, and rendered visible through the archaeological efforts of King and Ayers. Take, for example, the image below, captured by King in one of his early trips into the woods and hollers surrounding the historic battlefields of Blair Mountain:

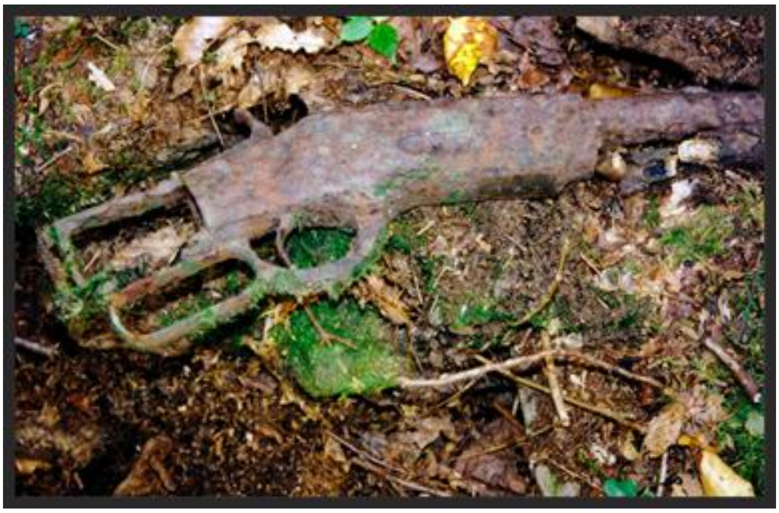

Figure 49. Rifle receiver on Spruce Fork Ridge, West Virginia. Photo courtesy of Kenny King.

The image of a rifle receiver, recovered from the grounds of the Blair Mountain battlefield, illustrates the relationship between the natural ecology of central Appalachia and the artefacts—the physical remnants--of the collectively remembered conflict. The rifle, covered in rust and moss and looking almost as much like a decaying piece of wood as a machined bit of metal, is embedded in the landscape, just as the conflict that it signifies is embedded in the collective social memory. It exists in the liminal space between the visible and the invisible, unsettling the contemporary landscape with its ability to call to the past. That liminal space, according to Wiley, is where the spectral always appears. Interrogating the liminal spaces between seen and unseen, above and below, we can begin to locate the memory of the past, and the social props that feed it, in the very ecology of Appalachia.

What do the constant and mindful efforts to preserve and locate the past reveal about the passing of time in central Appalachia? In my time in the region, as both a resident and a researcher, I have often felt that Appalachia, more than other American place I am familiar with, is constructed through social processes as a space with an intensely significant relationship with its own history. Because history, in all but its most postmodern imaginings, relies on the philosophical acceptance of a linear temporality, and because the history of Appalachia is so marked by the power of extractive capital and the countless Appalachian moments of extractive conflict, the temporal experience of contemporary extractive Appalachia is not linear but circular, a circle composed by coal extraction's hold on the collective memory of life in Appalachia. Visiting the endless memorials, archives, museums, and ecological spaces that preserve the memory and scars of extractive violence and clutter the material and conceptual Appalachian landscape, I am never far off from spaces where the ecological and social violence of extraction exists ongoing in the contemporary moment. Put simply, the violence brought to West Virginia by extractive capital does not exist only in memory but also in the present, both *by way of memory* and *by way of contemporary ecological and social conditions*. Memory and history, then, are not things that exist on the linear plane of temporality in Appalachia—new memories of extractive violence, ecological ruination, and the repressive forces of fossil capital are made every day here. Judah Schept, in describing the 'dark tourism' of Appalachian carceral spaces, notes that on entering these spaces 'one is stepping into a fleeting moment where history collapses into the present' (Schept, 2014: 215), and this same effect of haunting and the collapse of linear time is felt in the Appalachian spaces of extractive ecocide through the 'ghosts…and sediment of dirty industries that seep into and imbue the present' (Schept, 2014: 198).

Returning again to Eugene Thacker's horror of philosophy, and to what his typology of worlds reveals about how and why social anxieties surrounding ecological and social collapse are communicated on the visual register of horror, we can locate some of the ways in which the breakdown of a linear understanding of time and temporality are often part and parcel of ecological horror. Turning to the first season of HBO's *True Detective*—a series based, according to its creator, on the photographs of Richard Misrach, the American photographer most recognized for his haunting images of seemingly post-human or non-human industrial landscapes captured along the ecologically devastated 'petrochemical valley' of the US gulf coast and the bleak philosophical texts of Thacker (Calia, 2014)—we find that the notion of nonlinear time, and more specifically repeating time, is a central component of the horrifying world for itself and world without us. When True Detective's Rust Cohle, the misanthropic antinatalist detective played by Matthew McConaughey, is finally given the discursive space to voice his guiding philosophy in entire, he describes repeating time as what he believes to be the ultimate horror of human existence: 'Time is a flat circle. Everything we've done or will do, we're gonna do over and over and over again.' This diatribe, informed as much by Nietzsche as Thacker, reveals an essential point about horror and new anxieties emerging in response to increasingly mechanized ecological collapse and ruination—the fear of an ecologically devastated world without us is just as much about the fear of nonlinear time as it is about the fear of human extinction. Nonlinear time does not, of course, have to be materially realized to be ontologically unsettling; the eternal recurrence of nonlinear temporality and experience, as Nietzsche described it, requires only to be thought as possible in order to be 'the heaviest weight' (2001: 194). If ways of knowing the past(s) and present(s) of a material and cultural geography configure ways of imagining its future—and if those ways of knowing the past and present of Appalachia are, as I have argued, conditioned by the visuality of Black and White Appalachia and the emerging horror of Extractive Appalachia—the future of Appalachia is imaginable only as the past.

Nowhere is the collapse of linear temporality—and its replacement with a sort of circular and cyclical temporality—made more strikingly evident than in the area surrounding Black Mountain, on the Kentucky-Virginia border. Looking for coal memorials, I am directed by staff at the Beckley West Virginia Exhibition Coal Mine to the town of Eolia, Kentucky, at the southeastern edge of Black Mountain. There, after driving in circles for 20 or 30 minutes while trying to get my bearings, I find the bronze roadside plaque that memorializes the miners killed in the twin disasters in the Oven Fork coal mines here in Letcher County. The first explosion, on March 9, 1976, claimed the lives of 15 miners, and the second, on March 11, 1976, killed an additional 11, mostly rescuers working to recover the bodies of the men killed two days earlier. The plaque is simple, listing the names of the men killed, and sits just at the intersection of the main road and a gravel turn-off. The gravel road is a private mine road, and while I am at the site taking photographs, coal trucks and heavy equipment rumble and speed in and out, each time kicking up clouds of gravel and coal dust. Framing the memorial plaque in my camera's viewfinder, I notice for the first time the background. Just beyond the plaque, at the top of the coal road, is Black Mountain. A site so unimaginably altered by surface coal mining that it looks more alien than earthly, Black Mountain is a routine stop on tours through the area that aim to show visitors the extent of surface mining's impact on Appalachian ecology. With the memorial in the foreground and the flattened, barren and rocky peak of Black Mountain in the background, though, the resulting image perfectly illustrates the circular progression of Appalachian temporality, the heaviest burden. It is, in short, a visual manifestation of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence, Walter Benjamin's dialectical image. Even as we mourn and remember those lost to past moments of extractive violence, the violent machinery of extractive capital rumbles all around us, clearcutting ridges, filling streams and valleys with rock and rubble, flattening the peaks of the mountains, and taking the lives of workers. The violence of extraction is not over and done with in

Appalachia, it rages on. Here, time is indeed a flat circle, and the extractive violence that is ongoing is as the extractive violence which is past.

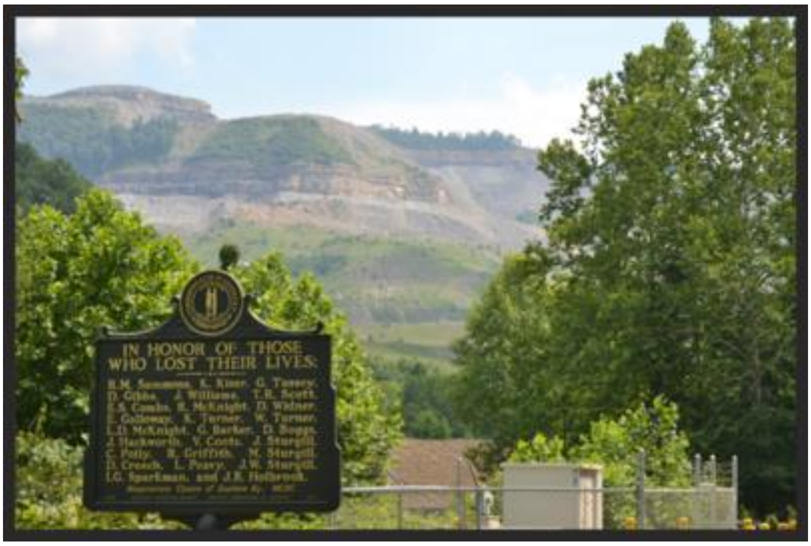
IN HONOR OF THOSE
WHO LOST THEIR LIVES:
R.M. Sammons, K. Kiser, G. Tussey,
D. Gibbs, J. Williams, T.R. Scott,
J.S. Combs, R. McKnight, D. Widner,
E. Galloway, K. Turner, W. Turner,
L.D. McKnight, G. Barker, D. Boggs,
J. Hackworth, V. Coots, J. Sturgill,
C. Polly, R. Griffith, M. Sturgill,
D. Creech, L. Peavy, J.W. Sturgill,
I.G. Sparkman, and J.B. Holbrook.

Figure 50. Memorial to Scotia mine disaster with active surface mine at Black Mountain, September 2015. Photograph by the author.

Conclusion

A Ray of Darkness

What happens to a futurist, when the future's upon us?
There's always a brighter darker one waiting for us.
Sole, *Using the Illusion*

While in our first conversation Junior described three choices for making a life in contemporary Extractive Appalachia (coal, the military, and drugs) there is an emerging fourth option—work in central Appalachia's growing carceral economy—that, once again, reaffirms the darkening of Appalachia. Geographer Ruth Gilmore Wilson (2002; 2007; 2008) notes and details the ways that rural landscapes like Appalachia are increasingly an essential geography of incarceration (see also: Huling 2002), and in other work (McClanahan and Linnemann 2017) I have described the growth of rural carceral landscapes as an effect of the 'unknowable darkness' of rurality because of its condition as what Trevor Paglen calls a 'blank spot on the map' or what is routinely culturally understood as the 'middle of nowhere'. Judah Schept notes that the growth of the rural 'prisonscape' is intimately linked to the dynamics of visuality and countervisuality that condition the visibility and vocabulary of carceral growth and rurality alike. In central Appalachia, the growing carceral economy is, like the military and drug economies that Junior described and I witnessed, built on a foundation laid by the history of coal extraction. The same capitalist logics of accumulation and the extraction of surplus value that drive the coal economy drives the Appalachian economy of incarceration, as the bodies of the imprisoned are transformed into economic opportunity and accumulated capital. As extractive capital and industry has increasingly left central Appalachia with the mechanization of extraction and the shift to surface mining, the gaps in ecology and economy left in the wake of coal have increasingly been reimagined as carceral spaces: Kentucky, for example, recorded the greatest increase in incarcerated population in the nation in 2007 (Riordan 2008) and again in 2011 (Steele and Masterson 2013; Carson and Sabol 2012). Along with the boom in Appalachia's incarcerated population—a population made up, because of the diasporic tendency of federal incarceration, primarily of people from outside of Appalachia—has been the growth of the carceral sector as an engine of economic growth and opportunity. I encountered the ways that carceral labour is presented as an opportunity for those regional residents alienated from the coal industry and extractive employment outside a small gas station on West Virginia state highway 3 near Naoma, while spending time with Junior and other CRMW staff in the spring of 2016. Because of historically high levels of flooding in the previous year, the windows of most local shops were plastered with handbills indicating regional offices of the Federal Emergency Management Office (FEMA) that aided residents affected by the floods. The floods, of course, were themselves an effect of the coal industry—highwalls, surface mines, and valley fills all create a topography uniquely prone and vulnerable to flooding. At the gas station in Naoma, next to the ubiquitous FEMA flyers was a flyer advertising employment opportunities in newly built carceral facilities in nearby Kanawha County.

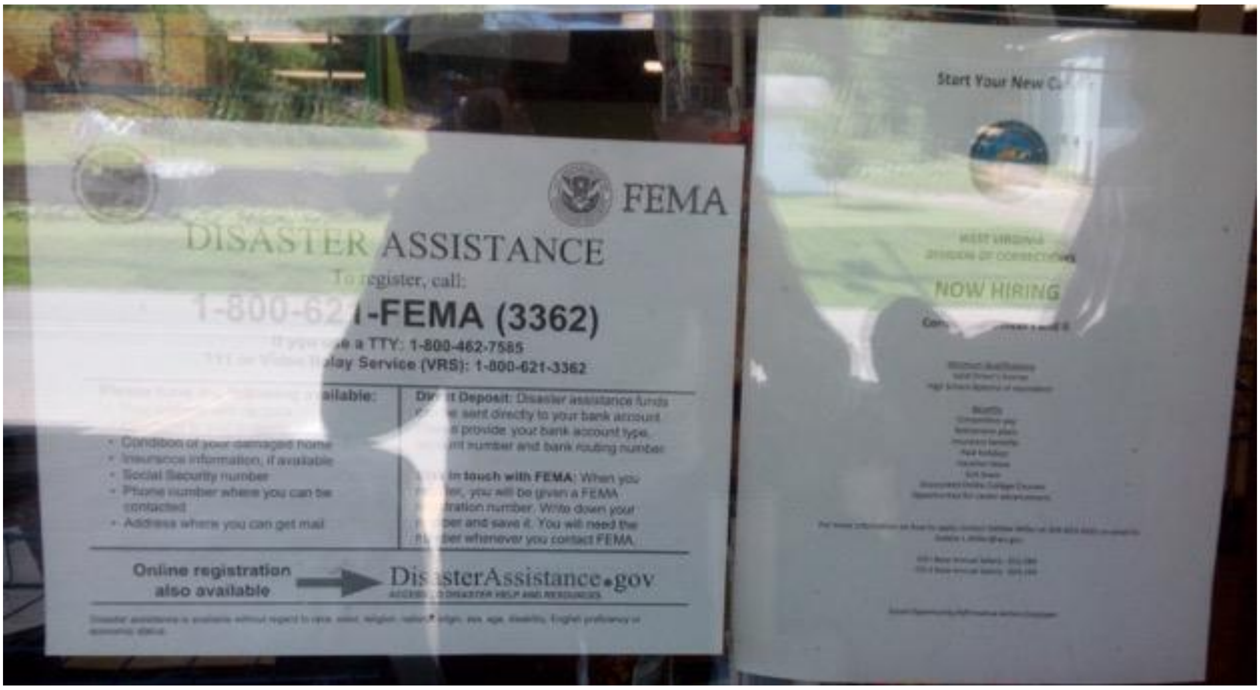
FEMA
DISASTER ASSISTANCE
To register, call:
1-800-621-FEMA (3362)
a TTY: 1-800-462-7585
lay Service (VRS): 1-800-621-3362
Online registration also available
DisasterAssistance.gov
Start Your New C
NOW HIRING

Figure 51. Flyers for FEMA flood relief and job opportunities with West Virginia's Department of Corrections. Raleigh County, West Virginia. Photograph by the author.

The relationship between the carceral and extractive or post-extractive landscapes of central Appalachia are always evident across West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, and east Tennessee. In Morgan County, Tennessee—a small mountain county near Knoxville in the eastern part of the state—I encountered a post-carceral and post-extractive landscape that perfectly illustrated the various ways that the economy and ecology of central Appalachia have been historically configured by the ebbs and flows of conflict, extraction, and incarceration. Driving through Morgan County in the summer of 2016 with Eric, we stopped in the small town of Petros. Petros is the home of the Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary, a large correctional complex operated by the Tennessee Department of Corrections from 1896 to 2009. The prison, with its gothic main building and disjointed and jumbled collection of smaller outbuildings, resembles a castle, sitting in the valley between two mountain ridges crisscrossed with entrances to deep mines. Eric and I knew about Brushy Mountain from its position in the rural mythology of east Tennessee, where Eric lives. The prison's construction, in 1896, came after an 1891 incident in which coal operators in the Coal Creek watershed of the Cumberland Mountains region of Appalachia—the network of mountains and hollers that make up the material landscape around the prison—struck a deal with the state to replace coal miners with convict labour leased out by Tennessee. In response to the operators' efforts to replace union labour with low-cost convict labour, free miners organized raids on small local jails, prisons, and stockades and company offices, freeing incarcerated miners and destroying coal company property. After a series of skirmishes between state police, militias, and armed miners, Tennessee stopped leasing convict labour to coal operators, opting instead to build the Brushy Mountain Prison in order to centralize convict labour, with incarcerated men mining coal directly for the state so as not to compete with the free labour market and upset union forces. The prison operated for over 100 years, housing notorious inmates like James Earl Ray, the man who assassinated Martin Luther King, Jr. In 2003, though, the prison closed following a prolonged struggle to keep the buildings up to code. The land and buildings were bought from the state by the Brushy Mountain Development Group, a consortium of regional development interests who intended to transform the former prison into a tourist attraction and economic hub of the region featuring a whiskey distillery, bottled water plant and brand, museum, campground, brewery, pleasure orchard, bed and breakfast, and general festival and recreation space. There are countless towns in Extractive Appalachia that are rolling the dice on carceral growth and opportunity, towns like Inez and Wheelwright Kentucky, towns in which the only light on the horizon—the only chance for growth or even stability—appears in the carceral economy. While a miner might hope to earn a starting annual salary of $50 or $60,000, though, a corrections officer can only hope to make a fraction of that.

Just as Appalachia is emerging as a landscape for the incarceration of surplus black and brown bodies captured by the late capitalist carceral state, the interior space of the Appalachia body itself is (re)emerging as a corporeal biolandscape captured by the black toxicity of coal. Miners have long suffered from progressive massive fibrosis—'black lung' disease—as a product of long-term exposure to coal dust and other fine particulates in poorly ventilated underground mines. In Extractive Appalachia, the roadsides are littered with billboards advertising legal services encouraging miners to be diagnosed with black lung and join class action lawsuits or otherwise seek compensation. Since Earl Dotter produced images of sick miners covered in the flattening blackness of coal dust, black lung has been a central component of the visuality of contemporary Extractive Appalachia. The coal industry and the regulatory bodies it has captured, though, have been successful in containing emerging knowledge of the extent of the disease: the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) reported just 99 cases of 'complicated black lung'—the worst form of the disease—between 2011 and 2016. In 2016, though, investigations by National Public Radio (NPR) revealed that eleven black lung clinics in Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio alone had recorded and reported a total lot of 962 new diagnoses between 2006 and 2016. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) notes that the 'actual extent of PMF [complicated black lung disease] in U.S. coal miners remains unclear', but that the true number is undoubtedly higher than indicated in the NPR reports (Blackley et al. 2016).

Black lung is, of course, a terrible disease to live with. Life with the disease 'is bleak…it's incurable and fatal' (Berkes 2016). As one miner diagnosed with complicated black lung described plainly to NPR reporters 'dying of suffocation, that's what I've got to look forward to' (Berkes 2016). The relationship miners have to the disease is, however, complicated. Joe Wimmer, a miner with 13 years underground in West Virginia, told an ABC reporter in 2010 that 'When you get coal dust in your lungs, you want to go back. I craved that dust like nicotine' (Dwyer 2010). Here again I locate evidence of the intensity with which the logics and practices of extraction have captured the cultural landscape and affective conditions of central Appalachia: even as the toxic materiality of coal captures the interior of the body, suffocating and choking, many in Extractive Appalachia remain so culturally and affectively and economically attached to the labour of extraction that to imagine anything else is to imagine nothing at all.

The question that emerges from the mist and dust and blackness of Appalachian extraction is, fundamentally, a question of the limits of imagination and hope. How can a place so configured by ecocide, social death and violence, and fundamental and pervading toxicity imagine a livable future, or hope for more than what it has? Recent data suggests that, in many ways, it cannot: young people are leaving West Virginia and eastern Kentucky at a rate far greater than other places, even other rural places, in the United States. The reasons for the outsized exodus of young people are not entirely clear, though the issue can be easily spatialized: West Virginia's depopulation—which is 'faster than any other state in the country' (Gutman 2015)—has been concentrated on the southern coalfields. Eastern Kentucky is no different: between 2000 and 2005, 31 of Kentucky's counties saw sharp population declines of more than four percent. In both states, overall populations declined because of 'net out-migration and a death rate that exceeds the birth rate.' It is clear, then, that there is little drive for residents to remain in central Appalachia, that to imagine a future without coal and a coal economy in eastern Kentucky or southern West Virginia is an exercise in futility for many residents. At the same time, though, for many, to imagine life outside of Appalachia is an equally futile exercise. Here, as cultural evidence for the impossibility of seeing livable futures in Extractive Appalachia and the simultaneous impossibility of leaving Appalachia behind—a condition experienced by many in Extractive Appalachia, and a condition discussed in Chapter 6 as the collapse of linear or progressive temporality—I offer a poem, *Heritage*, written in 1935 by Kentucky poet James Still:

I shall not leave these prisoning hills

Though they topple their barren heads to level earth
And the forests slide uprooted out of the sky.
Though the waters of Troublesome, of Trace Fork,
Of Sand Lick rise in a single body to glean the valleys,
To drown lush pennyroyal, to unravel rail fences;
Though the sun-ball breaks the ridges into dust
And burns its strength into the blistered rock
I cannot leave. I cannot go away.
Being of these hills, being one with the fox
Stealing into the shadows, one with the new-born foal,
The lumbering ox drawing green beech logs to mill,
One with the destined feet of man climbing and descending,
And one with death rising to bloom again, I cannot go.
Being of these hills I cannot pass beyond.

For Still, as for many Appalachian people, the mountains present a confounding dialectic of impossibility and necessity. Still, moreover, foresees the new ecological and social horrors that have only in the last four decades truly begun to become visible over the horizon; in the new, emerging carceral landscape of Appalachia, Still’s ‘prisoning hills’ find contemporary and literal relevance, while the mountains continue to ‘topple their barren heads’ as part and parcel of the exercise of the late-modern extractive power. All of Appalachia is, it feels to me, as Still describes: unable to leave, but ‘one with death’.

The capture of Appalachia, then, is a capture that covers nearly all imaginable facets of the region, and is one that is only loosening its grip with the exodus of the coal economy and people alike. The landscapes and ecologies of central Appalachia have been captured by the coal industry through the primitive accumulation that is so fundamental to dromic and always-accelerating capitalism, as land is bought and held and exploited and, finally, destroyed by absentee corporate interests. The labour and quiescence of Appalachian people is captured and ensured through the broken promises of economic prosperity and stability, while the production of culture in Appalachian spaces and communities is captured by the historical dominance of the extractive logic. The ecologies and people of Appalachia alike are captured by the mechanics of photographic production, a process that is wholly implicated in the ongoing exploitation of the region and its construction as a geography of difference, a place that is less than other places. Extractive Appalachia continues to be captured on the visual register of the horrifying, uncanny, and the eerie as it continues to offer itself as a psychogeography rendered uniquely unsettling by the past, present, and future of extractive violence and social death that configures it. The specters of those histories are felt every day as they capture and haunt Extractive Appalachia, and as the machinery and violence of extraction rumbles forward, their ghostly numbers grow each year, capturing memory and temporality. And, finally, Appalachian futures are already being configured in the logics and architectures of capture, as the carceral landscape expands ever deeper into the mountains and the toxicity and biotic death of black lung rages on, suffocating and choking this place, this ecology, and these people.

If a green cultural criminology is to be attuned to the convergence of questions of ecology and justice of the sort raised by the collisions of extraction, ecocide, and carceral expansion and violence in the cultural and material landscape(s) of Appalachia, it must first broaden the conceptual spectrum of its interest and orientation. ‘Green’ is no longer a useful conceptual or analytical tool or framework: in places like Extractive Appalachia—even with its verdancy and deep biodiversity—to speak of green is to speak of something that does not meaningfully exist in anything but the most literal and material prismatic sense. While it is true that there is a vast amount of green material in central Appalachia, the objects that make up the material ecology and the moments and modes and products/productions that make up the cultural ecology of Appalachia have all been thoroughly blackened by the accumulating layers of coal dust that has historically darkened any available lenses through which the region can be seen, felt, imagined, or understood. Thinking or being in ecology means more, in a contemporary sense, than *green*—coal, iron ore, and smog are, after all, part of the late modern ecological experience. I suggest, then, that green-cultural criminology reconfigure itself in order to develop a more relevant, contemporary, challenging, and critical orientation. Just as ecology, ecocriticism, and ecotheory have been pushed beyond green with the development of new prismatic orientations like black ecology, dark ecology, and melancology, so too must a cultural criminology that is attuned to harms to and of ecology begin to think outside of the restrictive boundaries of 'green'. Here we can—and should—return to criminologist Mark Halsey's 2004 assertion that the then-nascent green criminology should 'jettison' the term 'green'. Halsey, though, founds his critique of the criminological lexicon of environmental harm on the 'political baggage' of 'green'. While Halsey's critical engagement with the 'green' in green criminology was fitting and adequate for its time, I suggest something more fundamental and, perhaps, radical: nature (for which 'green' is a synecdoche) is a dead concept, and with it has died any meaning or salience of romantic notions of wilderness and environment. As humanity continues to reach beyond the confines of the subjective world and objective earth—as we inch ever closer to the non-object/non-subject Planet and the terror and virtue, desire and dread that framework implies and contains—and into the conceptual and spatial expanses of the cosmic and the spectral, we can no longer settle for the dated and romantic concepts of a green teleology. Moreover, if our aim as criminologists engaged in the production of ecological thought is to remain true to its origins as established by South and Lynch, the contemporary ecological moment can only be adequately theorized in a way that seeks to account for the convergence of ecocide, exploitation, oppression, and social death along the lines of place, class, race, and gender.

Morton calls for an ecological thought that tangles with our capacity for imagining and thinking ecology and philosophy at the end of the world. If we take that 'world' as the subjective world imagined and described by Thacker, we can then begin to think ecology at the end of the primacy of subjectivity, to move into a realized object-oriented ontology. In this ontology, Extractive Appalachia (and, for that matter, other zones of extractive ecocide) emerges not as a space or a place but as a vast array of hyperobjects. The networks of coal mines above and below the surface, the failed reclamation sites, the memorialscape and the prisonscape, the black and brown bodies of the incarcerated and the coal-blackened white bodies of the extractive laborer, the slurry ponds and the creeks and streams and rivers filled with the toxic externalities of extraction all are the hyperobjects of an ecology captured and conditioned by the logics of extractive capital.

Blackening the edges of central Appalachia, at this very moment, is a new ecological thought and experience that sees, fundamentally, that what is is as what was, that that which is above is as that which is below, and that what sits on the horizon is the past and future both. Anticipated by Harry Caudill (1976), one of the earliest and most prominent foreseers of Appalachian ecocide and social murder (see generally: Short 2016, Engels 1845: 126) in his writing on 'a darkness at dawn', thinking Appalachia as a dark ecology reveals the ways in which the light and lightness of bucolic American rurality is now—and perhaps always has been—a way to disavow or obscure the ecological and social darkness of ecological relations under regimes of extractive capital. Through a lens of historical extractive subjectivity and alienation, a lens itself blackened by the mist and dust of the conceptual and material geographies of horror that constitute Extractive Appalachia, we can see desire and dread rising still behind the mountains like a black sun. And while we might dread the moment in which horrifying futures are no longer lost but realized, there are among us those who all the same desire their arrival. Those among us who wish to see Appalachia left not to the ruination of industrial extraction and capture, but instead *re*claimed, *re*captured, and, finally, *re*configured by the vast material and conceptual expanses and spectrums of the dark and unknowable ecology of a world-without-us. This is the unlikely optimism of dark ecological thought, what Morton (2016) describes as the third inevitable moment we encounter when thinking dark ecology ('dark as in depressing' is the first moment, 'dark as in mysterious' the second), the moment at which melancholy and mystery give way to hope, power, honesty, and accuracy. Likewise, if we return to James Still's *Heritage*, quoted above, we can locate the first moments of dark ecological thought—an Appalachia 'one with death'—and the third—an Appalachia 'rising to bloom again'—alike. The mountains are, after all, a peculiar and special space, a hyperobject all their own, an ecology that eludes total apprehension even as it is captured and conditioned and configured by extractive capital. What possibility for the future is left, then, but to seek to engage honestly with the terror and beauty of the mountains, and to look again for hope and desire and possibility within the fear, horror, and mystery of new post-extractive ecologies?

Appendix

Notes on Methods and Methodology

Towards a Green-Cultural Criminology with (and of) Images

In this thesis, I have sought to heed earlier suggestions (Brisman and South 2013, 2014; Natali 2010, 2013; Beirne 2013; McClanahan 2014; McClanahan and Natali 2017) for an interdisciplinary approach to green criminology not only by adopting the broad theoretical and methodological tendencies suggested previously by cultural criminologists, but also by the incorporation of some of the various approaches to method and theory offered by visual sociology and visual criminology. In order to develop an understanding of the importance of identity, subjectivity, and culture to ways of knowing ecology and conceptualizing and responding to ecological harm, it is essential to employ a methodology aimed at understanding the mutually constitutive dimensions of emotion and place. Previous work—particularly in geography and environmental sociology—linking the spatial dimensions of place and nature with the affective dimensions of emotion and culture has suggested that 'emotions are…intimately and inescapably caught up in the current re-writing of the earth' (Smith et al. 2009), an observation that suggests several important points of consideration for green criminologists interested in the interplay between human labour and justice, ecology and culture.

Following the need for a methodology that seeks to understand the dimensions of affect, emotion, ecology, and identity, this research suggests, develops, and adopts a qualitative approach informed by various theoretical and methodological tendencies already at work within criminology. Here, green criminologists can turn to the approach—which can inform both method and theory—detailed by Avi Brisman and Nigel South's (2013; 2014. See also: McClanahan 2014; Natali and McClanahan 2017) calls for a 'green-cultural' criminology. This emerging framework calls on green criminologists to consider the perspectives developed by cultural criminology, an integration that while certainly not inevitable may be made possible by the tendency of both disciplines to be theoretically and methodologically ‘open-minded’ (Brisman and South 2014: 118). Of particular methodological use to those deploying a green-cultural criminological approach is attention to what Brisman and South term the ‘construction of environment, nature, and environmental harm’ (2014; 120). Because these constructions are formed and communicated via mediated cultural production—not only in the sense of mass media, but also various subcultural communication and production across visual and performing arts, music, literature and discourse—efforts to understand the cultural forces that either resist or support environmentally or socially harmful extraction or industrial contraction must make methodological choices that consider and explore a broad array of cultural productions.

While the integrated approach offered by Brisman and South offers methodological suggestions (insofar, at least, that the ‘tendencies’ of cultural criminology can be considered to constitute method) that are both applicable and useful to green criminologists interested in using culturally formed and mediated representations of ecological conflict and contestation, it does not offer suggestions for particular theoretical perspectives which may be well-suited for contextualizing the image. Does the methodological use of images (i.e. an image of a prison cell inserted, with minimal analysis, within the margins of a qualitative study on incarceration) pay adequate theoretical attention to the image and its production? While the image itself, stripped of theoretical analysis, is certainly important in that it represents and communicates a moment in time and space, the methodological tendency at play in such atheoretical uses of the image fails to adopt the innovative and inventive tendencies of cultural criminology. In response, I suggest that it is necessary to develop an integrated methodological framework that makes room for theories of the visual, rather than simply approaching the image as ‘mere “data”’ to be gathered’ (Zaitch and de Leeuw 2010). In order to focus adequate theoretical attention on the image, we can follow the work of photographers and visual theorists such as Sekula (1981) and Mirzoeff (2011), who offer a more theoretically rich and challenging perspective that requires attention be paid to the meaning of not only the image itself, but also the conditions and processes—be they mechanical, cultural, legal or philosophical—that underlie, facilitate and empower its production. While there is currently a tendency in some criminological work to engage with the visual as just another data point, there is also excellent and compelling scholarship within visual criminology that engages the visual in a more theoretically informed way; Carrabine (2012; 2011), Linnemann and Wall (2013; Wall and Linnemann 2014), Brown (2014) and others have produced work that reflects serious theoretical attention to the production of images. There is, however, a paucity of this sort of scholarship—excepting the contributions of Natali (2010; 2013; 2016)—within green criminology.

Reflexivity and Method in Ethnographic and Visual Research

Extractive cultures are not monolithic. Geographically, they are scattered around the world, following the discovery and exploitation of natural resources. Demographically, they are comprised of labourers employed directly by the extractive industries, corporate owners and managers of extractive corporate interests, dependent families, and those who work in the various local industries established to support extractive labour or live on the land affected by extraction. Nor are extractive cultures monolithic in their philosophy; those living or working in extractive regions often have identities and political, social and environmental views hugely different from their neighbours. In some ways, then, a binding tie between individuals within the context of a given extractive culture—or globally across extractive cultures—is the presence of extraction itself. In extractive Southeastern Appalachia, for example, one of the surest markers of an ‘outsider’ (a particularly mistrusted category in many parts of the region) is someone disconnected entirely from the extractive experience, a visitor awed by the striking extractive landscape. Here, my own history has been an asset; as a native of rural Kentucky, and as a former resident of Eastern Kentucky, I am both familiar with and comfortable in the rural Appalachia that made up the setting of primary data collection, and this familiarity allowed me to move freely and comfortably across the geographic and social field(s) of study. There are, though, significant tensions that precede and will outlive this research. These tensions make reflexivity, sensitivity and awareness an essential component of any field research in the extractive zones of central Appalachia.

Since the publication in 1963 of Harry Caudill’s *Night Comes to The Cumberlands,* a narrative account of Appalachia that at times belies the author’s Eastern Kentucky roots by reproducing the callous stereotypes constructed by hegemonic discourses of Appalachian rurality, and John Dominis’s *The Valley of Poverty,* a photo essay appearing in Life Magazine in 1964, narratives and images of Appalachian life have sometimes captured the attention of America. With this in mind, I spent time while conducting research gathering historical images and stories of Appalachian culture and environment and analysed them reflexively, using a technique described by David Altheide as ‘ethnographic content analysis’ and defined further by Ken Plummer (1983) as the ‘reflexive analysis of documents’. Describing his own vision of ethnographic content analysis, Dimitri Bogazianos (2011) provides insight on how this method might be usefully applied in the analysis of historical documents and images: materials should be ‘approached with…the assumption that all sources…are the products of complicated social practices that say something, but not everything, about the contexts from which they emerged’ (153). Adopting this approach allows for the holistic analysis of a wide range of materials, including both historical and contemporary images and narratives of extraction. This method of content analysis, which abandons the coldness, coding and counting of more traditional quantitative content analysis, is a central methodological component of cultural criminology, making its use in this research a central methodological illustration of the cross-fertilization of green and cultural criminologies.

Following Lorenzo Natali (2013; 2016. See also: Natali and McClanahan 2017) and Eamonn Carrabine (2012), and in keeping with the goals of cross-fertilization fundamental to this project, my research also considers the political prominence and power of the visual. There is, however, a pervasive but well-founded distrust of ‘outsiders’ in Appalachia, and it is a distrust that is intensely connected to the production and dissemination of images of Appalachian life by outsiders (and, just as frequently, native Appalachians like Caudill, discussed above, whose work remains controversial in the region). This problem is so pervasive that some regional organizations working to promote tourism as a post-coal economic strategy for Appalachia warn visitors to not display ‘environmental or peace-type bumper stickers’ as local residents harbour ‘fear and distrust of outsiders, especially those from northern states’ (Cooper, n.d.). While these concerns are sometimes overstated, they do point to and warn of a historical wariness among Appalachian people, a wariness that has times spiralled into violence. It has been essential, then, that I remain mindful of the complex historical relationship between Appalachian people and photographers, and that the photographic dimensions of the research are conducted with sensitivity, empathy and tact.

Given the historic tensions between photographers and Appalachian people described above, it is essential when producing or employing images in Appalachia or other geographies marked historically by the convergence of pollution and exploitation that adequate attention be given to the ethical and political dimensions of the visual. In conversations with local people in the field, calls to carefully consider the production of images were common. These calls sometimes came in the form of subtle warnings that raised the spectre of historic moments of violence between photographers of Appalachia and their subjects: ‘y’all better go ahead and *pack up the cameras* and move along,' a miner cautioned me on the bank of a river—as well as in the measured and thoughtful consideration of the historical politics of Appalachian images: 'Just…please don't take a bunch of black and white pictures, ok? To some folks, that's all we are' a local teacher implored in Eastern Kentucky during a conversation about the production of images in the field. Both of these examples indicate and illustrate the possible ethical and political limitations of visual research. In other words, because of the region's uninterrupted history of ecological exploitation and because the visual has played a central role in that history, the production of images by those marked as 'outsiders' has a parallel history—one that raises significant tensions between researcher and resident, image and photographer. Feelings of scepticism associated with photography and outsiders are not, of course, limited to Appalachia. Since the earliest days of the medium, there has been warranted unease around the ways that photography might constitute or facilitate the oppressive power of the state (Wall and Linnemann 2014), the othering of nonproductive or nonpacified bodies (Hall 2009), and the racialized cultural and social hierarchies of late modernity (Roth 2009), an issue discussed more thoroughly below.

During those phases of research focused on the production of images, the historic ghosts of exploitive images lingered in the shadows. Nonetheless, the phases of this research conducted in Appalachia found consistently that those ghosts could be confronted and reckoned with through constant reflexive attention-to and awareness-of our own place in the field. In a visually attuned green cultural criminology, the production and use of images in contentious and contested geographies remains a sometimes-vexing problem, albeit one that encourages, in the thoughtful researcher, an intensely productive and illuminating stream of considerations. It is essential, then, that researchers employing visual methods in green cultural criminology make sound methodological decisions, and that those decisions remain mindful of the forces that condition the image. In the social-spatial context of an Appalachia so haunted by the converging forces of ecological harm and destruction, human and environmental exploitation, and the visual, the use of photo elicitation interviewing was intensely problematic. Some social and ecological geographies, we might note, are so over-visualized that the methodological use or production of images might, in fact, close more doors than it opens. I also find, however, that through careful methodological decision-making and ongoing reflexive consideration of the aims and position of the researcher, the toolbox contains sufficient methodological approaches for illuminating the visual convergence of environment and culture.

Having recognized the limitations of human subject photography in contested fields, the reflexive visual green-cultural criminological project can then consider the value and necessity of visual documentation of ecology. Landscape photography, while holding exceptional value for the green-cultural criminologist, must all the same be approached just as carefully as portrait photography. The photographic production of images of landscapes may also risk thinking of itself as objective, when it is anything but. Here, the mechanics and quotidian concerns of field-based research must be thoroughly considered. These concerns range from the relatively simple questions of access—how to apprehend a landscape that can only be seen and captured photographically when the researcher engages in trespass, for example—to the more complex questions of scope (how much of a landscape can be captured in an image? How much is necessary to illustrate the dimensions of the landscape the research is concerned with?)—to the even more vexing and complicated questions of history and politics (What are the historical forces that shape the landscape? How can they be captured photographically? How do those forces politically condition the production and social reception of the image?). As Shawn Michelle Smith (2013: 167) notes, landscape photography has played an essential role in the intensely visual project of nation-building and the construction of state power by ‘transforming land into nation by framing the view’. It is essential, then, that landscape photography is conducted in the field with the same sensitivity to the powerful structural forces that condition and configure Appalachian subjectivities that should inform and guide portrait photography.

None of the concerns, problems and limitations above are presented to suggest, of course, that the production of images in the field is too fraught to be useful to green-cultural criminologists, or that photography limited or confounded this research. Quite the contrary, the problem(s) of the image make its use and production exceptionally valuable for the green-cultural criminological project. Despite the contested nature of photographic discourses, histories, and individual images, the image provides a particularly useful means of seeing, establishing, communicating, analysing and documenting the social and ecological dimensions of environmental harm.

Despite the essential significance of the image and its production to this project, I did not find that the production of images in the field occupied much of my time or energy. Quite the contrary, there were countless moments that, in hindsight, I would have benefitted from capturing on film. I wanted to avoid, though, only seeing Appalachia through a lens, or from behind the shield of the camera. My interest in the power of the image in Appalachia does not, then, necessarily imply that I am interested in producing those images. I am not, furthermore, much of a photographer, and so to spend precious time tinkering with a camera would mean taking that time away from the dimensions of fieldwork I am more suited and inclined towards. I did, though, wish to understand the social dynamics of photographic capture from as close to the ground as I could get, and so on several trips into the field I was accompanied by a close friend and photographer, Eric Brittain. Eric and I have known each other for 15 years or more, and have collaborated on many projects as writers and visual artists. I know and trust Eric’s eyes, intuitions, and his ability to consider the political and ecological implications of his own work, and so I had no hesitation in asking him to accompany me on research trips. All told, Eric spent roughly four weeks with me in the field. In that time I did not otherwise alter my research agenda and approach: Eric accompanied me, but he was left to his own devices and I to mine. During those weeks, Eric produced thousands of images, and he and I talked for hours about the various ways that his processes as a photographer and artist were conditioned by the material and cultural space and history of Appalachia.

Troubling 'The Field': Positionality and Interrogating the Infinite

Because this project was based on fieldwork—on research conducted 'in the field'—the first and most essential questions relate to what 'the field' is: what are its boundaries? Where do we find it? What does it contain, and what must it miss? For me, the simple answer is a complicated one. For me, 'the field' is not a bounded geography or a particular place—it is not contained in a postal code or a county or a state or even a region. Following Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1997: 4), then, I abandon entirely the concept of 'field' as tied inextricably to spatiality, opting instead to configure my own conceptualization of the field around a concept of an infinite space of geography, ecology, space, culture, affect, time, and memory. In many ways, then, this research is based on a 'field' that is everywhere at once and yet nowhere to be found. Central Appalachia, of course, is the material geography in which I am most interested and in which I spent the time that most intensely informs the present writing. I do not, though, imagine my own research in the terms of the community studies approach taken by canonical research on Appalachia (see generally: Erikson 1976, 1986; Bell 2016, 2013). Instead, my work considers an Appalachia less tightly bounded by material space and place, opting instead to consider the material region as an ecology of objects (Morton 2011; Harman 2010, 2011, 2012) and the cultural space as a psychogeography of affect unimpeded by cartographic boundaries. Put simply, the ecology of

Appalachia is part of a broader cosmic ecology, while the cultures of Appalachia are part of a larger affective subjective space, and so to attempt to pin either to a place on a map seems, to me, to ensure that something is missed.

The field, moreover, is also a place inside me. I have spent my life in and on the margins of Appalachia, and it is a material ecology and cultural landscape that has shaped and moulded me. My own relationship to ecologies both Appalachian and otherwise, my own cosmological tendencies and beliefs, my own cultural affinities, and my own ways of knowing and seeing the material and immaterial worlds have all been configured by a life lived in Appalachia. I spent the first 11 years of my life living on a small farm in Kentucky, just on the western edge of central Appalachia. As a child, I was immersed in the ecology of the region, exploring fields and creeks and ponds and forests, fishing and hunting, and deeply immersing myself in Appalachian ecology. I remember the smell and the feel of animals—the chickens and cows we kept on our farm, the raccoon kit my sister and I raised from a bottle, and the pelts of foxes and coyotes our trapper neighbour would bring by our house. I can close my eyes even now, more than a quarter of a century later, and be transported back to a two-tiered barn, the cool breeze and taste of drying tobacco in the air, or to the creek on my friend Joe’s parents’ land where we used to spend hours hunting for arrowheads, the soft grey clay of the creek beds squishing between our bare toes. And while my memories mostly reflect those idyllic images of Appalachia, I can also conjure in my mind the darker sides of that particular rurality—the stories of violence and murder and madness that were nearly constant reminders of our relative isolation. My immersion in Appalachia is not only, though, ecological or spatial. My father is a novelist, a writer of Appalachia, and I spent my childhood listening in while he and his writer friends discussed and constructed a cultural Appalachia. My cultural identity, then, parallels my ecological affinity, and both are intensely Appalachian. After leaving that life when I was twelve, I remained with my family in

Kentucky, with only short periods spent living away from the region. I am, then, always close to Appalachia: I have encountered it in its material setting, I have encountered it in social and cultural ecologies around the world, I have encountered it in people, and I have encountered it in my dreams. I embrace that closeness, as it offers me not only access to places and people that might otherwise not be accessible (as described below), but also because it encourages the sort of reflexivity that is not only favoured by cultural and green cultural criminologies, but that is a hallmark of contemporary ethnographic methods (see generally: Ruby 1982). Recognizing the utility of reflexivity—as well as analytical autoethnography (Anderson 2006 evocative autoethnography (Ellis 1997)—for social and ecological research, I strive in my work to never shy away from identifying those moments in which my own experiences inform my research, writing, and thinking on Appalachia.

If 'field' is a complex term that signifies a complex space, I simplify it in my own mind by opting instead to consider Appalachia as a psychogeography. With that reformulation, the limitations of strict spatialization are somewhat ameliorated, while the significance of space and place are retained. Merlin Coverley, in attempting to define psychogeography, notes that it is neither object or practice, mode of critique or political strategy, but that it is all of those and more. For me, I think of psychogeography as offering a unique way to conceptualize the intersections of material place, ecological systems and objects, and affect, emotionality, and subjectivity: I think of psychogeography in terms of psychogeographies, spaces that exist in the collision of the internal world(s) of feeling and the external world(s) of ecology. Appalachia, then, is for me a psychogeography, just as London, or New York, or the village I live in, or my office or my kitchen is a psychogeography. Psychogeography as a critical tradition, though, also both implies and offers a peculiar set of methodological arguments and tendencies of method. Perhaps most central to those methods is walking-as-dérive, of the sort championed by Guy Debord (1989;

1958/2012) and the French situationists, Will Self, and others. While dérive as a technique of psychogeography is both inherently and fundamentally based on walking and on the urban (see generally: Debord 1958/2012; Richardson 2015) I have made efforts in my own research to reimagine it as a technique equally suited for rural landscapes, and for landscapes most effectively learned and explored not only on foot, but also from a car or an all-terrain vehicle. To that end, a routine part of my time in the material field of research was given to hiking, driving, or ATV riding without any particular aims or destinations, letting myself be guided only by the impulses of affect and the paths and barriers of ecology. For Debord, who located in dérive an essential set of tools for political critique and action, the dérive was an exercise in unknowing, in remaking the familiar as unfamiliar, and I found in my own Appalachian dérive that what had previously been a landscape and ecology that was intimately familiar to me suddenly emerged in my vision and imagination as an entirely new space and place, wholly unfamiliar to me and terrifying and comforting in equal measure. I find in the psychogeographic dérive , moreover, a fundamental interest in the visual that compliments and augments my own desire to push towards a comprehensive visual critical ecotheoretical framework. Psychogeography’s fundamental attention to the visual is, for me, made most clear in the work of Robert MacFarlane, who urges an undoing of knowing based on an alertness to ‘the happenstance of metaphors’ and ‘the presence of visual rhymes, coincidences, and analogies’ in the landscape (MacFarlane 2005). Finally, I find in psychogeography a clarifying articulation of the murky methodological waters of cultural criminology, and one that draws an essential parallel between cultural criminology and photographic production; the dérive and flanerie are each foundational techniques of psychogeography and experimental photography, and each hold equally prominent place in much of the cultural criminological work that first drew me to the discipline.

Ghosts, Landscapes, and Archives: On Spectral Ethnography

If ‘the field’ is a fleeting concept, space, or framework, best apprehended by techniques like dérive , it is a concept, space, and framework populated by the equally fleeting ghosts, spectres, and spirits encountered in unguided wandering. Because an essential aim and focus of my own research has been to locate and interrogate the landscapes and figures of spectral meaning that are mapped over the material landscapes of Extractive Appalachia, I have worked to develop and engage in ethnographic techniques that first reveal the ghosts that haunt the field, and then invite them to the table. Here I follow sociologists like Avery Gordon, whose interest in the ghostly merges with a sharp and unflinching critique of capital, and Michael Mayerfeld Bell, who uses ‘a language of ghosts…intended to give [sociology] a way to speak generally about the…meaning of place’ (Bell 1997: 815). Because, at its core, my interest in ghosts is intertwined with my interest in memories, memorials, and place, I have tried throughout to heed Bell’s warning that we not ‘reduce ghosts of place to mere memory’ lest we ‘overlook the live quality of their presence, and their stubborn rootedness in particular places’ (816). In the field, then, I have sought ghosts and spectres, and worked to engage affectively with them when and however possible.

Justin Armstrong offers reflections on the possibility of a spectral ethnography. Following Bell, whose attention to the spectral is inextricably tied to an interest in place and space, the techniques described by Armstrong are uniquely suited to locating and engaging with those ghostly presences that mark and haunt particular material geographies. Armstrong suggests ethnographic engagement with sites in which ‘spectral significance’ has accumulated—sites of ‘un-space’ (Hall 2007) or ‘non-place’ (Auge 1995)—as a way to locate the textual meanings that condition spatially-bounded subjectivities. In Extractive Appalachia, I regularly worked to locate spaces of spectral significance, and to interact with those spaces and the ghosts that haunt them, ‘embracing and cultivating slowness and reflexivity' (244) in order to understand their unique temporality and temporal significance. Among all of the spaces and places I encountered during this research, those spaces of spectral significance were the most unsettling, compelling, and unapprehendable. Because my interest in Appalachia is fundamentally about the ways in which it has been captured, I found the spectral landscape—which is, as Armstrong notes of all spectral landscapes, difficult to 'capture' (244)—called to me the loudest.

If Armstrong and Bell find spectral forces in the field of material ecology—both have a fundamental interest in non-built environments, and both have an interest in rural ecological spaces, in what Bell calls 'the phenomenology of environment' (816)—I extend the excavation of the spectral into the bureaucratic and textual space of the archive. During my research, I spent several days in the archives of the West Virginia Regional Historic Collection in Morgantown, West Virginia and the Appalshop archives in Whitesburg, Kentucky. In both of these archival spaces, I found myself interacting on the immaterial and affective spectral plane with the same ghosts that haunt the landscape. In the archive, though, those spectres are untethered from material ecology and left to roam through the expanses of time and space captured by the bureaucratic technology of the archival process. In the material memorialscape of Appalachia, for example, I might encounter a ghostly presence in the names and illustrations of dead coal miners, but those ghosts would be bound to the particular space of the memorial. In the archive, though, I might encounter the ghost darting in and out of the pages of a trial transcript, the audio tape of an oral history, or the catalogued ecological material of an archaeological excavation. If, then, the material ecological landscape is a space for the living in which the dead still have a place, the archive is a space for the dead in which the living still have a place.

Timeline, Design, and Mechanics

Fieldwork for this project took place in 2014-2016 in West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. I began research in the Coal River Mountain region, a network of small towns in West Virginia located in close proximity to several mountaintop removal mines of various sizes. There are, of course, no shortage of small towns and counties in West Virginia and Kentucky that are affected deeply by coal extraction. What makes Coal River Mountain particularly relevant in this research, though, is that it also is home to Coal River Mountain Watch (CRMW), an environmental advocacy and activism group in the region that monitors the environmental effects of mountaintop removal coal extraction and offers advocacy and support for local residents negatively impacted by coal extraction. For the majority of my time in the field, I camped on private and public lands, living in a small tent or, at times, in a hammock. Not only has living, quite literally, ‘in the field’ allowed me to be close to the people I wish to interview and learn from and the landscapes I wish to explore (which, given the remoteness of the area, is a significant advantage), it has also granted me an enhanced affective connection to the space of the research. Because this project is fundamentally interested in the nexus of environmental place and affective feeling, and because of the reflexivity required by the methodology used here, camping in the field has been essential to allowing me to foster and explore that affective connection.

With the goal of this research being the production of a comprehensive ethnographic exploration of the intersections of environment, culture, extraction and justice, the research is fundamentally qualitative and ethnographic. Primary field research employed participant observation, a ‘process of registering, interpreting, and recording’ (Schwartz and Schwartz 1955) in the field favoured here for its ability to produce organic and empathic knowledge. This dimension of field research entailed moderate participation in daily life and special events in the observed communities. During this phase of research, I sought to observe the ways that local residents construct and communicate cultural meaning out of the Appalachian landscape and the region’s extractive history and present. Field notes and recordings were utilized as the primary means of recording observations, with both transcribed and word-processed periodically during field research. This process not only allowed for the thoughtful consideration of insights and knowledge gained during observation, but also for in-the-moment preliminary analysis and theoretical development. Participation, however, was limited in order to ameliorate risks of over-involvement in local lives and practices while still actively working to establish and maintain affective and empathic bonds with community members.

Interviewing techniques for this research, when employed, were largely unstructured. Considering the unique and complexly individual experiences and histories of Appalachian people with coal, it is unlikely that a rigorously structured approach to interviewing would yield the rich and organic data of unstructured conversation. Still, though, field interviews were approached with a focus on answering certain broad questions concerning interviewee’s personal experiences with coal and Appalachian culture. These questions generally concerned intergenerational attachments to the land and extractive industry of Appalachia, engagement with uniquely Appalachian cultural productions (whether that engagement is in the form of production or consumption), perceptions of social and environmental harm related to the coal extraction industry and perceptions of local and regional support or resistance to coal extraction. Interviews were conducted in various settings dependent on logistical factors and the preferences of the interview subject, and each interview was recorded (audio only, with participants’ verbal and written consent) for later transcription. Field notes were also taken regularly during all phases of research—including interviews—and supported by original photographic images produced in the field.

Although the integrated approach offered by Brisman and South offers methodological hints that clearly influence my approach to research, I have often found criminology writ large lacking in its attention to prose, poetry and other nonacademic literature as key sites of cultural production and communication. While some work in green criminology has turned its gaze to historical (Beirne, 2013) and contemporary (Brisman, McClanahan and South, 2014) literary work, and some cultural criminologists have directed their attention to literature (Linnemann, in press) in general the novel (and other forms of nonacademic literature) has been conspicuously absent. Because of my own background—I count in my family a novelist father, a poet mother, and two siblings who are professors of English—literary fiction has always provided me with a lens through which to view and communicate. More importantly, because I was raised in Appalachia, and because I grew up in a family and cultural environment attentive to literary prose and poetry, those formations have had a significant impact on my understanding of the region, an understanding that I carried into my criminological interest in Appalachian ecology and culture. So, as I prepared to return—as a researcher—to Extractive Appalachia following my first year of living abroad, my attention returned to the Appalachian novel, not only as a communicative textual formation entering and shaping cultural understandings of Appalachia, but as a central component of my own methodology. With this is mind, I read and reread—this time methodically and methodologically as a criminologist—the novels, poems and memoirs that had shaped my understanding-of and attachment-to the place I am from. These readings were conducted before, during and after fieldwork, and were rooted in the reflexive methodologies of Altheide, Bogazianos and Plummer noted above, with the aim of establishing an enhanced understanding of artistic and cultural representations of the Appalachian people and landscape, and how those representations seek to make meaning out of the dominant extractive industry.

Participants

The 24 formal participants in this research were primarily Appalachian residents, recruited using snowball sampling. The usefulness of snowball sampling has been well established, and existing connections in the field have made initial contacts readily available. Because of the regional totality of coal extraction and supportive and resistant extractive cultures, and because of how deeply those cultures and practices have impacted the land and people of Appalachia, the parameters dictating which individuals make fitting subjects for observation and conversation are so vast as to be non-existent: no residents of rural Appalachia are ambivalent towards extraction, and if any such person were found, their ambivalence would nonetheless be worthy of ethnographic exploration.

In order to develop understandings of the various and often competing Appalachian cultural identities, this research will engage ethnographically with a diverse group of residents of extractive Appalachia, including former and current coal miners, environmental activists, artists working in a variety of mediums, and white-collar employees of extractive corporate actors. A former coal mine employee and activist served as my primary contact during the initial phase of research in West Virginia. I also established and fostered connections with six local residents of the Coal River Mountain region of southern West Virginia, each with a complex and compelling relationship to resource extraction and cultural production in Appalachia. These residents make up the core group of the first phase of research, and were instrumental in opening doors and helping me to build relationships with other local residents. Because of the diverse relationships each has with coal in the region, this group also provided significant insight into both supportive and resistant dimensions of Appalachian culture.

During the portions of this research undertaken in central and eastern Kentucky, a wide group of participants assisted in providing a comprehensive survey of extractive and resistant cultures. These include writers and artists who have grappled in their work with the tensions and problems presented by an Appalachia culturally, economically and ecologically captured by coal extraction. In eastern Kentucky, I have met with young students at Eastern Kentucky University, the largest public university in the immediate area. As a former graduate student and instructor at the university, I have developed relationships with undergraduates, many of whom are first-generation college students from families with long histories of extractive labour in Appalachia. While conducting research, I spent time talking with these young people, observing the various ways they maintain attachment through the performance, production and consumption of an extractive culture, to an industry that in many cases no longer provides material support to their families or offers any viable economic future.

Following research in the Coal River Mountain region, I traveled to Whitesburg, Kentucky. Whitesburg, located in Letcher County on the eastern edge of Kentucky, is home to Appalshop, an organization dedicated to the documentation and preservation of Appalachian culture. Because Appalshop maintains several archives of images, film and documents of Appalachian life and culture, the collections there are essential to this research. There I visited the archives held at Appalshop for 5 days, with Appalshop archival staff granting me broad access to their diverse collection of materials. There gathered materials for secondary analysis, which was conducted both in the field and following the conclusion of field research. Appalshop and the Kentucky communities of Whitesburg and Harlan (in Letcher and Harlan counties, respectively, which share a border and a great degree of cultural continuity) are central to this research in that they provide the opportunity to connect with and observe individuals and communities that are deeply affected by coal extraction, but that may not have the resistant activist orientation of groups like CRMW. In these contexts, I was given the chance to observe and interview residents working directly in the local extractive industry or in the various industries that both support and rely on coal extraction.

Limitations, Ethics, and Risk

The practicalities of living ‘in the field’ have also acted as a decisive and impactful force on my mobility during research; movement within and between the various field sites of this research followed in the methodological footsteps of Ferrell and other cultural criminologists by engaging reflexively in a sort of situationist dérive described above. While Debord thought of the dérive as primarily a tactic for revealing the psychogeographic meaning in the convergence of the participant and the urban landscape, and while Ferrell’s (2001) work continues in that vein (highlighting cultural criminology’s continued exclusion of rural concerns, as noted by: Linnemann and Kurtz 2014; Brisman, McClanahan, and South 2014), my own research applies the dérive to the rural landscape. In practice, this technique involved engaging in research in a mostly unplanned fashion, allowing myself to be directed by unconscious responses to immediate and changing social and ecological stimuli. There are, of course, limitations to the use of dérive in rural Appalachian landscapes, some material and some cultural and political. I found routinely, for example, that my ability to move in the landscape was limited by infrastructure: there were often no roads to the places I wanted to go, and oftentimes the roads that did exist were flooded, too rutted to travel, or enclosed by fences and gates. On some occasions, I was able to employ Ferrell’s methodological trespass in order to access spaces of interest, while at other times I elected not to.

Dérive in central and Extractive Appalachias, moreover, is a technique that is likely only available to researchers with a degree of familiarity and what we can imagine as cultural camouflage; as a white man with a Kentucky accent, I was often comfortably safe in spaces that would likely be less welcoming had I ticked different demographic boxes. Similarly, and as evidenced by my use of techniques like trespass and dérive, this research contained a component of risk. Risk here, though, was generally a result of ecological forces: during fieldwork I encountered black bears, rattlesnakes, copperheads, floods, tornados, mudslides, armed guards, and hostile people. None of those things, though, are peculiar to Appalachia, or to living in a tent, or to being a researcher, and moreover each are simply part of the experience of living in Appalachia just as the risks of taxi cabs and subway accidents are part of the experience of living in New York City. I do not find myself uniquely brave or bold, nor do I find Appalachian landscapes and people particularly dangerous. So while my research might, in some ways, find a home in broader fields of 'edgework' (see generally: Lyng 2004), I resist that label for both my methods and the lives of participants for its inaccuracy and its blindness to the ways in which it fails to see, valorises, affirms, or reifies certain problematic masculinities (see generally: Miller 1991; Laurendeau 2008; Anderson and Brown 2010).

As in any research involving participants of any sort, this project came with its own unique ethical considerations and concerns. In order to alleviate those concerns, I decided to approach the processes of research with a policy of honesty and forthrightness that demanded that I not deceive participants or potential participants, that I not engage in surreptitious data collection or recording, and that I not conceal my own epistemological and philosophical positions and tendencies. All formal participants were given informed consent forms that detailed and described the research project and their part in it, and all were offered the choice of anonymity (it is significant, I think, that none of the 24 participants to complete the form and engage in recorded unstructured interviews requested anonymity). I have adhered, whenever possible, to participant's wishes to be named, though in writing I have changed names and details in those few cases where to do otherwise would compromise the safety of participants or myself.

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