Mines-Bodies: A Performance Ethnography of Appalachian Coal Mining

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Communication Studies (Performance Studies).

Chapel Hill
2006

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ABSTRACT

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(Under the direction of Dr. D. Soyini Madison)

From November of 2003 to the present, I have gotten to know a group of primarily disabled coal miners in southwest Virginia. Their stories are powerful, poignant, and deeply embedded in the ambiguities of daily living with death in the mines. The complex web of social and kinship networks, body politics, and economic in/stability is wound around one substance, coal, and their daily *doing* of working in the mines, even as that same work has un-*done* these miners through severed limbs, dis-abled bodies, and the psychological wounding of watching loved ones become crushed in mining rock falls. Their richly-textured stories are often silenced under dominant narratives of Appalachians as either "simple and stupid" or "dirty and dangerous."

This dissertation cross-connects the politics and poetics of southern Appalachian coal mining culture by asking: How is Appalachian coal mining culture in southwest Virginia performed as an intimate relationship with the *body* of the mines (or, the "mines-body")? I first ground the reader in the context of southern Appalachian cultural history, an abject and Othered region I figure as a postcolonial space. I then investigate miners' unique understanding of the mines as having a living body, character, and language. This configuration of mining space as a *body* is central to miners' conceptions of their work, the ways they negotiate and construct their own identities in relation to the mines, how they cope with the daily dangers of their work, and how they later deal with disability as separation from a community of other miners *and* from the mines with which they have formed a sustained relationship. The dissertation highlights women miners' narratives of subjugation, sexual harassment, and empowerment, in addition to the often silenced narratives of disabled miners with black lung who literally *have no breath* with which to speak against those who unjustly deny them compensation or disability status.

My research culminated in the original live performance Out of the Dark: The Oral Histories of Appalachian Coal Miners (DVD archive included). I conclude with reflections on the collaborative process and impact of this embodied performance as scholarship and activism.

To the Appalachian coal miners and their families,
who gave the tremendous gift of their stories and lives.

And to Soyini, whose passion, rigor, beauty, and love inspires everything I do.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I cannot begin to express my gratitude and heartfelt thanks to the coal miners and friends of coal miners I interviewed, without whom this project would not have happened: Earl Scott, Steve Austin, Donald Mullins, Eddie Cantor, Johnny Sharpe, Palmer Maggard, Albert Maggard, Harley Colley, Sam Jessee, Pam Turner, Jimmy Castle, Daniel Beatty, Bill Buchanan, Joe Smiddy, Ichabod, Buckwheat, Mike, and to those who wished to remain anonymous. Thanks especially to my Papa, Wayne Lanthorn, who started me on this journey in the first place. Most importantly, immesurable thanks to my Mama, Rachel Little Lanthorn, for her patient and enduring love, help, and encouragement during the development and revisions of this project. Mama and Papa, quite simply, I could not have done this without you.

Special thanks to my advisor, mentor, and inspiration, Dr. D. Soyini Madison. Dr. Madison's patient and careful guidance has influenced and shaped all of my graduate work and has greatly enhanced the many incarnations of this project in the field, on the page, and on the stage. Soyini, thank you for lovingly teaching me my life's work: to appreciate the extraordinary in the ordinary; I am always writing to you.

Many thanks also to my committee, whose generous support, feedback, encouragement and critiques spurred this project forward. My joyful thanks to Della Pollock, whose passionate pursuit of the politics of performance has sharpened my writing, thinking, and teaching more than I can ever say. Thanks to Carole Blair, whose rigorous interrogations of place have taught me to question surrounding structures and structures of power. Thanks to Robbie Cox, who has taught me the equal importance of political commitment, critical analysis, and loving devotion to our shared home region. I especially want to thank Dr. Genna Rae McNeil for joining the committee when we needed her most and for her careful reading, questions, and insights from a much-welcomed historical perspective—what a delight it is to know you.

My thanks to Derek Goldman, our "ghosted" committee member from afar, whom I miss so much—thank you for teaching me to love critical performance and for your advice and guidance on many aspects of this project. Also, thanks to Dr. Beverly Whitaker Long, who taught me a passion for performing literature and who convinced me to come to Carolina in the first place.

Joseph, thank you for your love, laughter, and support during these first months of our marriage and last months of my writing. I thank my God in my every remembrance of you.

Thanks to my grandparents Tom and Doris Little, who have lovingly guided and supported me through every moment of my life. Grandaddy, thank you for teaching me storytelling—whenever I get up to tell any story, I am thinking of us. And to my colleagues, teachers, and friends, without whose help this project would not have been possible: Angie Dyson, Matt Spangler, SaRAH! Kocz, Chris Chiron, Pamela Sunstrum, Rob Hamilton, Bill Balthrop, Victoria Dowd, Niku Arbabi, Kathy Maboll, Mark Robinson, Rob Roberts, Kelly Huckaby, Wordshed Productions, and the Graduate School and the faculty and staff of The Department of Communication Studies at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Thank you Abba Father, for bringing me this far.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

When I was eight years old, my second grade English teacher gave us a special spelling bee word—the longest word in the English dictionary. The test was to be able to pronounce it, and each of us received extra credit for being able to spell it:

Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanioconiosis

Also listed in medical journals as a scientific term for the coal miners' disease commonly known as "black lung," to me it was an exciting but obscure bit of trivia. I learned that day a second-grader's understanding of what "black lung" was—a sickness caused by breathing in small particles of dust in underground mines. It was many years later and well into my current graduate work before I fit the larger and lived pieces of this term together: images of older men wheezing in laughter and coughing fits in the back booths of a local diner; watching the asthmatic convulsions of a grandfather in the film Margaret's Museum, his having to be beaten and turned hourly to loosen the congealed mucus and grit in his lungs; pausing in the doorway of the Piccadilly restaurant in Kingsport to allow a white-haired man pass by in a wheelchair, sipping oxygen through a nose straw; and now, hearing the narratives of coal miners from the mountainous Appalachian corner of Wise and Lee Counties in southwestern Virginia.

For over three years I have been listening to coal. During this time I have gotten to know a small group of primarily disabled coal miners in southwestern Virginia. Their stories are powerful, poignant, and deeply embedded in the ambiguities of daily living with death in the mines. The complex web of social and kinship networks, body politics, and economic in/stability is wound around one substance, coal, and their daily *doing* of working in the mines, even as that same work has un-*done* these miners in so many ways (severed limbs, dis-abled bodies, and the wounding of watching those you love be crushed before your eyes). Their stories are often silenced under a dominant narrative of the simple mountain life, a narrative that undercuts, covers over, and devalues the rich textures of this culture because they are seen as a *simple* people: simple ways, simple problems, and simple brains.

In the low-wall coal mines of southwestern Virginia, men and women ride with heads bent sideways on thin mechanized cars through passageways sometimes 28-36 inches high. Mud and coal entangled in hair and ears, under nails, rubbed permanently into knees…deep breaths at any moment contain pieces of this place and the threat of methane gas traces. They move, shovel, and drill through brittle openings "no higher than [a] table sometimes they're workin in, these caves / and miles and miles underground they go down and then out along it / They, uh, they learn to be a part of it," as my stepfather Wayne Lanthorn said. Literally inhaling place,

> Wayne: Their lungs are filled with the / with the dust from the coal.
> And then they put what they call this rock dust thing to keep the gas down
> so it doesn't explode. / That gets in their lungs.
> All the, so you can hear them breathe, you almost feel the mines, they're still breathing
> the mines, kind of.

Despite their injuries and place-imposed diseases, many miners still dream—in rest and in waking—of returning to the mines. They excitedly interrupt my stepfather in conversation when he asks, "Do you still dream about being in—" with "Oh, yeah! Workin' at, workin' right in there, healthy / Workin' / Go right back in if I could."

Inside this dangerous womb, surrounded by "constant wet" and "pitch black" when the generators fail, "it's always menacing." You learn to listen—not just look—to the coal. Its whispers are portents of life or death:

> Wayne: But they can hear the rocks / cr-cracking you know, they hear the rocks cracking. And then,
> as one fella told me this year sometime, / you've got to learn to listen to the / rock.
> Sometimes it makes a sound, and you can tell it's a bad sound.
> Sometimes a sound's just a shifting.

Dug an hour's crawl deep into the earth, these miners' daily labor serves as an embodied metaphor for the larger identities of surrounding families and communities who are equally tied to this black rock.

In this place, person bonds with earth literally—like the unclaimed and unidentifiable excess tissue remaining from post-9/11 or Oklahoma City bombing sites, flesh and rock become one in rock-falls, cave-ins, and methane gas explosions. As Wayne said, they walk into what might properly be called a grave, where "more than several that have seen the other workers killed / and carried em out, carried parts of them out." This is sacred

ground. Dealing with death and loss is a daily ritual. The cracking rock above warns of immanent danger, and sometimes rats will guide them to safety. "Banged up" and scarred, my stepfather says that

> Wayne: Even though they've all been in a rock fall, they've all been there, almost killed, they've all been
> smashed up, and they go back in again. And you know
> these rock falls and stuff, and…
> And then they all have their stories about, "Well, / sittin there eatin' lunch and a, you know, two ton rock came down right beside me."
> (*he mocks asking the miner*) "Well, what did you do?"
> (*he mocks the miner's response*) "Well, we jumped around a little bit and then we finished lunch and just
> moved on, you know, kind of pressed on." I mean remarkable, like, you almost lose your life, but it is a part that is so inculcated to them that / it's just a part of it, for them.

In her Appalachian ethnography A Space on the Side of the Road, Kathleen Stewart asks us to "imagine the kind of place where, when something happens, people make sense of it not by constructing an explanation of what happened but by offering accounts of its impacts, traces, and signs" (Stewart 57). Rock falls, deaths, techniques of timbering passed from father to son to son, listening to the coal to "sound" the roof for pockets of methane behind ("If it sounds like a drum, you know not to go under it. It has a ring to it"). Coal daily brings together the bodies of men and women who form a type of place attachment like no other (Timbering). The strong relationships forged between miners in these dark spaces are intimately connected with the daily work of "going in" together:

> Wayne: There's a remarkable camaraderie among them / that I really, admire.
> They have nicknames and / all that stuff for each other, and they joke and uh
> that kind of thing. And I think that's to offset the danger, I'm fairly convinced you know.
> So they just get into denial about the danger… Unfortunately, then when they're hurt
> you know…all that camaraderie ends. / They maintain very little contact with each other.
> They're very anxious when they run into each other in the waiting room (*in Wayne's office*) if they haven't seen each other in a long time. They make nervous chatter out there, I can kind of hear em
> talk again about the mines and who you've seen. I guess those are natural sort of things. But they don't, they don't like it, I don't think, too much, they don't like
> being reminded about what they / what they used to do or were able to do or all that.

In the mines there is a dialogic "relationship with you and your men [sic]," Wayne told me. But once daily work is severed—due to a lost limb or other injury in the mines—this talk ends, as does the narrative space of belonging between former miners as they "make nervous chatter" and are "anxious when they run into each other."

I am fascinated with these men and women—their stories are full of pain, passion, and resolute devotion to a *place* that they imagine as a character. Place is a body that they once communicated with and, after disability, long to return to once again. Growing up on a farm in northeast Tennessee very close to the Virginia border and only a half hour drive from many of the miners I interviewed for this study, I understand what it means to love a place. I was an only child growing up, and my formative years were filled with imagined adventures climbing into the trees, swinging from sinewy branches, building forts, swimming in the creek, and harassing the neighbors' cattle. I also grew up in a household of abuse and violence, and I came to see the house and the land as a silent co-witness *with* me to the psychopathic and alcoholic unpredictability of my father. My childhood narrative as I tell it is a survivor story every bit as much as it is my origin tale. And I find myself returning to the physical land I grew up on to remember what *we* experienced.

So when the miners began to describe the coal mines to me, with all the love and affection and tender care of someone describing to you their spouse or parent, I could understand. In my own way, I have known place as a friend and an important character in my life and my history. These miners went beyond my experiences in their stories—they told me of a place that breathes, speaks, moves, and consumes them. Even after their injuries, many of them said they long to return to the mines. Similar to my return trips to the land on which I grew up, coal miner Earl Scott was drawn to the site of a former coal mine in his hometown of St. Charles. He took me to the filled-in site of the old "P&P" mine, where two of his and his wife's closest friends were killed in an explosion in the 1970's. He looked at the cairn of rock and dirt that covered the mine with the same expression as when he described seeing his old mining buddy and mentor, Haggie Barnett, crippled up in the waiting room of their doctor's office. Seeing both the body of the mines and the body of Haggie was "like medicine" to him—an elixir of presence that gave him a sense of continuity with the past and community in the present.

My story is not the point here, but it is my starting point. While my embodied experiences are central to this study, I have attempted to separate my own experiences from those of the miners so as not to conflate my relationship with place and theirs. With this caution to myself, I am drawn to ask: How is Appalachian coal mining culture in southwest Virginia intimately linked with the body of the mines—what I call the "mines-body"? This

term is taken from the insistence by many miners of calling a single mine site "a mines." One does not go into "a mine" in coal mining vernacular—"a mines" is always narrated in the plural. Following Michael B. Montgomery and Joseph S. Hall's Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English (2004), I see Appalachian language as playfully unrestrained by "proper" rules of grammar. These miners' colloquial terms allow me to understand more about mining culture and spaces than "correct" grammar would otherwise allow. Entering as co-witness with these miners rather than panoptic and distanced observer, their term "a mines" reveals the always already multiple and pervasive presence of mining spaces as well as the interconnected nature of coal mines. A single mine has many rooms (according to the room and pillar system), and many mines may run through a single vein or seam of coal. What does it mean that at any moment, community members aboveground may walk over coal miners working three miles beneath their feet? What sort of relationship to place does working cheek-to-coal engender for coal miners? How does this relationship perform coal mining culture?

To address this question, I study the relationship between low-wall coal miners (working in tunnels 28-36 inches high) and the land in which they work. Coal miners describe the mines as having a living and speaking body. The miners' unique configuration of mining space as a *body* is central to miners' conceptions of their work, the ways they negotiate and construct their own identities in relation to the mines, and how they later cope with disability as separation from a community of other miners *and* from the mines with which they have formed a sustained relationship.

Other questions, of course, ensue: What is Appalachian coal mining culture in southwest Virginia? For those mining communities in and near Wise County, VA, what is the multidimensional status of bodies whose way of life is the coal? How is identity intimately linked to daily, bodily interaction with coal? How does the body of the landscape speak back to the bodies of the miners who enter it? In what ways does coal mark the bodies of miners and their families—physically, metaphorically, and discursively? What histories are caught up in this single substance? How do miners and mining communities perform Appalachia? This dissertation is a partial and incomplete gesture towards addressing some of these questions. As critical performance ethnography, my research includes both written and performed original scholarship.

I. Overview and Purpose

The purpose of this research is to study the relationship between low-wall coal miners in southwestern VA and the landscape in which they work, paying particular attention to the daily performances of coal mining, and how these practices influence/shape identity, memory, and relationship to place. The study will offer a means for coal miners to speak to and for the communities and localities out of which they come. The practices identified will be used to develop conclusions about the unique relationship that coal miners have with the Appalachian landscape and how Appalachia as a region, and coal miners in particular, are reductively described by those outside this region. Of particular interest to me is how disabled coal miners cope with the loss of daily life in the mines and the radical changes in their daily embodied lives.

The representations we see and read are always partial, incomplete, and perspectival renderings of events, and "truth" is cycled through multiple and sometimes hegemonic lenses. My dissertation first grounds the reader in the context of southern Appalachian cultural history: how has this region been shaped by popular media as abject and Other? It is, I argue, a postcolonial space. I next investigate coal miners' unique understanding of the mines as having a living body, character, and language. This relationship is central to miners' conceptions of themselves as Appalachians living in dis-abled, mocked, and forgotten bodies. How do miners cope with daily living with death in the mines? Once they become disabled, how do they cope with separation from the mines? Finally, I discuss my original play Out of the Dark: The Oral Histories of Appalachian Coal Miners and its effect on these miners' lives. Following D. Soyini Madison (2005), public performance opens academic research to audiences who would not otherwise engage this knowledge through written works.

Rather than generating generalizable claims, this study is a "thick description" of individuals' oral histories that critically examines some of the sustaining performative structures of and relationships between "able" and "dis-abled" coal miners (Geertz qtd. in Rubin Rubin 8). Consistent with ethnographic projects, the research will use the voices of the participants, thereby foregrounding their own comments, perspectives, and ways of seeing. This is in keeping with Madison's concern about not "privileging the written work at the expense of shunning the poetics, oral rhythms, and improvisational expressions of

subaltern communities" (Madison "Possibilities" 277). Similarly, Conquergood argues for "another way of knowing that is grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection: 'knowing how,' and 'knowing who.' This is a view from the ground level, in the thick of things" (Conquergood "Interventions" 146). Thus, the focus of this project is on the local knowledge of the participants. As a performance ethnographer, I seek to create performances that will challenge reductive definitions of Appalachia as an impoverished, passive, and partial region. Following Conquergood, live performance serves as a rigorous scholarly compliment to written research.

I have spoken with 18 current or former coal miners thus far and have heard many others' narratives second-hand through my stepfather, a clinical psychologist who for the past ten years has interviewed Virginia miners for disability status. In addition, I observed and/or spoke with over 30 miners when I participated in mining operations while visiting Deep Mine 36 in Virginia. From other miners who have heard about my interest I have received a flood of videos, copies of newspaper articles, and second-hand "tell her this for me" stories—these are miners I have never met, many of their gifts given with the addendum, "Give this to the little girl…anything you can give the little girl to help change the way people think about us over here." These miners' bodies, scarred by rock falls and stained black by the coal itself, are emplaced in a region whose very dirt speaks a complex history of a culture dug out of and back into the ground.

II. Implications

Appalachian novelist Gurney Norman says, "America *needs* hillbillies…Mountain people are the last group in America it is acceptable to ridicule. No one would stand for it for a minute if you took any other group—Native Americans, African-Americans, Hispanics, women—and held it up as an example of everything that is low and brutal and mean. But somehow it's O.K. to do that with hillbillies" (qtd. in Billings 9). The study allows miners to speak to and for the communities and localities out of which they come, effecting lasting and positive change in the lives of Appalachians by complicating dominant reductive narratives about this region.

This dissertation has profound implications for labor studies regarding sexual harassment, disability, and compensation. I study women miners' covert and overt acts of resistance against sexual harassment in the mines. Women miners' narratives of subjugation

and empowerment open a dialogue between men and women miners and expose sexual harassment to public scrutiny. Many disabled miners are abandoned by the companies to which they devoted their lives and shunted by the insurance companies that once claimed to help them. I highlight the silenced narratives of miners who, through the debilitating effects of black lung, literally *have no breath* with which to speak. The study benefits miners who are denied compensation unjustly.

This study investigates the ties between corrupt local politicians and medical leaders, youth drug culture, and local poverty in these coal mining communities. The dissertation implicates those larger networks of corruption that bankrupted and closed hospitals in Lee and Wise counties in Virginia, forcing disabled miners to drive over an hour into Tennessee for the nearest emergency medical treatment. This study aids in current efforts to improve local health care and bring a long-term drug rehabilitation clinic to these self-imploding communities.

III. Methodology: Performance Ethnography

Victor Turner shifted ethnography away from the universal towards the particular, towards the language of performance and drama, to see human beings as actors, homo performans: ”humanity as performer, a culture-inventing, social-performing, self-making and self-transforming creature” (qtd. in Conquergood “Rethinking” 187). I use Performance Ethnography as a methodological frame for my research. Following Madison’s Critical Ethnography: Methods, Ethics, and Performance, ethnographic methodology is inherently intertwined with cultural and critical theories. Theories on memory and narrative analysis are ingrained with all of my methods, and throughout the dissertation I blend theory and method in my discussions of coal miners’ narratives. Performance is a method of inquiry in this dissertation, seeing performance in Dwight Conquergood’s multifoliate understanding as

1. Accomplishment—a making of art and a remaking of culture, embodiment, participatory understanding, engaged knowledge, artistic form and process, practical consciousness, creativity, performance as a way of knowing.
2. Analysis—an interpretation of art and culture; thinking about, through, and with performance; critical reflection; performance as a lens illuminating the constructed, creative, contingent, and collaborative dimensions of human communication; knowledge from contemplation and comparison; concentrated attention as a way of knowing.

3. Articulation: activism; outreach; connection with communities; application and intervention; action research; rooted in an ethic of reciprocity and exchange; knowledge tested by practice within a community; social commitment, collaboration, and contribution/intervention as ways of knowing: praxis. (Conquergood "Performance Studies" 152)

Performance ethnography asks: Will you put your body on the line for this culture? What are my biases? What are my assumptions? What is my positionality in this research? What is at stake? (There is *always* something at stake in critical ethnography.) How do I deal with the contradictions of the individual lives I interact with? Wrestling with these questions, how then do I represent this culture? In the spirit of Walter Benjamin in "The Task of the Translator," I offer my best *translation* of their lives through performances and written works that are an "echo" of these coal miners' performances *with* me (Benjamin 76). The performance Out of the Dark: The Oral Histories of Appalachian Coal Miners was developed as a staged translation of these miners' stories, my impressions of those stories, and our relationships in co-constructed conversations and excursions together during fieldwork. What I offered, and what we as a cast discovered, in the creation of this performance was an "echo of the original," and I hoped to give, "in [my] own language" of dance, song, movement, symbol, and image "the reverberation of the [first] work in the alien one" (76). Performance moved me to a place where I might live in complicated co-habitation with, beside, and in-between these miners' bodies and narratives and my own. In this space of cohabitation I constantly asked myself: What are the politics of representation? Did I get it right?

Performance ethnography brings performed interpretations of cultures *out* to wider public audiences who would not otherwise engage this knowledge through academic monographs or written ethnographies. In addition, performance ethnography takes these performances *back* to the communities out of which these stories welled in the first place to engage in the hermeneutics of performance. I offer performance as an ongoing dialogue. This research does not place a 'final say' and objective stamp of closure on these miners' lives, saying with smug certitude "this [my written work] *is* who they are." Rather, I engage in a series of hopefully ethical representations (made valid through, as Madison encourages, contextualization, informed consent, and self-reflexivity) that themselves are caught up in a

web of representations enacted *on* Appalachian culture. Out of the Dark is both a re-performance of and an intervention into these miners' stories.

Madison's work with Ghanaian Trokosi wife/slaves illustrates this ethical approach to fieldwork and representation. Through sustained interactions with women and men in Ghanaian communities, self-reflexively positioning her biases and motives, Madison contextualized her/their experiences through performance works both in the field (2000—her performance in Ghana) and at home (2002—a more political performance at UNC-Chapel Hill aimed primarily at changing US foreign policy). Madison brought Ghanaian community members to her Chapel Hill performance to engage with the performers and audiences in this (ongoing) work. Madison gave each actor a photograph of a particular person in Ghana for them to envision as they formed their characters, and through the rehearsal process and public performance actors were able to deeply and experientially understand others' perspectives and the complex and contradictory entanglements of Trokosi religious/abusive/honoring/enslaving practices. Audiences witnessed and engaged with questions of foreign policy and human rights which might never have been brought to their attention through other mediums. Through live/embodied and written works, Madison performed those individuals who live (and sometimes die) in liminal modes of existence.

I rely heavily on the works of Dwight Conquergood, who says that performance ethnography challenges the ways that knowledge is organized in the academy. Traditionally, empirical observation is detached: critical analysis is achieved from a distance, thinking "about" others as "that" (Conquergood "Performance Studies" 146). This scientific and modern approach threads through qualitative methods courses and haunts communication studies with questions of legitimacy (i.e., "if it's a science, it must be objective"). As Dr. Madison told me in one conversation, performance ethnography is an *art* and a *science*. Conquergood says that performance ethnography takes a more hands-on approach, grounded in co-participation. Questions focus on 'how' and 'who,' searching for what is ephemeral and temporal. Donna Haraway calls this a "view from a body" versus an objective and distanced "view from above" (qtd. in Conquergood "Performance Studies" 146). Foucault encourages us to seek out "subjugated knowledges," those ways of knowing ignored by dominant epistemologies because they are active and outside of books—they evade transcription and thus evade legitimation (qtd. in Conquergood "Performance Studies" 146).

Conquergood says that we should look to what cannot be spelled out in words, to the performance of "silence, blank stares, arched eyebrows, body tension" (Conquergood "Performance Studies" 146). Similarly, James Scott writes in Domination and the Arts of Resistance that we should look to the gaps in conversation that might reveal what he calls a hidden transcript.

Conquergood says that Geertz's model of the traditional ethnographer resembles an uninvited invader. Contrarily, he stresses the ethnographer's role as co-performer. Conquergood notes how performance ethnography investigates the entanglements between performance and texts, and he cites the work of ethnographer Kathleen Stewart's A Space on the Side of the Road, who employs performative writing to discuss how the residents of Mingo county began to hang up 'NO TRESSPASSING' signs outside their front doors (for fear of being sued by dog-bitten neighbors) while simultaneously performing against these written imperatives by continuing to visit one another on front porches. Conquergood says that the signs reframed these social performances, which in turn "reclaim, short-circuit, and resignify the citational force of signed imperatives" (151). One "Welcome to Kentucky" sign that I encountered during my fieldwork is another example of these text-performance entanglements: a friendly welcome sign on one border between Kentucky and southwest Virginia was regularly shot through from both sides of the border with buckshot, and "Welcome to Kentucky" now reads in red paint "Welcome to Hell," showing an ongoing political dialogue enacted at/on/through the site of this artifact.

Fieldwork Methods and Experience

While informal interviews have been ongoing since the summer of 2003, formal research was conducted during an eight-month period from September, 2004 through May, 2005, with follow-up interviews through April, 2006. During the research, I conducted interviews and participated in mine activities by visiting a mine and observing and engaging in mining operations. Interviews were a blend of unstructured and semistructured questions: I introduced topics and guided the interview with specific questions but made it explicit that conversational partners were free to "go off on tangents" and side-stories. I told participants that my main interest was to present and talk about what they were interested in discussing, not my own agenda. This is a cultural study, investigating the "shared understandings, taken-for-granted rules of behavior and standards of value, and mutual expectations" of

Appalachian mining culture (Rubin Rubin 6). The study is topical to the extent that it explicates the process of coal mining within the context of the life histories of conversational partners, asking about the details of major life events and the relationships that led them to coal mining and sustained them through disability (6).

I prefer the term "conversational partner" (following Rubin and Rubin) rather than "interviewee." Conversational partners are not "objects" of research, but subjects with equal authority over subject matter and flow of the interview. Interviews have been tape- and video-recorded. Observation periods were documented through detailed field notes, tape- and video-recording and were followed-up with interviews during which clarification was sought. Most interviews lasted from 1 - 3 hours. As a qualitative study, interviews have been conducted as "extensions of ordinary conversations," and I was interested primarily in the "understanding, knowledge, and insights" of my conversational partners, allowing the content of the interview to flow according to the desires, knowledge and feelings of the interviewee (6). Many times, the emotional tone of the conversation revealed nuances in content and changed the meaning of what was said—listening carefully, I attempted to mark not only what was said but to hear the meaning of what the miners communicated to me through gesture, pause, tone, and what was left unsaid.

I have interviewed and observed approximately 30 coal miners over the course of the research period. Conversational partners were working-age adults, ranging from 30-65 years of age. Due to the disproportionate nature of gender distribution in coal mining jobs, most interviewees are male, but I have also sought out and interviewed two women miners and heard the second-hand stories of deceased women miners from their living male relatives. Due to my interest in finding local, specific examples that will demonstrate a variety of interactions with work and the landscape, I have not deliberately sought a similarity between these participants' descriptions and experiences. All current and former coal miners living in southwest VA in addition to those working in administrative positions within coal companies were eligible to participate. Over the course of interviewing, participant selection broadened to include spouses, siblings, and older family members (especially for second and third generation miners). I concluded my research when interviews reached a saturation point of repetition.

Gaining access to this community of miners was fairly easy—my stepfather served as a primary contact, and participants were contacted and selected using a snowballing method. I invited my primary contacts to notify their friends and acquaintances about the study—I gave the miners I interviewed a small card to give to their friends. The card explained the project in brief and my interest in interviewing others about their experiences in the mines. Other current and former coal miners contacted me, and the number of participants grew.

I understand that one person's experiences are no more intrinsically true than another's, embracing what Trinh Minh-ha described in "My Grandmother's Story" as truth that is truer than fact (Minh-ha 481). For example, when Earl described St. Charles as once having approximately 22 taxi cabs, and his friend Daniel reported that there were close to 100, the historical truth of "what was actually the case" was less important than the truth value to these two individuals: what does it mean to Earl that there were 22, or to Daniel that there were 100?

I transcribed the interviews following models by Madison (Critical Ethnography, "That Was My Occupation") and Pollock (Telling Bodies, Performing Birth). Any mode of transcription is political and masks or privileges particular text-context relations. It was important to honor the individual rhythms and phrasing of the miners' speech as I transcribed. The content of our conversations was intimately tied to the context of our performances together. Therefore I tried, as much as possible, to translate the miners' voice and body in co-articulation with the words said. I wrote towards the poetics of their speech, transcribing down and across the page. Line breaks and spaces indicate the natural pauses and rhythms of the speaker. For the sake of clarity, some pauses are indicated by slash marks ("/") in lieu of line breaks. Punctuation within lines indicates briefer pauses, and italics indicate stresses. Spelling follows pronunciation. Ellipses and brackets indicate where portions of the narrative have been omitted or re-ordered for clarity and brevity. Tone and gestures are described in parenthesis and italics. In all this, I hope to honor the particular rhythms of these miners' rich mountain speech while offering my best *translation* of our embodied and temporal conversations into this linear and written performance (Benjamin 76).

This process yielded over 1,200 pages of transcription. I then followed Creswell's method of coding the research into story themes: women miners, smells of mine, wet/damp

in mines, dreams about the mines, etc. (Creswell 57). I organized these themes and arranged them according to the most prevalent and recurrent concerns. Selecting some of the most poignant stories, I compiled a first draft script (about 250 pages) for the live performance. Three months of editing honed this script down to 24 pages, and once the cast and I entered rehearsals the script expanded outward to 28 pages based on the collaborative rehearsal process, which I describe in Chapter Nine. As actors learned more about their own characters and as I introduced more videos and additional stories into rehearsals, we as a cast decided what stories to further edit out and what stories to add back in to the performance.

Coal miners received a complete copy of all interview transcripts, if desired, and will receive a copy of the final research document and video of the performance. All of my interviewees were invited to the live performance in Chapel Hill, and with fellowship funding from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Graduate School, I will be able to bring a video re-performance of the play to the miners in Wise, VA. No monetary or other inducement was offered.

Participants were not at either physical or mental risk at any time during the course of the research process. However, participants were asked to discuss potentially difficult issues relating to work, family, and individual and community identity. The participants were informed that they were under no obligation to respond to any of the interview questions and that they had the freedom to leave conversations or end observation periods at any point during the process. During participant-observation when I entered the mines, there was consensual risk of bodily harm—I signed a waver of my rights to sue in case of injury when I entered the mines, as do all coal miners who enter these spaces. There were no illegal activities involved or discussed during the research process. There was no deception used in any research questions or techniques. I asked the participants to read and discuss a project outline prior to the beginning of our conversations, in order that they understand the larger scope of the project and their role in the research process. I asked all participants to sign an IRB-approved informed consent form.

Field notes, cassette tapes, and any other documents pertaining to the gathering of data have been kept secure in my homes[1] in Kingsport, TN, Chapel Hill, NC, and Atlanta,

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[1] Because of fieldwork travel, doctoral exam completion, and my recent marriage, I lived in and between each of these states during 2005.

GA. Participants chose whether they wished for their real names to be used in final presentation or publication of research, and names of participants who wished to remain anonymous have been kept in a separate, secure location and remain confidential. Uncoded, "raw" data has been shared only with my advisor and dissertation committee members. Names, addresses, and specific job titles/companies have been changed and/or removed at the participants' discretion.

Ethics of Representation

What are the ethics and responsibilities involved in performing the stories of another person and culture? What is the process of creating a performance based on the collective stories of a community of people? Storytellers as ethnographers have a responsibility to the co-performative witnesses whom they represent. If one makes the claim (as ethnographers do) to tell the stories of other people, then those stories must be faithfully true to the narratives that were related to them by their informants. *Faithfully true* can become slippery territory, and deserves further unpacking—for this I follow the ethics of Norman Denzin, as he writes in Interpretive Interactionism, Second Edition.

The performance art of Anna Deavere Smith is a useful example of how one journalist-turned-ethnographer performs the stories of individuals radically different from each other and from Smith's own background: in her performance Fire in the Mirror, a solo storytelling performance crafted from a series of monologues from eyewitness interviews of the racial conflict in Crown Heights, Brooklyn on August 19, 1991, Smith performs the stories of the Reverend Al Sharpton, police officers, rabbis, mothers, fathers, gang members, and African American cultural critic Angela Davis, just to name a few (Denzin Interpretive 13). In Smith's performances, she assumes the voice, bodily stance, and character of the individuals whose stories she tells.

Professional storyteller Milbre Burch told me that she shapes many of her storytelling monologues and performances after Smith's aesthetic, which involves taking on the persona of the original teller and translating the original teller's words as transcribed from taped interviews (i.e., pauses, "um"s and "uh"s are included in such monologues). Such performers do not attempt to "put *on"* another person's way of being (looking at their mannerisms from the *outside in*) in a derisive imitation but understand these individuals from the *inside out*, immersing themselves in the informant's social/political/economic/familial

situation which shaped those mannerisms in the first place. As D. Soyini Madison told me in a rehearsal for her show Is it a Human Being or a Girl? (2002), to perform another person's life, you must find a way inside of that person's experiences—his/her places, spaces, contexts, and locations. In this way, an ethnographer comes to deeply know and understand the circumstances of an individual and, immersed as such, will *act out* of that understanding versus *acting on* a character with false-seeming mannerisms which in other circumstances might be interpreted as making fun of a particular person or group of people.

Public performance is a particularly resonant medium for communicating the values, beliefs, struggles, and desires of a group of people (filtered, as always and inevitably, through the political consciousness and subjectivity of the performance ethnographer). This is because, unlike print or more formal staged dramas, performance "invites [audiences] to become participants, not mere spectators, in the public dramas that define meaningful, engaged life in society today" Denzin Interpretive 9). Cornel West has observed that Smith's Fires in the Mirror serves as "a grand example of how art can constitute a public space that is perceived by people as empowering rather than disempowering," and thus Denzin follows, "blacks, gang members, the police, and the Jewish community all come together and talk in this play. The drama crosses racial boundaries" (13). Following the work of Dwight Conquergood, such performances "create spaces for give-and-take, doing more than turning the other into the object of a voyeuristic, fetishistic, custodial, or paternalistic gaze" (14).

Norman Denzin writes about the deep ethics involved in qualitative research as a performance ethnographer. Denzin advocates research and ethnography that examines "the relationships between personal troubles (such as wife battering or alcoholism) and the public policies and public institutions that have been created to address these troubles" and performances that "work[] outward from the biography of the person" (2). This is the same work that Burch continues in her performance of Bradford; Meeting Martin, where she interprets the story of a homeless man in Philadelphia (a retelling of the story of St. Martin set in the urban streets of Philadelphia). Through this story, Burch brings a politically charged message through the biography of one person (himself a *true* account and character, though his persona is a fabrication based on actual circumstances of homelessness and neglect, reinforced by policies and public institutions as well as social mores that, in effect, teach that these people *should* be neglected and ignored). In her performance, Burch

presents a storied retelling "that seek[s] the truth of life's fictions via evocation rather than explanation or analysis…[where] ethnographers, audiences, and performers meet in a shared field of experience, emotion, and action" (16). Burch demonstrates the search "to understand how power and ideology operate through and across systems of discourse, cultural commodities, and cultural texts" and, like Denzin, "asks how words, texts, and their meanings play a pivotal part in the culture's 'decisive performances of race, class [and] gender'" (4).

Denzin argues that, as performance artists who advocate for a particular group or individual, "we must grasp, understand, and interpret correctly the perspectives and experiences of those persons who are served by applied programs if we are to create solid and effective programs" (3). Denzin recognizes that the ethnographer is not an "objective, politically neutral observer who stands outside and above the study of the social world" but is a "gendered, historical self…historically and locally situated within the very processes being studied" (3). As such, the ethnographer recognizes his/her own subjectivity and political consciousness as a mediator and interpreter of others' voices. Guiding all agendas, in a feminist, communitarian ethical model, are "the four nonnegotiable journalistic norms of accuracy, nonmaleficence, the right to know, and making one's moral position public" (11).

At the core of my performance work is a commitment to Madison's "performance of possibilities," in which "the possible suggests a movement culminating in creation and change" (Madison Critical 172). The performance of possibilities is "the active, creative work that weaves the life of the mind with being mindful of life, of merging the text with the world, of critically traversing the margin and the center, and of opening more and different paths for enlivening relations and spaces" (172). Madison says that the performance of possibilities conjoins a subject's voice with history and experience, stressing the situatedness of human experience. Performance has the potential—and ethical obligation—to provoke change. Through "*actual engagement*," Madison says performance brings audience, actors, and subjects into an interrogative field that encourages involved and enlightened citizenship (174). She writes,

> Performance becomes the vehicle by which we travel to the worlds of subjects and enter domains of intersubjectivity that problematize how we categorize who is *us* and who is *them*, and how we see *ourselves* with other and different eyes… In a

> performance of possibilities, moral responsibility and artistic excellence culminate in an active intervention to break through unfair closures, remake the possibility for new openings, and bring the margins to a shared center. (176-8)

The performance of possibilities is living and active. It intervenes on injustices while guided by an ethics of "caution and a strategy informed by cultural politics" (178).

IV. Knowing Bodies, Body Knowledge: An Epistemology of Body Witnessing

In my fieldwork, I have witnessed bodies who "have endured and not," bodies that are "on a different line than mine" and that were "made flesh with my own" (Madison Human Being). The conception of body-to-body witnessing that guides a majority of my fieldwork and writing/performance is built on models by Dwight Conquergood, D. Soyini Madison, Della Pollock, Margrit Shildrick, and Kelly Oliver. Several other discourses on the body inform and deepen this notion by deconstructing how the body is socially constructed, how these "bodies on a different line" are separated from "normal" bodies through discourses that position them as abject, postcolonial, monstered, excessively fat, feminized. For the coal miners with whom I speak and perform, identities are constructed from self-reflexive embodied relationships with each other and with the coal mines-as-character, what I call the "mines-body." A body-centered perspective asks, how can embodied performance re-think, upturn, disrupt, dissolve, or (with Savigliano) *dance through* binary dichotomies?

The Body as Epistemology

My project understands the body as an epistemology—a way of knowing and understanding others in the co-constructed space created body-to-body between informant and researcher as co-performing witnesses in ethnographic interviews. Kristen Langellier and Eric Peterson stress that researchers cannot 'quit negotiations,' 'stop construing,' or 'evacuate' our bodies, as they are "our access and our means of expression" (Peterson Langellier 146). Conquergood says that performance ethnography takes as both its method and its object of analysis "the experiencing body in time, place, and history" (Conquergood "Rethinking" 187). As co-performing witness, my body is deeply implicated in this study. Many miners said that the mines cannot be explained fully but must be experienced—this place is known in and through the body, through their breath, through their walk. As a mining researcher for only three years thus far, it is a knowledge that I do not have the body

to understand fully: I have not entered that year-upon-year relationship with this place to be able to understand.

I also have a woman's body, which has *its place*, and for many men miners that place is decidedly *not* in the mines. But this gendered valuation is contradicted by subcultures—by miner Jimmy Castle, who respects women but still sees them as the world's most precious "commodity." What is the status of my white, female, petite, privileged, Tennessee/Appalachian, heterosexual, married body (marked recently by the diamond engagement ring sitting on my left hand, itself a product of coal) in relation to these miners' bodies—female and male, African-American and white, many disabled and in constant pain, Virginia/Appalachian, most being heterosexual and depending on marital partners who faithfully "stand by" them when their crippled bodies cannot stand at all?

Fieldwork-as-Witnessing

At a conference on Diaspora Performance given at Northwestern University in the Summer of 2003, Dwight Conquergood said to me that we are co-performing *witnesses* with others. Conquergood says performance studies privileges the body as a site of knowing (Conquergood "Rethinking" 2). Performance studies rejects the Cartesian mind/body split, which envisions thought as epistemically and morally superior to embodied, sensual experience and desire, construing corporeality as low, irrational, and dangerous, inferior to the higher powers of reason and logic (2). Performance ethnography demands that I immerse my body in fieldwork—into the lives, homes, and spaces that miners inhabit and construct in various material places. Conquergood extends Malinowski and Geertz's methodologies into a performance framework of bodily witnessing *with* others: the very disciplinary authority and rigor of ethnographic work comes in the depth of bodily-known experience performed with a culture, "established by the time, commitment, and risks [bodily/physical/psychological] a researcher takes in order to acquire cultural understanding" (3). Co-performative witnessing demands body-centeredness, a recognition of the *doing* of ethnography through speaking-with (dialogic), listening, and acting together, acknowledging the sensuality of speech (as Trinh Minh-ha elaborates in her work) in the extralinguistic "saying" (as Madison writes in "That Was My Occupation") and co-temporality of performed, three-dimensional bodily experience (as Butler and Michael Jackson write) (4).

Dori Laub understands the witness as not merely someone who sees but one who *listens*. What does it mean to listen to Appalachia? To listen to coal? To Dori Laub, the witness is not *see-er* but *listener* who is participant and *co-owner* of narrated trauma (Laub 62). To listen is to be changed—to be transformed by and co-create experience with another person. The empathetic response of experiencing with others forces events, places, objects, lives, and histories *into* the body of the witness. Rather than looking from afar at others, the witness *goes in* to that messy space, experiencing the dual role of witness for another and for herself.

Embodied Ethnographic Performance

A body-centered perspective also witnesses to the stories of subjects through research that privileges the bodies and embodied contexts out of which those stories and experiences come. Through live performance, a body-centered approach refuses to erase the body in the shift from ethnographic method (fieldwork) to ethnographic rhetoric (the published work) (4). Indeed, performance ethnography claims the rhetorical force and power of live performance. Moving a personal narrative from an interpersonal interview setting to a staged performance, we do not leave embodied life but extend and transform it (Peterson Langellier 146). Performance ethnography works from the site of the body, allowing an individual to embody another person's perspective such that her bodily experience "becomes you" (Anna Smith xxiii). In embodied performance I "put my body on the line for performance," to allow my body to become "the register of someone else's power" for "good purposes" (Madison Human; Pollock Telling 23; Madison Human).

Embodied Writing

I write from an embodied perspective and write from the body. My writing follows several models, including Pollock's conception of performing writing in her article "Performing Writing" and book Telling Bodies/Performing Birth. Such tensive writing is further modeled in Madison's article "Performing Theory/Embodied Writing," a performance of theory as staged dialogic interaction. Savigliano's Tango and the Political Economy of Passion performs the taut and interconnected movements between theory, thick description, and tango performance *as* a dance across the page—writing as dance, tango as writing. Langellier also exemplifies this multitextured method of writing in her essay "Two or Three Things I Know For Sure." Both the performance and written ethnography situate the

materials temporally and historically and present them as "slices of ongoing interaction" (Denzin Interpretive 82).

Following Denzin, interpretation is always "unfinished, provisional, and incomplete," conducted from within a hermeneutic circle—conclusions will be drawn, but the interpretation is never completed (83). I attempt to write performatively, to create verisimilitude, "a space for the reader to imagine his or her way into the life experiences of another" by capturing through thick description what Merleau-Ponty called the "prose of the world" (99). Rather than separating out description, analysis, and interpretation, as Denzin models, I interweave the "detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another" with critical theory to interpret these individuals' stories (100).

This study is a descriptive analysis resting on native narrative accounts of experiences (130). I enact what Clifford Geertz terms "thick description" that encourages depth, detail, and at-length discussion on the part of interviewees coupled with rich description on the part of the researcher (Rubin Rubin 8). Denzin's interpretive interactionism rejects hypothesis and theory testing, honoring lived experience and recognizing the socially constructed nature of facts. "Objective truth" cannot be found, and noninterpretive tests of a theory can never be made, because both researcher and informants selectively shape, edit, and construct narratives of experiences that then become the "facts" an objective approach so desperately seeks to *purify* through testing (which is itself situated and subjective) (Denzin Interpretive 133). Stories are "symbolic expressions of lived experiences" (134). Fiction is not opposed to truth—"fictions are true, but only within the stories that contain them" (153).

Understanding emerges out of a relationship with another, it requires that "one person enter into the life of another and experience for him- or herself the same or similar experiences as the other (137). Ethnography stands on shared experience, lived knowledges, and *empathy* with co-performative witnesses. To write meaningful interpretation, I understand I must emotionally enter into and be a part of the experiences that I write about. I must be involved, listen, and experience these people's realities with my whole body. Descriptive realism "allows interpretation to emerge from the stories that are told[,]…reveals the conflictual, contradictory nature of lived experience[,] and suggests that no single story or interpretation will fully capture the problematic events that have been studied" (152).

My positionality as a researcher is of one returning to my home to investigate what is viewed from larger American culture as one of its dirtiest, poorest, and most dangerous locations. My personal goals are to dispel these views. I was aware from the beginning of my research that these people and this place were being *mis*represented and abused in the common understanding of Appalachia as the symbol of everything that is dirty and wrong with America, that its history was conflated with the plantation South, and that its people were often assumed to be homogenously racist and dangerous. At the same time, there *is* racism and sexism in these towns and in the mines, there are drugs and violence, and there is corruption in local governments. In this project, I attempt to dispel hegemonic condemnation of Appalachia while balancing what I understand to be the positive and negative, or the poetic and contradictory, aspects of interview partners' stories.

Witnessing: Beyond Recognition

Former miner Harley Colley pushed his arms against his chair's armrests and hoisted his lower body upward in his cushioned seat, trying to get comfortable. I sat opposite him, a table between us, in a particle-board-paneled back room of my stepfather's office in Kingsport. *I was listening.* We had been performing, talking, laughing, sighing together for about two hours. Harley began to talk about the difficulty of gaining workman's compensation:

> Harley: You know my neck was broke but it— / my disks, / they're outa line.
> So they put, a big brace on my neck where it come loose / until I got over it…
> They's, I hurt my lower back too.
> Sometimes it'll pinch down here on my lower back right here, (*he feels his lower back with his hand*)
> and these both legs will go numb, / you know there.
> And that, hip right there my billfold's tryin to go in there, (*he shifts in his seat*) like cause when I drive? / Sittin on it? / It just, like, it'd go numb.
> So, as long as I can keep goin like I have [living with pain without risking paralysis through back surgery].
>
> Hannah: Yeah, / I know.
> (*quickly*) —Well I don't *know.* (*laughs nervously*)
>
> Harley: (*smiles, pauses*) No, you don't know.

In this situation, Harley lovingly taught me that I could understand more about his illness by acknowledging that I could *never* fully comprehend what he had experienced. What is witnessing? How can we witness to what is beyond recognition—to what is both impossible

to understand and yet absolutely necessary to acknowledge? In Witnessing, Kelly Oliver furthers an embodied sense of witnessing that rejects Cartesian dualism. Building on Laub and Felman, Oliver says instead of trying to recognize difference, we should think of "the recognition of what is beyond recognition" (Oliver 9).

Witnessing has a double meaning: eyewitness testimony (first-hand knowledge) and bearing witness to something that is beyond recognition (the un-seeable, the incomprehensible). The tension between these two meanings is the tension between historical fact (verifiable, juridical) and psychological truth (subjectivity), between J.L. Austin's understanding of constative and performative utterances[2] (16). Oliver makes a powerful, unsentimental address toward a loving gaze, love as an enactment of Freud's "working through," motored by performance. Oliver implies that to see with loving eyes is to invite loving response[3]. Subjectivity is a flow of energies between bodies in space and time and sustained through witnessing as a process—an unending and tensive dance between bearing witness to what is seen and what is beyond recognition (20).

Affect in Witnessing

How is affect implicated in Oliver's subject-subject witnessing? Oliver challenges vision that bridges a gap over an empty space between subject and object (for example:

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[2] Constative (to tell about, what can be verified as true or false) and performative (oaths, curses, that which in the naming does something) are outlined in Austin's 1954 lecture on Doing Things With Words. The 'narrative turn' of the late 1970's and 80's stressed that selves are constructed out of stories, but the late 1980's brought the 'performative turn,' especially influenced by Butler's notion of the performative. Butler turns to the body not as an object but as a being in time, not only seen but mobilized and used. The performative turn seeks to unhinge the "mind over matter" model. The performative turn acknowledges the body as a creative *process*. J.L. Austin's notion of performative and constative utterances stresses that naming creates, that naming something makes it come into being—performance is *in* the naming of something as performance (Pollock "Butler").

[3] Building from Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, and Irigaray, "loving looks" can transform an antisocial gaze into looks as "the circulation of social energy" (Oliver 215). These loving looks are what sustain witness and thus subjectivity. Oliver writes: "If we conceive of subjectivity as a process of witnessing that requires response-ability and address-ability in relation to other people, especially through difference, then we will also realize an ethical and social responsibility to those others who sustain us. Rather than seeing others with the objectifying gaze of a self-sufficient subject examining, subordinating, or struggling with the other, we can see others with loving eyes that invite loving response. Reconstructing subjectivity entails reconstructing notions of self, self-reflection, relationships, and love. What is love beyond domination? What is love beyond recognition? It is love as working-through that demands constant vigilance toward response-ability in relationships. The loving eye is a critical eye, always on the lookout for the blind spots that close off the possibility of response-ability and openness to otherness and difference. Love is an ethics of differences that thrives on the adventure of otherness. This means that love is an ethical and social responsibility to open personal and public space in which otherness and difference can be articulated. Love requires a commitment to the advent and nurturing of difference" (Oliver 19-20).

Sartre's accusing *look*, Lacan's alienating *gaze* of misrecognition, and the pornographic *removed* gaze). Space is not a void but full of energies, air, and light—if vision connects us, then vision is proximal, like touch. Building from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology (discussed later), Meltzoff and Moore's understanding of infants' use of proprioceptive motor information and J.J. Gibson's theory of "ecological optics" (which situates vision/sight as one element of a perceptual system), Oliver suggests that relations to other people and to the environment we inhabit/create are forms of exchanging social energy, and that seeing is in part the result of social energies: "what we see is influenced by what we believe about the world…by how we feel about the world and other people"[4] (14). Social energy includes affective energy: D. Robert DeChaine attempts to describe affect as 'bodied forth' in his article "Affect and Embodied Understanding in Musical Experience." DeChaine sees affect as our first and fundamental relationship with the world. Affect is "the *intensity* that allows us to feel. It is something prior to conscious thought…[it] represents an intersection of our bodies and the outside world…the affective power of music lies in its ability to fold the space of lived contexts […] into temporal moments in your lived history'" (DeChaine 86).

Affect flows between people—vision as the flow[5] and circulation of energies is not alienating, Oliver argues, but *connecting*. Vision is one part of "a dynamic system of perception [that] opens up the possibility of address beyond the humiliation, subordination, and objectification of the gaze," a position that enables us to address the subjectivity of Othered others beyond seeing either a familiar or alien reflection of ourselves (Oliver 15). This ability to respond to and address others is the very foundation of subjectivity and the definition of witnessing (15). By training ourselves to be consciously aware of differences in affective energies in relationships, we may enable an interpretive process that opens the possibility of building relationships with others. Moreover it is our ethical obligation (our response-ability) to develop affective awareness and to pay "living attention" to others, as Tessa Brennan says (Brennan qtd. in Oliver 196). Such a body-centered awareness is crucial in witnessing the stories of coal miners as they communicate meaning through affective

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[4] Stone echoes this sentiment in Black Sheep and Kissing Cousins with her discussion on how family stories shape what we see in others.

[5] One is reminded of Turnerian flow and communitas in From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play.

energies comprehended by and through the body, communicating meanings beyond linguistic or rational explanation.

Intercorporeal Witnessing

What does it mean to witness body-to-body? Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception rethinks subjectivity through the body. Merleau-Ponty says that fleshy thickness and the skin's reversible permeability make "intercorporiety[6]" possible as communication between the self and the world of others (Oliver 199). Merleau-Ponty imagines vision as connecting bodies and part of a system of perception, operating in spaces "filled with the flesh of the world" (201). He suggests a "vision-touch system" of interconnected senses (where vision is defined in terms of a tactile world whose corporeal nature enables seeing) (201).

Extending from Merleau-Ponty, Margrit Shildrick says that we come face to face with our other selves not through Lacan's mirror reflection but through touch (Shildrick 107). Merleau-Ponty's ontology stresses the flesh as the medium through which "things simultaneously envelop or copresently[7] implicate each other," "coming together in difference" in the excess of the chiasm (qtd. in Shildrick 111). Shildrick says that Merleau-Ponty opens a new space for responsibility, which Oliver develops as response-ability. Leder qualifies and extends Merleau-Ponty's notion of touch as incomplete because it cannot stand for the perceptual body beyond the skin to the visceral blood, citing the maternal/fetal bond as this "chiasmatic identity-in-difference…the two bodies are enfolded together, sharing one pulsing bloodstream" (qtd. in Shildrick 112).

Irigaray calls for "sensuous engagement" with the other and with the world, and like Leder she sees Merleau-Ponty's chiasm as a fluid relation between "joined hands perhaps

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[6] Miners know the mines-body *through* their bodies—it is both an intersubjective relationship and an *intercorporeal* relationship. Miners say that coal mining "gets into your blood"—this is an integral relationship between the bodies of the miners and the body of the land, that coal gets into the bloodstream of miners (breathed into the lungs) and the blood lost in the mines (spilled from miner to place through rock falls). As Earl once described, in one mine the blood stains from where a man was crushed from a rock fall in one mines was a magically persistent substance—no matter how much coal dust or rock dust the miners put down over the stain, the blood kept visibly seeping through, marking that space. Likewise miners have described the scars on their bodies—visible markers of the presence of the mines—as well as the scars on the breath—their audible breathing making audible the invisible and internal mucus-and-coal-lining on their lungs or the rock dust film in their lungs that "feels just like broken glass" against every breath.

[7] This connects both with Butler's temporality of bodies in space in performative acts, as well as with Conquergood's stress on the importance of the researcher's co-presence of bodies in ethnographic fieldwork.

represent[ing the] memory of the intimacy of the mucus" (qtd. in Shildrick 113). Such leaky and seeping contact negates a subject-object split with one having mastery over the other (Shildrick 113). Witnessing-as-leakage makes my body wholly vulnerable to experiencing the other, an intimate witnessing. Miners and the mines-body have a literal relation such as that Irigaray describes in their seepage of fluids: miners' blood spilled on the mines, to the point where blood kept re-surfacing in one spot where a miner had died; coal dust puffing into coal miners' lungs, such that one miner said that after he became disabled, it was fully five years before he stopped coughing up black mucus from his lungs. My experiences in the mines showed similar effects, witnessing place through the body intercorporeally and through coal-stained mucus.

Witnessing Damaged Bodies

In what ways are the bodies of coal miners "on a different line than mine?" How do I witness to bodies that are both beyond recognition in their pain yet absolutely necessary to respect through loving (caressing) looks? Shildrick notes that the healthy body is "scarcely experienced at all" and operates as what Drew Leder has called the "absent body" (49). However, once this body is broken—through disease, damage, or is somehow made "unwhole"—then the body "forces itself into our consciousness and that comfortable absence is lost" (49). It is this uncomfortable consciousness of the elderly body that Myerhoff attempts to help others know in embodied form through her workshops (stuffing cotton in the ears, wearing galoshes); it is also the experience of coal miners whose bodies have become "damaged" and "diseased" through the effects of coal and rock dust on and in their flesh.

Shildrick discusses disabled bodies as dangerous because they "expose the illusion of autonomy, self-government, and self-determination that underpins the fantasy of absolute able-bodiedness" (qtd. in Shildrick 76). They threaten the seeming inviolability of "normal" bodies that maintains an aura of self-mastery (Shildrick 76). This visible vulnerability of the disabled body is complicated for coal miners, whose disabilities are largely invisible yet show the visible effects of being unable to walk, move quickly, and breathe soundlessly (their audible gasps for air) or at all without the aid of breathing devices (oxygen through tubes).

Listener's Role: Witnessing the Impossible

Coal miners are witnesses to a space of impossibility—often in our conversations their descriptions would trail off into "it was unreal" or "just impossible." Many times there were pregnant silences, sometimes tears, shaking the head—other times some would stare off into the distance for a moment. They said "it was just a whole other world," a space of unspeakable horror: limbs ripped, flesh melted off, family members dying suddenly or slowly in front of them. Witnessing to the impossibility of this un-real space constitutes subjectivity for coal miners. This was also a space incommunicable love developed through the loving-touching-feeling relationship between miners and mines-bodies: one man cried mournfully in one interview as he longingly remembered the musty smell in that place. Like their friends who died in mining accidents, the mines-body too is irretrievably lost to dis-abled miners who cannot return to the mines. My role as listener is to bear witness with them—to aid in creating and sustaining the inner witness that can witness to and re-member that space of impossibility by working-through these memories.

My role as ethnographer is that of an external witness who listens—extending Oliver's notion and borrowing from Della Pollock's understanding of witnessing—*with my whole body*. In interviews I am listening "body to body" with coal miners, paying attention to what is said and silently expressed by the body—through ragged breath, lurching steps, labored movements as they slowly walk to the car (Pollock Telling 1). Pollock writes that she is "bound" and "contracted" by her maternal body to hear, record, and perform/tell (1). Pollock says that in her performative writing she has "tried to account for the claims each encounter made on my 'inward ease,' knowing that in various ways, to varying extents, each made me uncomfortable, each moved me to ecstasy. I made myself, as much as possible, vulnerable to being moved. Listening and writing, I saw myself as the register of someone else's power" (23). Following Pollock, I am paying attention to those moments in co-performative witnessing where I cringe and noting what makes my body tingle and shudder—these are corporeal and bodily reactions to narratives, images, and being in spaces. It means that I am paying attention to the "saying," the intonation and context of conversation, as well as what is "said."

In listening body-to-body to women's stories and the performance of their narratives, Pollock enacted the role of external witness who made inner witness possible for the women

in her study. This internal witness enables individuals to interpret and represent experience. The internal witness is necessary for subjectivity and moreover for individual and social transformation. Witnessing and response-ability create and sustain subjectivity and humanity, and response-ability is never a solitary act. Oliver says, "I am by virtue of response-ability," by another's response to me (Oliver 91). Witnessing body-to-body shapes an "I am" counter to the Cartesian "I think, therefore I am" or Freud's "Where it was, there shall I be"[8]. Oliver's interpretation of response-ability speaks to the ethics of performance ethnography as listening with and serving as an enabling witness to what is impossible to speak but imperative to acknowledge and respect. To witness to impossibility is not to comprehend that impossibility but to *encounter* it (Oliver 90).

Oliver says that much like Derrida's "undecidables" such as aporia and the supplement, witnessing's double sense opens up ways to get beyond binaries of self-other, subject-object, psychoanalysis-history, constative-performative, and even mind-body (105). Bearing witness to the self "works through…the forces whose oppositional pull makes subjectivity possible and ultimately ethical" (105). Agency is produced in the tension between verifiable historical fact (subject positions) and psychoanalytic truth. I imagine Oliver's description of working through performance as a tensive dance, two interlocked bodies moving together. This ethical witnessing means "acknowledging the realness of another's life is not judging its worth, or conferring respect, or understanding or recognizing it, but responding in a way that affirms response-ability. We are obligated to respond to what is beyond our comprehension, beyond recognition, because ethics is possible only beyond recognition" (106).

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[8] As Dr. Pollock told me during a course on "The Body in Performance," in Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism, Elizabeth Grosz uses the theories of Deluze and Guattari towards a more multiplicitous and shifting interpretation of bodies with regard to intensities, flows, and disruptions. Grosz discusses the body without organs, the body as both being and being had by a subject. Deluze and Guattari emphasize a *doing* body—that the body becomes itself in performance. Grosz contrasts her theories of bodies with notions of the body as fixed in time and place, which Freud acknowledges with the phrase, "Where it [the body] was, there shall I be" (the body *was*, and the I *is*). In Freud's understanding, the I (or subject) becomes a future orientation of the self—"I shall be." The body is located in a fixed time and place ("it was"), and thus the fundamental nurturing of the child's body as an emerging subject or self is always constrained by the body that was. Freud's understanding of the self-and-body is different than Descartes' "I think therefore I am," which acknowledges a single self ("I think") as opposed to the multiple "shalls" possible with Freud's interpretation. Freud's understanding suggests containment. Grosz proposes a rhizomatic movement of the body: the body becoming and stretching into a future that is not linear but a self that turns back onto its body that "was."

Bodies in Pain

How do miners witness pain? How can I bear witness to pain that I cannot comprehend? Elaine Scary speaks to The Body in Pain in her work, insisting that pain exceeds culture, marking the boundaries of experience and thus threatening to undermine culture, language, and identity—pain is divisive, absolute, unsharable, and regressive, drawing bodies down into animal states of cries, moans, and unintelligible utterances that precede language (and precede culture) (Pollock Telling 120). Torture threatens the utter destruction of identity and meaning, "unmaking" the world in its destruction of control and an economy of well-ordered meanings (separating human from animal). Scary says that physical pain resists objectification through language (Scary 11).

Pollock challenges Scary's assumption that pain is prelinguistic and argues that vernacular discourse practices pain *differently*, as "a form of discursive practice that, heard and felt, defies the Cartesian denial of body knowing and blast open its concomitant categories of gender, sex, meaning, and value" (9). Pollock questions the cultural implications of how we narrate pain and how it is primarily put in terms of illness and injury. Pollock asks: How is pain represented and *practiced* in and by birth stories? What is pain made to mean? To Pollock, pain doesn't precede language but is "always already interwoven with meanings and meaning systems" (121). How we see and narrate pain[9] is intimately tied to our conceptions of recognizing pain—as Oliver forwards, we *should* witness pain through loving-touching looks and acknowledge that some pain is beyond recognition. Birth stories

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[9] In Pollock's account of Karen's story, the doctors warn her of the worst pain she could possibly imagine, such that these narratives draw a circle around how pain can and should feel, how the body can narrate its experiences through set codes of interpretation and fixed languages of meaning:

> Birth stories critically function *as stories*, in the project of controlling birth pain. Their 'story-ness is at least as important as the particular recommendations they make…encouraging expectant mothers to think *in* story, to anticipate an end, to yoke what will happen to what has happened—in effect to *tell* the future. (Pollock Telling 133)

Karen "didn't just name pain; she re-marked it" (136). Karen didn't imagine her pain as injury or assault, defying normative practices of narrating pain and witnessing to pain. Karen's pain "rose up to meet desire (her desire? My desire?) in an excess of pleasure, in more desire, in pleasure that exceeded itself in power—not power over pain but power to perform pain, to name it in image and action, to insist in language on the absolute integrity of body, memory, and subjectivity, and to become herself, to enter becoming, in the *act* of remembering pain" (135). Following Phelan, this re-markability of pain appropriates a masculine tactic of marking on the bodies of women who are unmarked and thus re-markable.

Andrea provided a cautionary tale of the pain of her C-section. Here, Pollock admits a struggle to not tell this story without interjecting/writing over Andrea's message with her own pain. Andrea narrates conventional narratives of heterosexuality—her story becomes her husband David's story. In such normative narrative scripts, pain is at times forbidden to memory (181).

practice and mark pain as "variable, shifting, doubled up and over again. They not only recount bodily risk but risk uncertainty and ambivalence in the act of representing pain" (170). This ambivalence is ultimately what threatens normative discursive formations of pain and how pain may be witnessed and re-performed: counternarratives of practicing pain threaten to topple heteronormative and masculinist scripts.

Narrating pain—physical and psychological—and empathetically writing into a subject's experience of pain is critical to this study. As Bakhtin states, one of our greatest human fears is of not being acknowledged: "Nothing is more frightening than the absence of an answer" (qtd. in Madison Critical 173). Many former coal miners struggle not only with their disability but with gaining acknowledgement by insurance companies that they are hurt and in daily, crippling pain. Pollock's work reminds me to pay attention to the ways that miners practice pain and to witness to this pain with Oliver's loving-touching looks. As Madison illuminates, "the nature of Bakhtin's answer is a profound giving back that affirms we are real to others (and to ourselves) and that we are not alone" (Madison Critical 173). I answer to these coal miners' pain through performance, on the page and on the stage.

Witnessing the Monster(ed)

How do I witness to that which has been made abject? How are abject bodies socially constructed, and for what political ends? Oliver provides a beautiful theoretical frame for vision as loving and nurturing, but she does not provide a model for how this happens or how we get to this utopist point. I use theories on the body that deconstruct binaries in order to deepen a knowledge of the transformative power of the loving gaze—by understanding how binaries are constructed and operate, we may better form a foundation for *looking through* these binaries with a loving gaze that connects subjects in energy-filled space. By deconstructing systems of oppression in seeing them for what they are (constructions), we clear the space of these binaries to enable loving looks.

Shildrick's body-work focuses on monstrosity and appearance, otherness as dramatized and mobilized through visible markers. She presents a challenge to the modern world that consolidates in hyper-cleanliness and super-consumption, a world that supports systems of radical containment of excess. She embraces excessively monstrous bodies to find a new relation and understanding. Shildrick says that we monster others by setting up

binary pairs of difference between us and the monster. Recognizing the body as a constructed and contested site, she asks, what does it mean to body forth a self?

V. Personal Narrative Theory

Narrative is not a given enactment of memory and experience but a situated, political construct. Particularly with traumatic experience, memory is not neat and clear. Like a tangled mass of yarn, threadbare at some edges, lumped and messy, strings crossing over in incalculable patterns—pull one cord and you move them all—we braid and weave scraps and pieces of thread-thin memory together to shape a narrative history that will support us in the present and propel us toward an imagined and desired-for future. The past we narrate and enshrine is contingent on the future we hold dear in the present. We work to make memory meet desire in narrative, fashioning it like clay on a spinning wheel. Re-membering and re-telling, the creative imagining-together of narrative out of the 'members' of experience, is a politics and poetics that has material effects in the personal identities and collective worlds we create (each shaping the other in cultural context).

Memory is multilinear, shapeshifting, in constant motion, an active and acting presence on and within bodies. The stories we tell and *are allowed to* tell frame experience and shape future narratives. The stories we hear or *choose not to* hear shape the politics of everyday life. We do not see many stories because they are located in silences; in body movements; in the way an old man gardens; in the female body of a dancing Aspara who is "the narrative container of the cosmos," as Hamera writes; in an heirloom photograph; in the staggered breaths of those with black lung (Hamera 30). What is the historicity of coal miners' narrated experience? In Gayatri Spivak's terms, what are "the complex and changing discursive processes by which identities are ascribed, resisted, or embraced and which processes themselves are unremarked, indeed achieve their effect because they aren't noticed" (qtd. in Scott 33)? How is the past ghosted into the present in their narratives for the sake of the future? How do coal miners witness to impossible traumas of multiple deaths and losses? How can I witness to them?

I am indebted primarily to Langellier, Peterson, Pollock, and Madison for my understanding of how personal narrative operates performatively both as a reiterative enactment of norms and a subversive tactic of the weak. Peterson and Langellier note that in personal narrative study, researchers and performers are involved in "contested, hence

political concerns of context and power" (Peterson Langellier 135). Peterson and Langellier attack three common misconceptions of personal narrative methodology: that personal narrative is a text (here they join with Conquergood in a rejection of Geertz's world-as-text claim), that it can be fully transcribed and analyzed (an imperialist desire), and that it is not performance (Ricoeur's privileging of the said over the saying vs. Conquergood and Madison's rescuing the living saying from the enshrining of the said). Walter Fischer and Barbara Myerhoff declared a "narrative turn" to describe, interpret, and critique various storytelling phenomena—we are *homo narrens* (135; Langellier "Personal" 125). Langellier notes the performative turn, which Conquergood outlines in his article "Rethinking Ethnography." The performative turn responds to the bodiless voices so prevalent in ethnographic writing and those voiceless bodies who resist colonial power and discourse (Langellier "Two" 126). Langellier says that personal narratives situate us among muted and marginalized voices lost in hegemonic metanarratives (126).

Peterson and Langellier stress that all personal narratives operate politically and (following Diamond) within structures of power (Peterson Langellier 136). They agree with Joan Scott in that "what counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straight-forward; it is always contested, and therefore political" (qtd. in Peterson Langellier 136). In "Experience" Scott asks, what is the status of experience and identity? Scott urges scholars to investigate the analysis of the production of knowledge—its historicity. Scott says that knowing the other differently is not a matter of increased visibility or listening to marginalized voices, but looking at how memory constructs subjectivities, the logics of relationally-constructed identities and historical processes that position subjects and *produce experience* (Scott 25). How is (narrated) knowledge situated?

Butler writes that history and performance are intertwined, inseparable, linked in iterative and reiterative patterns: "performance mobilizes history through and as repetition" (Pollock "Introduction" 2). To re-member, to re-assemble the members of experience into an ordered, narrative whole that (as Myerhoff and Riessman encourage) makes sense to the teller—this sense-*making* is processual, contextual, and deeply embedded in temporal, political, and socio-cultural spaces as well as individual desires. The processual *making/doing* of his-story is implicated as what constitutes, validates, and authorizes "fact" and "Truth." Conventional History claims a clear line marking the boundaries between

"fact" and "fiction," but the wall between these constructs is now called into question, and theorists such as Madison and Pollock ask: "What does it mean to re-present the past? How have politics shaped traditions of representation? To what extent is history writing itself an exercise in history making?" (4).

Narratives are made in ongoing talk and "locally occasioned" (Peterson Langellier 138). Peterson and Langellier show the importance of context and its political force in shaping meaning through varying versions of transcribed narrative performances. Context matters, both in the 'fieldwork' moment of the story performed and in the recorder's written/performed account of those ethnographic fieldwork performances. Personal narrative is not given but produced; it is a strategic practice. Similarly, Keya Ganguly asks, under what discursive terrain is the subject made and made unstable in daily life? How do memories of the past reconsolidate selfhood and identity through everyday discourses of dislocation and renewal (Ganguly 27)? The re-collected past is "the ideological terrain on which people represent themselves to themselves" (29). Peterson and Langellier illustrate Fine's model for transcribing "natural" performance, which foregrounds the telling of the story before the told (as illustrated and extended by Madison in "That Was My Occupation"). They also describe Gee's more literary or poetic model of transcription. Neither mode is a-political, and each masks or privileges particular text-context relations, making them visible or invisible. Transcriptions, like the personal narratives they study, operate within power relation systems. Personal narrative writing is always partial and incomplete, and performance studies embraces the fragmented nature of performing such research.

Peterson and Langellier describe personal narratives as *performances* of everyday life. HopKins says we should look to how performers negotiate roles, occupying multiple subject positions (qtd. in Peterson Langellier 145). As Anna Deavere Smith says, she has more interest in where the glove *doesn't* fit her, where she does not wear the story perfectly, displaying her own "unlikeness" (Smith xxxviii). Peterson and Langellier (following Madison and Conquergood) ask: "whose body (narrator, performer, researcher) is speaking? What kind of performance is the body allowed to give? What is the relationship of personal body politics to the body politic? How are other bodies arranged in the text? Before whom is the narrator revealing or concealing (or both) his body or her body? Whose desire, whose pleasure is performed? Does the personal narrative performance contribute to the

empowerment of oppressed peoples? Whose story is it?" (Peterson Langellier 146). In whatever way we transcribe, researchers extend personal narrative through our ability to participate in performance.

VI. Summary

In this chapter, I outlined my initial interest in these coal miners and gave a brief introduction to some of the themes in their stories. I described the methodology of performance ethnography, which uses performance as a critical lens through which we may self-reflexively observe and interpret human interaction and understand Appalachian culture. Performance is a methodology as well as a body of theories—performance is theory, method, and event. Or, as Conquergood illuminates, performance is a series of alliterative triads: *imagination, inquiry,* and *intervention; artistry, analysis,* and *activism;* and *creativity, critique,* and *engaged citizenship* (qtd. in Madison Critical 171).

The performance theorists and artists I have mentioned step beyond Descartes' fundamental binaries: Shildrick attempts this through a subject-subject relationship with the monstrous other(ed). Oliver suggests the "loving gaze" (though provides us with few examples of what this looks like) as opposed to an Othering (male) gaze. French Feminism offers erotics as a way out of the binary and escape the structural. Pollock practices body-to-body witnessing with those whom she interviews, while Conquergood stresses the embodied nature of fieldwork and the role of researcher as co-performing witness with others. Shildrick's question of "How do we "unmonster" the monster?" is a call for a change in how we witness the other—as Oliver notes, witnessing is subjectivity itself, so the question of "how we witness" is fundamental to our very being. Body to body witnessing looks through and past constructed binaries with loving looks and touch extended through affectively-charged spaces. Witnessing "works through" (in Oliver's sense, borrowing and extending Freud's term) difference (as opposed to reinscribing binaries) to imagine witnessing as subjectivity itself—as the foundation of the self and as an ethics of mutual response-ability.

CHAPTER 2: APPALACHIAN PORTRAITS[10]

To understand the context of these miners' narratives, some grounding in the concerns of the mountainous region of Appalachia is necessary. The goal of this chapter is to provide an introductory context; obviously, a comprehensive analysis lies outside the scope of this dissertation. With this in mind: What are some of the major aspects of and central questions concerning southern Appalachian culture? What is the particular history out of which these coal miners' narratives stem? Appalachia and coal mining communities in the mountain South are often seen as indistinguishable from the histories of other states, cities, and communities in the Deep South. How are notions of "The South" conflated into homogenous and wide sweeping narratives about what can constitute this space in all its varied pockets, hollows, mountain/low country regions, histories and communities? How is Appalachia and the mountain South conflated with the Deep South in stereotypical and "outsider" discourses? Socially constructed from 'outside' its borders, what are some of the narratives that impress, mold, and shape Appalachian bodies as "impoverished" (as listed in the Online Electronic Dictionary) and the land as feminized?

In this chapter, I discuss some of the ways that the cultural image of southern Appalachia has been shaped by popular media. I investigate some of the particularities of southern Appalachian social and economic history and illustrate how these histories intertwine with contemporary cultural constructions of Appalachia as precious, impoverished, dirty, homogenously racist, and dumb. I outline some of the earlier vehicles for these stereotypes (media and settlement schools) as well as contemporary means of shaping a simulacra of Appalachian experience (through Disney's Country Bear Jamboree). Appalachia has come to be seen as an Other place, a group of simple and stupid people, matter out of place, abject, and often left unseen or "off the map." This is a postcolonial space that is (in Bhabha's

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[10] Portions of this chapter were presented at the 2004 National Communication Association Convention in Chicago, Illinois under the title "Folding Past Into Future: Performing Appalachia at The Carter Fold" (Ethnography Division). Further portions of this chapter were presented at the same conference under the title "Performing Appalachia: Bodies of Earth and Flesh" (Performance Studies Division).

terms) *almost the same but not quite* urban, modern, or efficient. Appalachian writers such as Barbara Kingsolver, Harriette Arnow, and Adriana Trigiani have begun to speak back to these narratives through novels that find parallels with the postcolonial works of V.S. Naipaul and Arundati Roy. I conclude with a discussion of recent popular photography collections and consider what might be understood as postcolonial photography in this region.

I. Postcolonial Wealth and Impoverishment

"It is a region of great and crucial wealth, yet the people
of the area have remained, on the whole, poor" (Drake 215).

In literature and popular culture, Appalachia has come to stand for both the "highs" and the "lows" of bourgeoisie desire, its identity oscillating between essentialized understandings of contradictory cultural characteristics: hill people are both "friendly and suspicious…pathologically dependent and utterly self-sufficient, pathetic and heroic, loving and violent" (Stewart 119). Living with these contradictions, in the era of Johnson's War on Poverty and the continuing work of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) this region was subsequently painted under the signs of "'rednecks' or 'white trash'…irredeemably white, poor, rural, male, racist, illiterate, fundamentalist, inbred, alcoholic, violent, and given to all forms of excess, degradation, and decay" (119). At the end of the 19th century, four profound and interrelated processes were set in motion that had a direct impact on how Appalachia was to be viewed for the next hundred years: "economic colonization by northeastern capital; the rise of indigenous resistance among workers and farmers; the discovery of indigenous culture by writers, collectors, popularizers, and elite-art composers and concertizers; and the proliferation of (mostly Protestant) missionary endeavors" (Whisnant 6). The following four sections outline these processes in the wider context of Appalachia as a "whole."[11]

Economic Histories in Brief

Billings and Blee investigate the history of a region that was once prosperous (now a difficult reality to imagine having ever been the case). Van Beck Hall's studies of the mountain region of Virginia from 1790-1830 reveal that Appalachian residents there

[11] Williams slightly modifies the ARC's definitional geographical boundaries for Appalachia—I follow his definition (Williams 13).

"actually backed democratization, the involvement of more individuals in the political process, banks, internal improvements, the protection of the flow of capital and credit, and education, and occasionally challenged the institution of slavery…These actions simply cannot be fitted into the usual portrayal of an Appalachia trapped in a sort of late eighteenth or early nineteenth-century 'time warp' or of a culture and society that was easily manipulated by powerful outside interests" (Lewis 32). Billings suggests that geographical isolation may have helped protect local industries, as outside merchants with lower prices on goods did not have access to "interior" markets whose prices remained higher (Billings Blee 75). This is not to suggest that the region's people were ever holed up in Eden-like (or Hellish, depending on viewpoint) separation from the "outside" world: "Contrary to the stereotype of Appalachians as being rooted as the old mountain oaks in their hollows, Garrard [an elite member of the Clay County community] had by then [1849] already traveled throughout the U.S. Southwest, having earlier raised a company of soldiers from Appalachian Kentucky to fight in the war against Mexico" (74).

A population boom following the Civil War caused lands previously owned within one family to be divided into smaller pieces among kin when a landowning parent passed away. Following the Civil War and Reconstruction, the "New South" was "to be built in the image of the great dominating corporations of the northeast" (Drake 215). As a result of overpopulation, plummeting land values, and the inability to incorporate existing non-capitalist economic networks of individual borrowing and indebtedness into the growing capitalist systems, the native elites of many Appalachian towns (and of most coal towns) "dug in" to take hold of local politicians in schemes of indebtedness, corrupting local governments. Coal and lumber industries that had boomed previously now struggled in competing markets, and as mechanization entered the coal mines (a compromise by the UMWA) in towns that had built their sole business on coal, jobs dwindled. Unable to return to former farms (for those who were *lucky* landowners, their father's farm had been partitioned in small parcels to brothers and sisters) or rely on previous subsistence farming methods to sustain them, the poor grew poorer. In 1950's alone, mining jobs available at the decade's start had been cut in half by mid-decade, and hundreds of thousands of Appalachians migrated upwards and outwards (Drake 207).

Subsistence Farming, Gendered Selves

What Billings and Blee describe as a "patriarchal moral economy" within the Beech Creek neighborhoods shows how subsistence farming as a noncapitalist economy sustained a large number of coal mining families in mountain Kentucky, creating "a social world of kinship cooperation and neighborhood reciprocity" (Billings Blee 50, 60). LaLone describes this subsistence farming structure, complimented by mining work in the winter. Following local market demands, coal sale rose in the winter and shrank dramatically in the summer, when manufactured heat was not necessary. During the summer months and in the fall, miners and their families relied on subsistence farming for family foodstuffs. LaLone describes how "family members work together with complementary productive roles, every person contributing what they can, to bring together the resources needed for household subsistence" (LaLone 6). While LaLone enumerates these roles as they were in the 1930's—with women performing "so-called female tasks" of washing, ironing, sewing, cleaning and the preparation of medicinal teas and meals, she fails to critically highlight the highly gendered nature of family work roles (and even of what constitutes *family* in this place) that separates what every person *can* contribute[12] and who compliments whom[13]. Normative gendered roles of duty and service enacted daily performances of family and community in coalfield towns, but as Stewart recorded, in these places people say "there is nothing so ridiculous as a man so babyfied he can't cook a meal for himself or a woman so feminine she can't chop a pile of wood or shoot off the head of a thief who comes in the night" (Stewart 184).

Such a noncapitalist system created inter-household channels among kin and neighbors for sharing resources in times of need (LaLone 6). Pudup, Billings and Blee have noted that "[s]ubsistence production and barter terms of trade did not permit local

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[12] Williams reminds us that "Although women had worked around the mines during both world wars, their right to regular employment underground was established during the 1970's by the Coal Employment Project and the persistent demand among Appalachian women for access to what were still the best-paying jobs available in many communities" (Williams 319).

[13] Maggard's research on the non-miner women involved with coal mining strikes in Harlan County, KY from 1986-7 shows similar insight into family work patterns and "women's work" both in the 1950's and in present-day Kentucky. When the women Maggard interviewed were children, they "did the 'women's work' of caring for the sick, tending young children, cleaning up after people, raising food, preparing food, and making and cleaning clothes," sometimes sacrificing their own schooling in the process (Maggard 235).

accumulation of money capital. Both direct producers [farmers] and nonproducers [merchants], therefore, lacked the financial means to become a vanguard class and to finance regional capitalist development" (Billings Blee 262). Barter[14] and credit practices declined in the late nineteenth century, as outside capitalist "explorers" to the region brought cash into the area to invest in (read: buy out) the area's natural resources, and who subsequently invested in railroad building (263-4).

Slave Labor, Race, and Migration

While most families relied on subsistence farming in the early 19th century, some could afford enslaved labor, and imported slave populations created the socioeconomic foundation for a politically/socially/economically elite class[15] (61). In this place, "people were not passive objects of history but active subjects in it and…the local culture was not pristine and separate but caught in the dialectic of class and race and gender" (Stewart 106).

Lewis says that before and (unofficially) after the Civil War, native whites, African-Americans, and foreign immigrants were segregated in company towns into sections known as "Colored Town," or "Little Italy," and that job discrimination occurred in the types of jobs typically assigned to workers—blacks and immigrants usually took the more dangerous work in the lower chasms of the mines, while British and native whites occupied technical or managerial positions aboveground (Lewis 36). However, then as well as now, underground workers were attracted to high wages offered, and as Stewart says, quoting the folk wisdom of such towns, "everyone is black underground in the mines" (Stewart 184). Both under and above ground the men worked together in common economic interests in the UMWA, and "rigid segregation often became blurred in company towns, and without other employment opportunities, the workers came to focus on their common economic interests in the United Mine Workers of America, the one organization in the coalfields they could control" (Lewis 36-7). Throughout its history, this is a place where "the meanings of 'kinship' and 'place'

[14] The Barter Theater, mentioned later by Peggy Hensley, is the state theater of Virginia—its name stands testament to these bartering methods, and still today admission can be gained by bringing a few eggs (although this rarely happens).

[15] Dwight Billings and Kathleen Blee show how there were some wealthy slave owners in antebellum rural Clay County Kentucky, and in 1850 census reports reveal that there were 39 "colored male slaves" between 20-29 years of age in Scott County ("24258").

arose out of the meanings of class…and…the meaning of 'home' grew out of the effects of industrial occupation" (Stewart 105).

The Wake Forest community in Virginia's New River Valley was developed out of the ruins of a destroyed plantation at Buchanan Bottoms (now Whitethorne), when following the Civil War Elizabeth Kent set aside land for the freed slaves who continued working in the Kentland household. Again, LaLone's perfunctory gloss over the implications of landlessness[16] for those who chose *not* to continue working on the "destroyed" plantation is upsetting. But the gaps in her narrative imply the historical trend that patterns of African American landlessness remained relatively unchanged during the postbellum period (Billings Blee 221). And we do learn from LaLone that many of those working for Kent later came to work in the mines nearby, even coming to own and operate some (LaLone 14). As others have recorded, following the abolition of slavery "relations of financial credit and obligation bound impoverished African Americans and wealthy white businessmen together. White entrepreneurs sought to make money through loans to African Americans. Also, whites relied on African American suppliers and producers" (Billings Blee 215).

During Reconstruction, northern social workers and investors turned their attentions toward the mountain South. Some historians suggest that this turn towards the Appalachian South by missionaries had more to do with a fascination with its perceived racial purity than with altruistic aims to educate and save. In her essay "'What Does America Need So Much as Americans?': Race and Northern Reconciliation with Southern Appalachia," Nina Silber argues that the impression of "racial innocence" in a perceived all-white Appalachia is central to 19th century northern fascination with the region (Inscoe "Introduction" 8). Though significantly smaller in population percentage than the Deep South, there is ample evidence of a free black and slave presence along the western Virginia frontier in the 1740's and 50's (Tedesco "Free Black" 135). Highland lynching patterns were similar in their performance and raced targets to other regions in the South. However, Fitz Brundage—the

[16] We learn from Billings the severe economic penalties for this lack, as much of the local economy depended on subsistence farming structures, this practice continuing into postbellum and Reconstruction era decades. Landless blacks and whites were often tenant farmers, paying or working off wages on others farms with little opportunity to earn paper money in a growing/invading capitalist economy. With little means to make a living without land of their own, many former slaves migrated north. Still later, many such poor and landless tenant farmers (and following the population boom following the Civil War, excess and jobless miners as well) would take part in the mass exodus of Appalachians starting in the 1950's in search of new work.

current leading scholar of southern lynching—finds that lynching was more an urban than rural phenomenon in Appalachia (Inscoe "Introduction" 9).

As northerners began to invest in Appalachia, coal industries and accompanying railroad expansion grew around a labor force engaging both poor whites and black convicts. Ronald Lewis and Joe Trotter have studied race relations in Appalachian coal mining towns during the 19th and 20th centuries. In southern Appalachia at this time, black convicts were contracted to work in the coalfields under abusive work conditions in which the capital worth of their black bodies was less than that of black slaves'. Accordingly, Lewis argues, convict labor was subject to extreme cruelty (Inscoe "Introduction" 9).

In the mass-exodus time of Reconstruction, Stewart notes that "the nostalgia for the family farm is a white idiom, not a black one, and…African Americans clustered in towns when they could and left in disproportionate numbers for the cities up north along with the Italians and Poles who arrived from Ellis Island" (Stewart 106). Billings and Blee suggest that the exodus of African-American residents in Clay County in post-bellum years may have had more to do with changing economic structures that were intimately tied to land ownership than with inherent racial tensions. Joe Trotter's work Coal, Class, and Color investigates the migration of blacks into southern West Virginia coal communities. He argues that African Americans there formed a strong sense of solidarity through various institutions, churches, fraternal orders, and party politics (Inscoe "Introduction" 9). While the farm was not the dream, "they[17] say mining gets in your blood…the intense continuity between generations in the camps that draws young men into the mines after their fathers. …They say their fathers did it and their grandfathers before them" (Stewart 126).

Current Economic Theories

Recent popularity in techniques of strip-mining and mountain-top removal have devastated smaller farms in lower-lying hollows. With the advent of bulldozers and giant shovels following WWII, the "overburden"—the soil covering large veins of coal on mountaintops—could be removed rather easily, without the dangerous process of hiring miners to precariously slide under the earth to extract coal. But as mountaintops are leveled, and the Appalachian mountain landscape laid bare, the runoff from rainstorms shovels the

[17] Here Stewart implies *all* miners.

overburden downhill, muddy sludge rushing over farm acreage and clogging swelled streams: "The small yeoman farmer, whose grandfather probably sold his mineral rights to some nineteenth-century mineral buyer for fifty cents an acre, now finds his home and farm inundated—often with little or no legal recourse"[18] (Drake 205).

The misleading implication of Drake's tone, however, is that *grandfather* and other Appalachians were ignorant or careless about their property holdings, which is simply untrue. Billings argues that *grandfather* was not a "hapless victim[]" to exploitation, as the opportunity to sell land "for unknown quantities of minerals that local people had no way to mine or sell on their own [] must have seemed like a pretty good deal" to him (Billings Blee 269). Through multiple examples of explicated deeds, wills, mortgages, and contracts, Billings shows that "even the most cursory examination [of these records] that are registered in every Appalachian courthouse attests to the care with which mountain people sought to secure their economic transactions among neighbors, kin, and business associates" (270).

Drake's tone of narration follows one of two major theories that have dominated discussions since the 1970's of how to understand Appalachian poverty or "the Appalachian problem." Culture-of-poverty theories (prominent in late 1960's/War on Poverty scholarship—and continuing some still today) depicted this region as being in need of aid because of what was understood to be an inherent tendency of the Appalachian mountaineer to be caught up in a backward-turning and "antiquated system of cultural values" that demanded entrenched isolationism (xi). This attitude was and is simply not the case, as Billings, Blee and others have shown—records do not support such reductive claims.

A second and more recent explanation for Appalachian poverty (this is Drake's line) conceptualizes the region as an exploited colony (xi). As an embodiment of a created and desired otherness, coal mining towns are "encased in the endless replay of an othering that is contained and held at a distance—the closed loop that Said (1978) called orientalism, that Bhabha (1990) called colonialist ambivalence, or that Stocking (1989) called romantic motives" (Stewart 73). Comparing the cultural construct of "Appalachianism" with Edward

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[18] During Reconstruction, unscrupulous corporations would purchase land at a comparatively low rate, then immediately put the same tract up for resale at a higher price and then refuse to pay the already outstanding mortgage owed to the original owner. For county elites who had the legal muscle to fight back through the court system, original owners made their money back or retained the property, but paper-poor community members either could not afford the attorney fees or wound up selling their original tracts *again* to pay the attorney fees paid on the *last* reneged sale (Billings Blee 274-5).

Said's notion of "Orientalism," Rodger Cunningham has said that Appalachian scholars "are grinding…not an ax but a lens" that allows what Raymond Williams called "the 'unlearning of the inherent dominative mode'" (Billings "Introduction" 17). I embrace this second conceptualization while understanding the limitations of its assumption that isolated absentee ownership of land by outside companies were/are *the* cause of regional poverty. Such a view overlooks the significant "indigenous coal ownership and extraction [sectors] that were notorious for low wages, job insecurity, and the lack of health and safety benefits for employees in comparison with larger, absentee-owned firms" and the fact that "other coal mining regions—notably Illinois—were even more absentee-owned than Appalachia yet had significantly more equitable tax policies and better diversified local economies" (Billings Blee 13). Along with Billings and Blee, I wish to use exploitation theories in conjunction with my own research to push further this growing understanding of the messy and complicated economic pasts and presents in a particular part of this region (specifically, Wise and Lee Counties in Virginia). In Chapter Eight, I discuss how poverty is principally a symptom of a larger cycle of enmeshed abuses in many Appalachian coal towns. Drug trade, local government corruption, in addition to outsider coal corporations pulling out *en masse* worked in concert to create ghost towns out of communities such as St. Charles, VA.

While miners are becoming more "visible" working on the surface of the earth (versus below and in it), the coal itself is a markedly invisible presence. Because now "nine out of every ten tons of the nation's coal vanishes into power plants," Freese purports that "many Americans can harbor the illusion that coal is no longer a major energy source or a big environmental threat, even while the nation burns more of it than ever" (Freese 166). As the following map shows, coal currently contributes to more than 50% of American energy production.

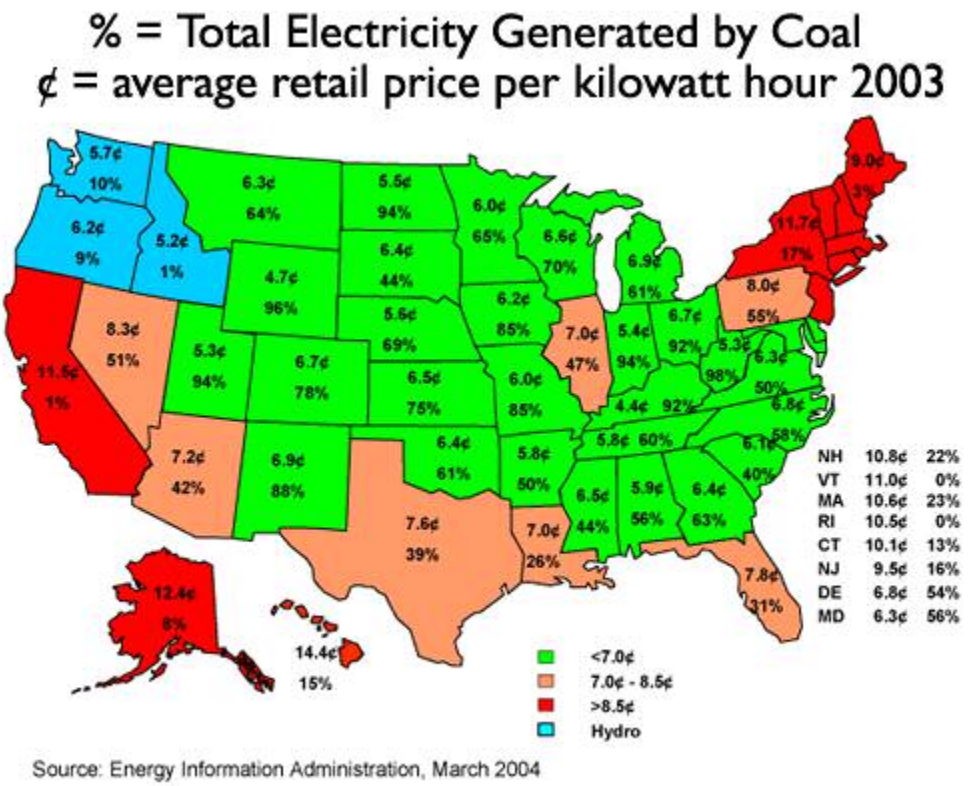

Figure 1 Nationwide coal-driven energy statistics. Source: Energy Information Administration, National Mining Association (NMA Facts).

In 2005, coal mined through underground operations contributed 33% of total coal production in the United States, with 67% supplied through mountaintop removal, according to the National Mining Association's website. And while magazines and editorials give smattering applause and full-color spreads for images of electric-powered automobiles, the question remains of where the *energy* for these electric wonders will be sapped from—undoubtedly, the answer is still predominantly from this same black rock.

II. Creating Culture

Said has written that "the power to narrate or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them" (Billings Blee 314). Selective narratives of a particular version of this region's past crafted by "local color" authors of the late 19th century (and continuing even through present day) reveal a politics of vision. A discourse centered around selective representations of feuds, hammered dulcimers, religious fundamentalism, and lack of formal

education narrates this region as monstrous, a place in need of national reform, securing the big brother superiority and "normality" of outside regions. Katherine Ledford finds that antebellum literary depictions of Appalachia "projected images of a wild and untamed state of nature [that] were transferred from the mountains themselves to their earliest inhabitants once upper-class, propertied explorers began to appreciate the value of the region's rich natural resources" (qtd. in Billings "Introduction" 13). "Sweet and simple" Appalachians were known at the turn of the century to be all of the same "racial heritage" which, entered into at birth, allowed them the "many graces" of their ancestors' fine English folksong, wisdom, language, and manners as "racial attributes which have been gradually acquired and accumulated in past centuries and handed down generation to generation…" (Whisnant 120). As a "dirty and dangerous" people, over 400 silent films were produced near the turn of the century focusing on Appalachian moonshine-making and violent feuds (Billings "Introduction" 5).

Colonial Literature

Literary stories of feuding families in the hills of Kentucky posited that "only with the domination of Appalachia and the displacement of its population by outsiders 'will the Frankenstein of the Kentucky mountains receive its death thrust, and the Land of Feuds…cease to be a blot on the map of these United States" (Billings Blee 312). An article in Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly also put forth that "So long as their mountain defiles remain uninvaded by the emigrant; so long as their mountain sides intimidate the prospective railroad line; and above all, *so long as their wild, barbaric blood remains uncrossed by a gentler strain*—just so long will their internecine wars prevail" (Billings Blee 313, emphasis mine). Such statements are reminiscent of the practices of feudal lords in "breeding out" Scottish highlanders during the ethnic cleansing raids of Bonnie Prince Charlie in the 18th century. Billings and Blee write that "By creating an impression of Appalachians as a people in need either of uplift or dispersion, and the southern mountain region as a dark zone of chaos and violence in desperate need of what the New York Times called 'the civilizing railroad,' feud narratives gave American readers a framework through which to view the profound changes that were taking place at the turn of the century in Appalachian Kentucky and the spasm of violence that was accompanying its industrialization" (315).

The politics of these stories that selectively narrate history and culture continues to be seen today through prominent newspaper articles, magazines, and internet chat sites. A 1992 New York Post columnist commented negatively about one group "acting like crazed Appalachians" after a New York Supreme Court justice's arrest for sending lewd and threatening mail, and New York Times Magazine recently noted the rise in popularity of "redneck" jokes over internet chat lines, noting that "the humorous impulse seeks out people who…are supposed to be *bad*-reactionary and racist—and thus deserving of all they get. And there's an added bonus: so few rednecks have computers" (Billings "Introduction" 4-5). For those *rednecks* who do own computers, one recently released graphics software program provides the image of an outhouse as its sole icon representing the state of West Virginia (5).

Settlement Schools

The work of the American Missionary Association (AMA) and the Freedmen's Bureau among Deep South African-Americans in the years immediately following the Civil War would prove an eerie prediction of what was to begin happening among mountain whites a generation later. These "soldiers of light and love" edited "letters to the editor" of their journal to reconstruct a message that would justify their efforts southward (Whisnant 9). AMA workers sought to "Yankeeize" freed slaves and "contrasted the energetic North with the lazy South" (9). Jacqueline Jones found that the AMA and Freedmen's Bureau "sought to impress upon journal readers the black man's degraded position in southern society and his total dependence upon northern support" (10). While W.E.B. Dubois called these groups "saintly souls," the messages they communicated through staged photograph images was "linked to a conservative concept of social change" and "projected seriously misleading images of the world of Georgia blacks to the world outside" (9). Attempts to remake southern blacks in the image of northern, Protestant, Republican northeasterners proved "difficult[] and intractab[le]," and missions groups turned their attention to the mountains (10).

What followed were a string of Settlement and Missionary Schools, including Olive Dame and John C. Campbell's work with the Hindman Settlement School. Hindman began as a "buffer against social and economic exploitation and a tool for self-directed social betterment" (20). More often, the schools translated a hierarchy of cultural values that were predicated on scholarly authenticated notions of what the *real* Appalachia to be preserved

against *exploitation* was. The schools operated as agents of systematic cultural intervention, meaning that "someone (or some institution) consciously and programmatically takes action within a culture with the intent of affecting it in some specific way that the intervener thinks desirable" with a wide range of effects (from passive to active, positive or negative, with any one of these leading to the other) (13-14). "Self-directed social betterment" came in the form of "re"-teaching the ballads that English-born Francis Child collected during his travels through the southern mountain region in 1917[19] (56). Child, favoring those songs that had their roots in English ballads, recorded those tunes that he thought necessary to preserve, and Hindman reinscribed this narrative of *official* mountain songs over other local ballads, including songs about "Old Christmas," the twelve-day family and religious holiday celebrating the birthday of Christ as January 6th (versus the more commonly and commercially observed December 25[20]).

By December of 1894, the Asheville Daily Citizen bore the picture of Santa Clause on the front page and reported that the fireworks ceremony that kicked off the usual twelve-day holiday celebration was "tame" compared with previous years, though they still ran advertisements for Christmas presents through January 5th. Silencing past and lived local traditions in favor of the *real* (imposed) Appalachian History, Santa's image (perhaps sipping on a Coca-Cola bottle from the roof of some middle-class suburban home?) covers all.

Sharp's selective reporting on the *authentic* Appalachian ballads (seen as a little slice of Medieval England) has deep political implications,

> involv[ing] presuppositions and judgments about the relative worth of disparate cultural systems; the selection of certain cultural items in preference to others—frequently in accordance with an unspoken theory of culture; the education (not to say manipulation or indoctrination) of a public regarding the worth (or worthlessness) of unfamiliar cultural forms or expressions; and the feeding back of approval-disapproval into the "subject" culture so as to affect the collective image and self-images (and therefore the survival potential) of its members. (126)

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[19] See also Cecil Sharpe's work English Folk Songs From the Southern Appalachians.

[20] The "Cherry Tree Carol" was silenced in Hindman:

> On the sixth day of January
> my birth-day will be;
> When the stars in the elements
> shall tremble with glee. (Whisnant 49)

Morris and Sword dancing, also collected by Sharp mostly in England and Scotland and seen in only a very few communities in Appalachia, was promoted in the Hindman school as popular native folk culture[21].

Material cultural elements, such as Danish quilting and tablemat patterns, were introduced through Olive Dame Campbell's work at Hindman[22] and cycled through popular outsider understandings of what the *authentic* Appalachian experience contained, such that these images, sounds, and myths *re*cycled back into the native culture to become the *real* that never really was. These patterns were popular for sale in New York as tokens of *true* Appalachian culture (the more rustic looking, the more *real* their value[23]), and today, two blocks away from my apartment in Chapel Hill, I can buy these same Danish patterns, woven into Appalachian red and white cotton placemats at Berea College and sold as *authentic* and old-timey Appalachian folk products.

III. Contemporary Stereotypes and Simulacra

> Wayne: They have a lot a pride about doin it [mining], and they feel sort a misunderstood by / abovegrounders.

When my mother was 13 years old, she and her friend Patty Roach each wrote letters to then-President John F. Kennedy. In her letter, my mother identified herself as a "poor little Appalachian girl" who needed individual aid—at the time, President Kennedy's

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[21] Whisnant comments:

> Thus, having focused on a romantic cultural 'world of green and silver,' having declined to involve itself in the major economic and political realities that were shaping life in the mountains, having judged that the cultural forms (feud songs, railroad and mining ballads, and mail-order musical instruments) that the people themselves were developing to comprehend and assimilate those realities were beneath serious consideration, and having chosen to lay the norms of genteel Victorian popular culture upon mountain people, the settlement had at best neutered itself and become a subtle agent and facilitator of the changes it formerly opposed. In the image of economically dispossessed mountain boys, attired in an antique garb borrowed from a tradition impossibly remote from any cultural reality that they (or their parents or grandparents) were familiar with, wooden swords woven artfully into a star above. (Whisnant 81)

[22] Olive Dame Campbell's experiences studying Danish folk schools in Copenhagen greatly influenced the development and curriculum of the Appalachian Hindman school, including the introduction of Danish weaving designs and patterns into Appalachian craft culture (Whisnant 133).

[23] This selling point was not lost on Berea College president William H. Frost, who at the turn of the century won many development grants by promoting the romantic image of the mountains as a "Rip Van Winkle…region [that] went to sleep while life had flowered around it and beyond" (Whisnant 73).

campaign promises in West Virginia to correct the economic woes of this region were materializing into the Appalachian Regional Commission (established posthumously in 1964), committed to contribute to fighting the War on Poverty in Appalachia. Relief would not come to my mother, and her letter lay unanswered in its wrenching request: Would you please send me two tickets to the Beatle's concert, so I can fulfill my dream? She recalls, "And I didn't even get a picture back—*I thought I'd at least get an autographed picture!* But no, I got no picture. I was waiting for those tickets. I was sure we'd get them!"

Popular "portraitures" of Appalachia (such as those found in Warren Moore's book Mountain Voices) depict this region as having a quaint, nostalgic, backward beauty. Such works depict Appalachia predominantly (and performatively) as a dependent area, a region defined as "impoverished." Moore's pictures are at best a romanticized ideal of the hard-working, rugged, "brave" Appalachian people, their quaint backward ways, their poverty…such depictions alone belie the complexities of these people's lives as they negotiate race/class/gender, in particular in the rural mountain South where class/poverty "cuts through" issues of race and class while still encouraging/expecting/enforcing rigid enactments of gender (i.e., cross-dressing is strictly policed in the Cove society of southwest Virginia). Common current representations of this area show it as simple and in some ways simply unnecessary: monstrous[24], feminized[25], subject to a partial (colonial) gaze[26].

Two prevalent and contradictory groups of stereotypes persist in mainstream media depictions of Appalachia: sweet and simple, or dirty and dangerous. Billings highlights that Appalachian men, and particularly the women, were and have been conventionally boxed into the myopic roles of backward dupe (of Hee Haw fame) or violent menace (the movie Deliverance, creating a monstrous quality in this place/people), each of these roles strategically engineered to create an Other out of this region.

Country Bear Jamboree

Documenting history—as with the creation of any narrative—involves selection and the re-presentation of events and lives through film, word, and performance. Baudrillard

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[24] Its rabid growth and untamed land which exceeds all bounds, which pulls its inhabitants into itself with tentacles of vines, pulling them in to isolation, to a "secure" relationship with the land.

[25] As miners dig into the womb of the earth, tunneling under in wet, tight, cavernous spaces where many die "in utero" from methane explosions or drowning under exploded walls of water.

[26] Appalachians are almost-but-not-quite-urban/modern/relevant/human.

extends Plato's notion of the simulacrum, of an "identical copy for which no original has ever existed," into what he calls the "hyperreal," a world in which "illusion is no longer possible because the real is no longer possible…The simulacra is never that which conceals the truth—it is the truth which conceals that there is none—the simulacrum is true" (Fjellman 300-1). Representation becomes the real that never really was. What we see and read is always a partial, incomplete, and perspectival rendering of events, and "truth" is cycled through multiple and sometimes hegemonic lenses. As photographer, musician, and documentarian John Cohen told me, "If it doesn't exist on film, it doesn't exist."

Fjellman argues that "the postmodern United States…has creepingly become surrealist. Simulations—models of things that don't actually exist in reality—abound in advertising and politics…people may still be able to tell the difference between reality and artifice, but increasingly they don't care which is which" (Fjellman 254). Walt Disney World's exhibits at EPCOT give the appearance of "sanitized squalor" as paint chips off of the walls in the Italy Showcase (241). Here, what is presented is fake, but that presentation forms the standards of what is real about a/any place: "hyperreality…where the American imagination demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake" (255). In Disneyworld, "things are not just real or fake but real real, fake real, real fake, and fake fake…As children know, [the] fake fake is more real than the real fake. Just listen to them cry, 'Look, its *really* Mickey!'" (255-6).

Disney's Country Bear Jamboree is an embodied reference to—and a particular narrative of—"back porch" gatherings such as those at the Carter Fold, a dance and bluegrass music hall in the town of Hiltons in southwest Virginia.

Figure 2 The Carter Fold, outside and inside. Graded seating overlooks a concrete dance floor and the stage beyond. Hiltons, VA. Photos by the author.

Part of the "Disney magic" at Disneyworld is that "differences are glossed over, and 'differences that make a difference'…are neutralized" (31). The corporate approach to history does not tell history "like it really was but as it should have been" (31). Theme park rides and shows take bits and pieces of Appalachian culture out of context to create the narrative that "should have been."

The Fold presents that same culture in context (the Fold is located within the Hiltons community), but it remains a show that becomes spectacle for inner- and extra-communities to consume. While not a Disneyfied "corporate tale," its authenticity is usually measured from outside visitors by these pre-set parameters and definitions of *what backcountry can/should be*. Many times, these parameters are taken from such outside definitions set by Disney-like narratives, and the Country Bear Jamboree—which I as an Appalachian woman find highly entertaining, as well as infuriating in its reductive stereotypes—becomes the authentic place by which all other real experiences are measured. Peggy Hensley, a third-generation Hiltons native, works the ticket counter in the doorway of the Carter Fold. She told me her observations on the topic when I talked with her in her home in 2003:

> Peggy: So maybe, a lot of the people that visit don't think they've been there until they've actually heard some traditional music.
> And fortunately when they come to the Fold they do hear
> you know, they get, they get a glimpse of / the *real* Appalachia. They may
> view it when they first come in as a stereotype you know.

But here, the *real real*[27] is presented in context.

With Disney realism (a historical narrative Fjellman calls "Distory"), "unpleasantaries would be dropped from history, and stories of the past would be told in the carefully (and commercially) re-mythologized form to which Americans were becoming accustomed through the movies and television" (Fjellman 59). The Jamboree presents a shack falling apart, but we know that the structure will stay standing, the dirt is hypoallergenic and at a distance, and we are safe, experiencing a version of what Carole Blair and Neil Michael call "The Safe (Perilous) Adventure" (after all, does Michael Eisner really want one more Disney law suit settled out of court?) (Blair and Michael 50). The Fold, by contrast, offers no such promises of safety, and Peggy remarks that it's a wonder

[27] See Whisnant on "real" Appalachian culture.

that the building has lasted so long without someone getting a broken leg ambling over the uneven earthen ramp to upper seating, or that someone hasn't gotten snakebite from the innumerable creatures that could be lurking under those wooden railroad ties. It is this illusion—and expectation—of "safe danger" that allows Connecticut residents to marvel at this "unblemished rustic treasure" with no prudent anticipation that the structure could literally *reach out and bite you* if you don't watch out.

In the Jamboree show, as with many Disney films, "Wild things and wild behavior," such as actual drunkenness in a dance hall—which, according to many Appalachian cove and holler residents including Peter Gott of nearby Madison County, NC, caused the ruination of many official dance halls and gathering places, as drunkenness was often accompanied by shotguns, death, and violence—"were often made comprehensible by converting them into cuteness, mystery was explained with a joke, and terror was resolved by a musical cue or a distinct averting of the camera's eye from natural processes" (Fjellman 262). In this selective narrative, dirt is *clean* dirt, music is prerecorded and predictable, and the bear/people have no worries about their years' earnings being washed out or being eaten by local wildlife like actual farmers do.

"Distory did (and does) tap into people's nostalgic need for a false history—for the reasonably benign makings of a community of memory" Fjellman writes (60). Taking pieces of Appalachian history—and the material pieces of its buildings—out of context, visitors to the Jamboree can easily glide out of the uncomfortable heat of Floridian sun and cross through a Bluegrass-filled threshold into a bustling leafy existence in harmony with nature, simple (read: quaint) pleasures, simple (read: uneducated, dumb) people/bears, and an easy low-key way of life, with the greatest discomfort being a long waiting line outside. The Distory of the Jamboree and other performances like it fosters (quoting Peggy) "a stereotype I think that maybe we / sit around on bales of hay and chew straw and everthing."

TV programs such as The Beverly Hillbillies and Hee Haw fostered similar overly simplistic stereotypes, even as they were enacted by "natives" whose personal image became caught up in the roles they played, those roles defined outwardly by networks who wanted to present a *fake real* Appalachia as quaint, backward, and ultimately a place and people to laugh *at* and not *with*. Peggy Hensley said:

> Peggy: Uh, the kids, uh / when The Beverley Hillbillies would [be on],

Aunt Susie's grandparent—or, grandchildren would say
they thought that my grandmother cooked owl and things like that you know?
Because they would tell them that, they'd say, "Well now you know
we're going down to Virginia and they cook this and they do that," you know…
I guess maybe it's still acceptable to laugh at
rural white Southerners when, you know, you can't do it at any other ethnic group.
I say that that's the only acceptable prejudice left because you can't laugh at people's
you can't laugh at their sexual persuasion anymore, you cannot laugh at their
at their ethnic origin or their religion or anything, you know.

Hannah: Yep.

P: And I think white rural Southerners are / it's still open / season.
And we fostered that some / with
our own people who were from this area who
who go other places and they / they perform, you know, and they
they do what's expected you know…
I mean there are people I'm sure who performed at the Grand Ole Oprey
in the 20's or the 30's you know on the radio
who probably have really— / well, look at Minnie Pearl.

H: Mm hmm.

P: She came from a very well to do family in Nashville, you know, I mean
very, high society. But you know when she got on, on—
I mean she was from Grinder's Switch, you know.
And she was real funny, you know. / But, uh, people
there are people who would not believe, you know, that
that she came from a [high society] / and had a college degree.

The social histories of poverty, failed coal mining communities, a defunct railroad (as a major artery and access point for coal fuel), and a farmer's daily toil in the ground and with smelly cattle—all these contexts that shaped the need for rough-hewn wood, engendered community donated materials such as carpet swatches, and enabled seats made of railroad ties (from the defunct line) are potentially glossed over in visitors' expectations—and ultimately, their experience—of a visit to the Carter Fold. The simulacrum of Appalachian experience is measured in twangy rhythms interspliced with barefoot locals in overalls[28].

[28] Peggy said in one interview:

Peggy: I think maybe / part of the
part of the allure of the Fold [a music and dance hall in Hiltons, VA] may be they, they think
it's kind of like I guess when we go to the Smokeys we don't think we've been to the
Smokeys if we've not seen the bear, you know,
or a Cherokee Indian with a Sioux headdress on. (*Hannah laughs*)

When I went to college, my roommate from Florida was *genuinely* surprised I did not have a wardrobe full of overalls and remarked that she was relieved that I was wearing shoes.

An "Other" People

Through intricately textured writing about the coal towns of southwestern West Virginia, Stewart argues that Appalachia has been made "Other" to a wider discourse and myth about America "through a long history of exploitation and occupation by an industry and an incessant narrativization of a cultural real" (Stewart 3). Appalachia is a place apart, "an 'Other America' defined within and against an encompassing surround and has become an inhabitable space of desire" (41). Stuart argues that "to tell the story of 'America' and the fabulation of 'Other' spaces is to tweak the anxieties and desires that motivate the master narratives of center and margin, self and other, and naturalize an order of things 'in here' and a space of culture 'out there'" (6). Stuart focuses on those narrative and performative moments that enact the cultural poetics of "occupying an always already occupied space," a space overtaken by multiple loud voices from outside aching to "show and tell you to yourselves...who you are" (58, Madison Human). What are these stereotypes—whose gaze dominates, and how? Through what discourses has this place come to be Othered? Whose vision is privileged—what sort of "seeing" is going on here?

Simple and Stupid

Diana Taylor writes that "*seeing* also goes beyond us/them boundaries; it establishes a connection, an identification, and at times a responsibility that one may not want to assume" (Taylor 19). But it is easier to ignore the intricacies of these communities—for to see would be a call to witness, and witnessing in this place involves, for many people, surrendering the sub/conscious pleasure of deriding the only group that it is permissible to mock in contemporary society. As Billings writes, "America *needs* hillbillies…Mountain people are the last group in America it is acceptable to ridicule. No one would stand for it for a minute if you took any other group—Native Americans, African-Americans, Hispanics, women—and held it up as an example of everything that is low and brutal and mean. But somehow it's O.K. to do that with hillbillies" (Billings "Introduction" 9). Better to keep at a distance these paces that are un-mapped, off the border, just on the margin of view and marginalized on the periphery…but—crucially—not too far out of sight that they cannot be located, even as occupying a no-where. The image of these border people *as* peripheralized is necessary to constitute a corollary "normal."

Seeing through the lens of romanticized "other"—as literally through the camera lens of Warren Moore's Mountain Voices—engenders the vision of an inviting, distinctive, but decidedly backward and quaint place that is "frozen in time," preserved and passive in its isolated beauty. It nostalgically holds the key to our past—*look*, and you will see where we came from, a people living in stasis in the past. As Taylor reminds us, "representations are not innocent, transparent, or true. They do not simply 'reflect' reality: they help constitute it" (Taylor 21). Moore's representations ennoble the mountaineer but also peg her as a romanticized object of desire, quaint, impoverished, and utterly backward. Andy Capp's cartoons of Li'll Abner have the same effect—while in caricature, they present an act of *seeing* into this place through the comic book frame that is taken as the "real thing." Representations of the lazy, simple, and stupid mountaineer mute this place and speak over it a narrative of simplistic joy that "marvel[s] at the harmony (ordinarily, what you would say is the backwardness) and the union these other people (and they are other people) have with nature. And you look at the things they can do with a piece of ordinary cloth, the things they fashion out of cheap, vulgarly colored (to you) twine, the way they squat down over a hole they have made in the ground, the hole itself is something to marvel at…" (Kincaid 16).

Matter Out of Place

Dirt to Mary Douglas is "matter out of place," understood relationally and in context with other objects/items/presences (Douglas 43). As pollution and uncleanness, dirt is "that which must not be included if a pattern is to be maintained" (50). The "self's own parameters" are secured normatively through performative acts that set perceivable patterns "defined by difference[s]" "for which we, the perceivers, are largely responsible" (Shildrick 71, Douglas 45). Uncleanness implies the conditions of a set of ordered (normative) relations and some interruption or contravention of that order, so that "Dirt…is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements" (Douglas 44). An anomaly that does not fit, dirt is also ambiguous, "capable of two interpretations" (47).

Dirt (both literal mud and any matter-out-of-place) becomes an intriguing visible marker of the other in Appalachia. Like Margrit Shildrick's example of a child born with "extra" fingers, the Appalachian landscape-as-body is an excessive body which is monstrous,

having extra digits (more trees, more appendages than concrete-covered urban spaces which level-off grass and forest, assuring control, safety, and security through power of modern rationality). It is a place in need of trimming/taming—fences, roads, clippers and chemical sprays keep these appendages at bay—lest these material forces "contaminat[e]" proper living space (71). "White trash" becomes matter-out-of-place, something to be swept out and *not* shown by Moore in Mountain Voices. In Moore's photographs we see seemingly happy, jovial, pleasant, passive, content representations of Appalachian people and their primitive dwellings made of wood and nails. The landscape photographs of Mike Smith in his collection You're Not From Around Here counter the repetitive performativity of a "cleaned-up" Appalachia, a pretty landscape that is free of the debris of urban life. In this collection, Smith presents a photograph of a trailer foregrounding a wooden house on a ridge skyline. The trailer violates the normative performativity of the house. The house is an image we would see in Moore's collection and seems comically one-dimensional behind the trailer. Commonly linked with white trash (both the people who are known by this title and the debris of plastic doll parts, worn-out mattresses, and used auto parts strewn on the lawns of trailer parks), the trailer can be seen as dirt, matter-out-of-place, an anomalous and ambiguous presence that is a threat to cleanliness, order, and contaminant.

Figure 3 Mike Smith, "Chucky, TN 1992" (Mike Smith 31).

Literal dirt stains the bodies of Appalachian miners, visibly marking them as different from urban. Dirt is matter out of place on their bodies, and by transference their bodies are *dirty*/matter out of place in clean, modern, urban spaces. As my father spoke of some miners' experiences at work, he inserted this brief detail:

> Wayne: One miner the other day, just the other day, he had shorts on and he said, "These black spots, you know? They're just
> they're from the mines—you can't get em out, you can't get em out, you can't get em out."

In an excessive, repetitive, performative narrative moment, my father re-iterates the miners refrain: "you can't get em out." Wet, globular strands and lumps of clay stick to hair, under nails; knee to dirt, this cavern reaches out to touch, to mark the miners permanently. Visible markers of dirt flag and expose Appalachian people as tied to this region and to a feminized body (the Appalachian land-as-body).

This feminized body is grotesque, counter to order, dirty. The lyrics of Gillian Welsh's folksong "Red Clay Halo" attests to the rural native marked by/as dirt:

> Well the girls all dance with the boys from the city
> and they don't care to dance with me
> Well it ain't my fault if the fields are muddy
> and the red clay stains my feet.
> It's under my nails, and it's under my collar
> and it shows on my Sunday clothes.
> Well I do my best with the soap and the water
> but the damned old dirt won't go…
> But when I pass through the pearly gates
> will my gown be gold instead?
> Or just a red clay robe, with red clay wings
> and a red clay halo for my head?

<u>Abject</u>

This "dirty" effusive landscape marks itself as out of place among normative representations the larger landscape/body of North America[29]. Along with Douglas, Kristeva finds that "filth is not a quality in itself, but it applies only to what relates to a *boundary* and,

[29] By "larger landscape" I do not mean universal.

more particularly, represents the object jettisoned out of that boundary, its other side, a margin[30]" (Kristeva 259). Across this boundary lie "Blood, tears, vomit, excrement—all the detritus of the body that is separated out and placed with terror and revulsion (predominantly though not exclusively) on the side of the feminine—are down there in that cave of abjection" (Russo 2). The *detritus*, the loose fragments worn away, as grains of sand from a rock, the eroded matter, the excess filed away, pared off, and piled up as waste to dispose of, to altogether separate from the proper body—this excess slough is *abject*, utterly cast off, and, Russo reminds, shoveled primarily onto the (binary) side of the feminine.

Kristeva theorizes those seeping, wet, sticky, smelly fluids hidden "down there" in that cavernous womb of the female. For Kristeva, the abject is not object but it is opposed to the "I," the self as "radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A 'something' that I do not recognize as a thing" (Kristeva 230). Jettisoned from the self, banished, the abject still cries out convulsively, never ceasing to challenge its master, superego, which has driven it out. Calling out, incapable of being utterly driven out, inseparable from the self, this monster "is not just abhorrent, it is also enticing, a figure that calls to us, that invites recognition. Simultaneously threat and promise, the monster, as with the feminine, comes to embody those things which an ordered and limited life must try and must finally fail to abject" (Shildrick 5). Enticing, calling to us, inviting us to recognize its threatening and promising presence, the monstrous is pushed away by the superego, yet cannot be fully driven away as the abject: complete nothingness, the collapse of subjectivity and objectivity where there is no grammar of meaning.

The excessive is what Kristeva calls the abject: "'what disturbs identity, system and order. What does not respect boundaries, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite'" (Shildrick 55). Like criminals who do not repent, a friend that stabs you, flaunting the fragility of the law,

> The abject confronts us, on the one hand, with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of *animal*. Thus, by way of abjection, primitive societies have marked out a precise area of their culture in order to remove it from the threatening world of animals or animalism, which were imagined as representatives of sex and

[30] Continued: "…The potency of pollution is therefore not an inherent one; it is proportional to the potency of the prohibition that founds it. 'It follows from this that pollution is a type of danger which is not likely to occur except where the lines of structure, cosmic or social, are clearly defined" (Kristeva 259).

> murder. The abject confronts us, on the other hand, and this time within our personal archeology, with our earliest attempts to release the hold of *maternal* entity even before ex-isting outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language… (Kristeva 239)

Kristeva points to a language that was present in the womb, "the autonomy" that existed "even before ex-isting outside of" the maternal (239). Viewed in terms of the feminized body of the Appalachian landscape, this maternal body's secretions (mud, gas, rock dust, water) compare with the "*corporeal waste,* menstrual blood and excrement, or everything that is assimilated to them, from nail-pairings to decay" that represent "the objective frailty of symbolic order" (259). While "excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by the non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death," feminine secretions such as menstrual blood "stand[] for the danger issuing from within the identity (social or sexual)" (Kristeva 261). As the Appalachian body is geographically *within* the borders of what we could imagine to be the larger body of the North American landscape, the Appalachian body-as-feminized (and thus producer of "menstrual" secretions) presents a double threat—both to itself and to this larger American body. Abjected, jettisoned, thrown-up yet inextricable, Appalachia's representation with the larger body of North America is tensive and tenuous.

Witnessing National Bodies

How are Appalachian bodies "seen" and made "scene" as a (national) feminized spectacle? Taylor investigates "how nation is shaped through spectacle[31], that desiring-machine at work in the 'imaginings' that hold a community together" (Taylor 91). The national imaginary places Appalachia as a fixed object of both desire and repugnance, the abject of 'higher' urban spaces. The nation's looking/seeing conceptualizes Appalachia as a place apart, intrinsically and geographically tied to the landlocked United States but inherently flawed and backward-seeking in a separate, pre-modern realm that is set away from—but not so far as not to be seen by—the larger national body. This subject-object relationship between "greater" and "lesser" North America presents this region as feminized, caught in a masculinist and hegemonic gaze.

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[31] Spectacle as I address it here can be understood as both intentional (stage) and everyday performances of self—those performative enactments that become spectacle to an outside gaze. Citing Roach, these reiterative genealogies of performance "transmit social memory through collective participation" as performative traditions that enact group identity (Taylor 32).

Taylor writes that the construction of Argentinean national identity was "predicated on female destruction," pitting two different kinds of men ("conqueror/indigena; liberal/federalist; military/antimilitary") against one another to hold the "masculine" position while "emasculating and feminizing the 'other'" (16). She states that in Argentina, "individual and state formation take place, in part, in the visual sphere through a complicated play of looks: looking, being looked at, identification, recognition, mimicry" (30). Argentinean gender and nation-ness are oppositional, intertwined because each is the product of the other's performance (92). Nation-ness in Appalachia is played out *on the bodies* of women (as exemplified in the Daisy Duke and Dolly Parton motifs which create a simulacrum of Appalachian experience—an image drag performances can subvert, as with my performance of Daisy Duke drag), on the bodies of feminized men, and also prevalently played out on the feminized *landscape-as-body* with which (predominantly) white males toil. Entering the earth, miners plunge into its negative space, carving out holes deep into the earth and marking this unmarked space with scars that run vein-deep. Mining "gets in your blood," conjuring up associations of both "blood brothers" and a fluid-mixing intercourse of two enfleshed bodies coming together to make one.

Referencing the binaries of male (functioning) vs. female (nonfunctioning), Taylor writes:

> The various discourses that equate human bodies, spatial bodies (such as cities), and state bodies (nations or other imagined communities) indicate the degree to which nation-ness and gender have been naturalized to shape, organize, and valorize space as well as human corporeality … Thus each "body" is constructed along the various coordinates of space (territory/nation-ness) and gender. (96)

People construct bodies as their needs and desires dictate. Henry Shapiro and Alan Batteau have well-argued the construction of Appalachian identity by mainstream American intellectuals, choosing selective images and objects from this region to create an entity that "their perceived American society needs" (Drake 218). With the feminized Appalachian landscape-as-body, like Mama in the Argentinean whorehouse of Ricardo Monti's La cortina de albalorios, "Her body is a commercial zone" ready for industrial purchase and pleasure (Taylor 240). Beyond Monti's depiction of a desired/desirable female body, the female body in El desconcierto is "the subject of debate…the social pact between power brokers and

complicitous audiences is being negotiated (both in the military discourse and in much of this 'art') on the body of Woman. The audience searches for its identity in her bodily interstices and looks for 'truth' on her naked flesh. Her body functions as a text on which the community's fate is inscribed[32]" (247).

Off the Map

The visible does not eclipse the power of the invisible, "those specters and performative hauntings that help shape what we see" (30). Off the map politically and cartographically, Appalachia is the invisible presence in state politics, literally in the corner of many states, including Virginia. Peggy Hensley notes the tensions inherent in state elections for mountain dwellers:

> Peggy: And I think it's so neat that we have
> the state theatre of Virginia (*The Barter Theatre*) / in our end of Virginia.
>
> Hannah: Right there.
>
> P: It's amazing. / It's a wonder they'd let us do that, you know? (*Hannah laughs*)
> But we hope that Jerry Kilgore is gonna be our next governer, so
> wouldn't that be wonderful to have a governor from this end of the state?
>
> H: Mm hmm. / Is that rare?...
>
> P: Linwood, Virginia and and
> Virginia and Southwest Virginia and East Tennessee are pretty much in the same boat:
> Southwestern Virginia ends at Roanoke, and East Tennessee ends at Knoxville.
> And that's pretty much
> that's maybe a little bit less than it used to be.
> But it's still,
>
> H: (*nodding*) It's still pretty much [the way it is].
>
> P: Oh yeah. I've had people come into the door at the Fold and say
> "We're from Lynchburg—that's in Virginia, you know." And I turn to em and say,
> "Honey, you're still in Virginia!" (*both laugh loudly*)
>
> H: (*imitating Peggy*) "Did you think you'd dropped off the edge of the Earth or
> something?" (*both laugh*)
>
> P: Yeah, I said, "We're barely here but you're
> you're still in Virginia, we're barely in Virginia."

[32] Scanning the landscape-as-body of Appalachia, its flesh torn naked and womb exposed through strip-mining, she reveals a broken self whose tissues mark in blackened stains the bodies of those laborers who wrestle in her womb and rip open her breasts to suck from veins of coal.

Barely here but hanging on and *wondering* that *they* permit the state theater to grace this hillbilly mountain corner of the state, Peggy laughs in the face of invisibility. Her poetic turn to my question placed the meaning of visibility within the hills themselves—the landscape speaks for itself (or more appropriately, it is silenced and not *listened to*), and the state literally *ends* at Roanoke (or in my case, Knoxville). Peggy draws into conversation that which is already the invisible around us—sitting in her kitchen, with her blue-and-cream left-handed homemade coffee mug, pine-wood flooring, and plastic magnetic curios of puppies covering the refrigerator, these material objects disappear before her/our eyes, for as she says, "I see this area through other people's eyes." Doubling her own gaze with the imagined etic perception of those who weekly walk through the door of the Carter Fold[33] and based on their visible reactions (of both desire and disgust) to the dirt, broken-down boards, sutured bricolage and welcoming "fellowship" of this place, Peggy enacts a double consciousness that recognizes "how lucky we are to have someplace like this…to live in a place where there aren't any drive by shootings" and at the same time

> Peggy: I mean you see people come in and just, (*she does an impression, sighing and rolling her eyes*)
> "Where have they brought me? / The middle of nowhere!?" you know! (*both laugh*)

This is a *no*-where, the material ground beneath her feet becomes shaky when caught in another's gaze that becomes *her own* vision that *doubles back* to Other her body and home through the performative utterance of these embodied etic comments—in her own kitchen, solid ground becomes shimmering, plastic, and illusive.

Hidden out in the open, images of Appalachia and its political and economic struggles are both invisible and in plain view. For Derrida, phantoms ghosted into the present perform a reiterative dance that is always already a fresh repetition: "[a] specter is always a *revenant*. One cannot control its comings and goings because it *begins by coming back*" (Taylor 30, emphasis original). In this *no-where* that state politicians rarely ever see, Hiltons and Wise are part of "an imagined landscape beyond the pale—a place given over to dirt and violence, lack and excess…the space of alterity itself—that process of always approaching from without but never arriving" (Stewart 67).

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[33] Peggy works Saturday nights selling entry tickets at the Carter Fold, a short drive from Wise County.

Marianne Hirsch describes Lacan's notion of the *image* and the *screen* separating the subject and the object of his/her gaze: "the image/screen could thus become the space of ideological opposition and contestation, modulating the effect of the gaze" (Taylor 30). Views of Appalachian land and people are separated from outside (stereotyped) view by multiple malleable screens (of race, class, gender), not the least of which is the literal film of dirt and coal dust that covers houses, stains skin, enters nostrils and invades the bodies of those who live and visit. Taylor notes that these historicized and localized screens change, altering the external register of what is seen. Screens morph between out/insider views.

Many coal miners stated that political boundaries are not as important as the geographical boundaries that connect KY/VA/TN and the region's interests and struggles. Peggy Hensley and miner Earl Scott both stated that VA ends at Roanoke, and TN begins at Knoxville. Earl's origin story flows with the discovery of coal seams which spill across state borders, crossing boundaries and connecting what are often seen as localized interests with trans-Appalachian concerns (which are often partitioned into the corners of states and hence their particular concerns are ignored at the level of state-politics).

Earl: Where that town [of St. Charles, VA] / was a boom town, as you can call it
I, as, as coal mining / started to thrive / in thE 30's?
Which, that came out a Harlan, Kentucky.

Hannah: Yeah.

E: And, Harlan, Kentucky, from where we're talkin' about Saint Charles you're only talkin' about 25 or 30 miles.

H: Is it that close?

E: It sure is.

H: Wow.

E: In fact, my grandfather, / on my dad's side, he came out a Harlan.

H: Really?

E: He came out a there when it was known as Bloody Harlan.

Hannah: Mmm

Earl: And uh, all this / mining camp in there, run on into Saint Charles and everthing.

In Appalachia: A History, John Williams notes that because Appalachia is a body partitioned off into the corners of so many states, attention from state legislature is rarely given, and issues from these regions rarely broached.

IV. Postcolonial Space

Almost the Same But Not…

In ”Of Mimicry and Man,” Homi Bhabha investigates colonial mimicry as “the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power” (Bhabha 86). Colonial mimicry emerges as a copy that proves itself different, producing the ambivalence of a partial presence, both “incomplete” and “virtual”: “almost the same but not *quite*” and ”*almost the same but not white*” (86, 89). Colonial power and appropriation rest in assuring the “strategic failure” of the colonial subject who remains partial, who (ironically) continually tries to achieve authenticity through mimicry (87-8). The objective, the ambition of colonial mimicry is a *metonymy of presence*, a part for the whole, not metaphorically or totally representing the “real” colonial but strategically and partially re-presenting. The ambivalence of colonial authority creates the possibility for no presence (the ironic desire for authenticity in mimicry that “conceals no presence or identity behind its mask,” “*mimicry*—a difference that is almost nothing but not quite”) and for a menacing presence (where power can be subverted through partial mimicry, “*menace*—a difference that is almost total but not quite”) (91). This is metaphoric presentation where the master is in control v. metonymic partial presence where it is dangerous for the master.

In her article “Hello Dolly Well Hello Dolly,” Rebecca Schneider echoes Bhabha’s notions of ambiguous (colonial) mimicry’s power, this time as seen through the gaze of the father (Father Mime). Schneider’s article focuses not on the ethics of biomedical cloning, but on the issues of time and repetition as they appear (and dis/reappear) in the theatre, marking these implicitly as theatrical concerns through her discussion of “the double.” Schneider probes the fears associated with cloning: we re-make, re-store (through copies, doubles, or clones), yet we fear the mimesis of doing so (Schneider 96). The fear of mimesis is the fear that the double will both cast and outcast the first—that the copy is what makes the original original, and that that copy might at some time have the power to unseat/outdo the

original—to pass for and be more original than the original itself. Schneider cites the Genesis story of Adam's rib, connecting patriarchy to the fear of the copy becoming the first—that the first man might be outdone or *first done* by its copy, the woman, making "authenticity deranged" and confusing patriarchal authority (and the idea of a first father or father of origin) (97). The very notion of a "first time" becomes enigmatic—even a first kiss projects toward other kisses for its own definition (97).

Like the hyperreplicated images of Barbara Streissand and Elvis in the works of Deborah Kass and Andy Warhol, Dolly presents a body that is excessive, out of control, a danger to "naturalized gender identification and heterosexual prerogative," and linked to the "improprieties of the theatrical" (101). The business of cloning in theater, film, and street performance is pervasive: from street dancers who puppeteer life-size female dolls, to the self-replica of older South Street Seaport market walls repainted to look like themselves when they were younger (and older), to Civil War reenactments (a "living history" and access to "authentic" understanding) (103). As with cloning, these theaters enact a repetition: "history brought back, again and again, across the body on stage, or across the body as [the] stage" of a single reproduced cell (103).

Cloning anxiety is multifaceted, and most fears hinge on the role of the father as original (related to a fear of mimesis/feminized replication, where "Origins are fictions" (or "first lies") brought about through performativity and (disavowed) repetition, and "Foundations are outed as performative re-foundations": feminists in fear of bodies-as-factories, men fearing the father's role in reproduction will fall away, homophobes fearing their sexual preference might be dislodged from its status as normal/original (and not constructed), and conservative Christians fearing God will be displaced by (wo)man and children denied their supposed-to-be biological parents (103).

The fear of the double is bound up in the thought that the copy would *acknowledge* the original as secondary, and that the double creates a parody/mockery/theater. The film Paris is Burning presents such a theater of doubled mockery, where gender is explicitly performative as participants in the balls clone the "executive" and the "real" as categories to be convincingly mastered (to the heterosexual eye—or the eye of Schneider's student). These performative gestures enacted at the balls open up a "wound" for Schneider's student—he had been duped, gay passed for straight before his eyes, the cave-wound of Plato

was played out before him as he mistook "shadow" for "real" (truly which is which?) in misrecognition. Plato says that in remembering that we have been fooled (in remembering that the shadow on the cave wall is not the real image at our backs), we find access to the truth we had lost (the "real" behind us, beyond our vision) (105). Schneider says that cloning translates Plato's cave theory into literal bodies (here, of sheep), welling up our remembered knowledge of the real through our experience with the shadow (the copy), but also conjuring fears of the cave as "Mother-space" and that of the "masquerading feminine" (105). Anxiety for Freud is closely linked with sexuality, but before this stage, at birth, there is the anxiety of separation from the mother, a primal scene. This anxiety is productive for Freud: repetition (re)generates anxiety to master (backwards) the remains of trauma (the wound), to heal the wound in a sense. Plato must maintain a binary between the clone/repetition and the Real/Originary, whereas Freud finds origin in the performative repetition: "remembrance itself is a theater, enabled *by performance*, not turned away from repetition as debased. In the theater of psychoanalytic transference, the first is always only accessed through reenactment, through a *second time* but, importantly, a second time which constitutes, backward *and* afterward, the first" (106).

Cloning may offer a "kind of end to death"—the body lives on and on in successive repetition, but this repetition also ends the station of the father for some antagonists to cloning (Dave Anderson on Michael Jordan, for whom Michael is the originary Michael because of the influence by/relationship with the father). Mime and cloning threaten paternity/patriarchy: "It is 'father time,' then, who saves us from the indiscriminate reproducibility of mother mime," Schneider writes (108). Mimesis is feared as a feminized version of (re)production—as being only of the mother [an act of (/performance by?) the mother], though the genetic material is of both father and mother. In non-clone reproduction (and according to Anderson's logic), the father "remains as, precisely, remains," as archive (the tangible remnants of a former body—the body of the father), and this somehow allows the dead father to survive and is comforting; mimesis (in Western culture) does not remain—like the theatre, it is ephemeral, always in the act of disappearing, an "illegitimate theater" that produces clones, without access to the "archive" of the dead father (108). Michael is the "original" Michael because of the influence of his father on (and his archival remains living on in) Michael's childhood. We "stockpile" such archival remains—"traces of dead

authentics, documents of the primary"—even as these "originary" remnants guard against our "culture of the copy" (108). In Western culture, the father/remains/archive survives/is left, and the mimetic practice and act (the making/copying/sameness) is of the mother and subject to disappearing.

The archive that works against death (to make live again a Dead Dad that has passed away—upholding patriarchy) also requires a death to make the archive itself (parasitic) (109). Thus, as Derrida writes in Archive Fever, the archive is as much about survival as it is about death/aggression/destruction—controlled loss. Schneider asks, if "son fathers parent" (the copy determines the Original), then does cloning (in its feminized understanding) threaten the dead father as "repetitive foundational citation," rendering him (and patriarchy) obsolete?

Colonial mimicry and the mimicry of cloning reveal a partial-threat mediated through the gaze. Jamaica Kincaid's take on the tourist in A Small Place shows the colonial gaze at work (or, at play/vacation)—the "stages" of the tourist experience (here, read the tourist of Appalachia) progress:

> …to being a person marveling at the harmony (ordinarily, what you would say is the backwardness) and **the union** these other people (and they are other people) have with nature. And you look at **the things they can do** with a piece of ordinary cloth, the things they fashion out of cheap, vulgarly colored (to you) twine, the way they squat down over **a hole they have made in the ground,** the hole itself is something to marvel at… (Kincaid 16-17)

→insert photo of farmers working happily with hoes

→insert photo of Mountain Hands, narrative collections honoring the traditional crafts of Appalachians with photographs of their hands holding items such as a corn-shuck doll

→insert photo of miners working **underground** in wet caverns

The conclusion of Kincaid's quote, and the theories that accompany it, give pause to any one-to-one correspondence between the interior American sub-region of Appalachia in the scope of the larger political body it in part comprises: the United States.

> …and since you are being an ugly person this ugly but joyful thought will swell inside you: their ancestors were not clever in the way yours were and not ruthless in the way yours were, for then would it not be you who would be in harmony with nature and backwards in that charming way? (Kincaid 16-17)

Kincaid's discussion of "ancestors" contrasts with the shared nationality (and even shared diversity of heritages) of Americans. And yet, Appalachians have been characterized to an extent that they become monstered[34], inhuman[35], of a different "breed[36]."

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[34] Appalachians are characterized as excessive and without socialization.

[35] They are barefoot animals, or as my grandfather said in one conversation: "…all they had heard was that / we didn't wear any shoes…."

[36] Even the dirt that miners work in stains their skin, changing skin color: "these black spots, you know, they're just / They're from the mines you can't get em out, you can't get em out, you can't get em out."

Though my work is rooted in economic, racial, and cultural histories that differ greatly from the wider body of postcolonial literature and theory at present, and with full acknowledgement of the differences between my focus and the larger racial/class issues and global-scale of current postcolonial studies, may we still ask similar questions of Appalachia as a region subject to a colonial gaze, insofar as its identity is made partial through modernist ideals? Looking at depictions of Appalachia from outside its borders, it appears to be viewed with a colonizing gaze that reduces the complex lives of those in this region to a nostalgic, romanticized, even somewhat exoticized postcard representation, (re)marking this region and its people as different from and somehow less than more urban centers: the urban me-yet-not-me→me-as-primitive-in-the-woods→primitive life→primate→simian→reminiscent of colonial and grossly disturbing characterizations of Africans as simian[37]… How may we look at representations of Appalachia (here looking at its people, as their bodies are uniquely interrelated and intertwined with the landscape-as-body of Appalachia) as partial, and what is its power through mimicry?

Appalachian Literature as Postcolonial Literature

Appalachian novels such as Barbara Kingsolver's Prodigal Summer, Harriette Arnow's The Dollmaker, and Adrianna Trigiani's Stone Gap series mirror the postcolonial writings of Arundati Roy and V.S. Naipaul in their subversive literary critiques of the ways Appalachian identity has been carefully constructed as a foil for more privileged and 'cleaner' urban spaces. How do their writings speak to Appalachia as a denigrated and postcolonial region?

Madison stresses that ethnographers are not the sole voice for underprivileged communities. Indeed, we should harbor no illusions that we are the heroes for others, and we have an ethical obligation to inform others of how indigenous workers are already there working in their own communities to fight injustices. In Madison's performance of Is It a Human Being or a Girl?, the Ethnographer character journals self-derisively: "We have the answers. We have the A-I-D. Giddy-up, giddy-up, giddy-up the Wild, Wild West will show you and tell you who you are!" then coming out of her frenzy she looks around at the

[37] as Bhabha tells us, "the discriminatory identities constructed across traditional cultural norms and classifications, the Simian Black, the Lying Asiatic—all these are *metonymies* of presence" (Bhabha 90).

Ghanaians who are looking at *her* as if to say, "Who do you think you are?" The Ethnographer turns back to her journal and writes/says, "I need to ask more questions."

Postcolonial literature by indigenous writers in former colonies is just one example of how communities are actively involved in their own forms of resistance. Roy's novel The God of Small Things tells the story of Rahel and her brother Estha growing up in the late 1960's in Communist Kerela, India. Roy's poetic novel explores the effects of globalization on her native home by unpacking the small things: everyday moments of joy and abuse, and the tangible remains of a way of life slowly crumbling underneath an increasingly tourist-centered economy. The transformation from local to global markets centers around

> The History House.
>
> Where, in the years that followed, the Terror (still-to-come) would be buried in a shallow grave. Hidden under the happy humming of hotel cooks. The humbling of old Communists. The slow death of dancers. The toy histories that rich tourists came to play with.
>
> It was a beautiful house. (Roy 290)

The following is a portion of a performance script which interweaves Roy's novel with postcolonial writings by Cabral and Cesaire and juxtaposes these against various "assurances" listed on the World Trade Organization's website. In performance, a Hindu dancer performs in the center of a circle of audience members as the script is read.

> ROY: Kari Saipu's house had been renovated and painted. It had become the centerpiece of an elaborate complex, crisscrossed with artificial canals and connecting bridges. Small boats bobbed in the water. The old colonial bungalow with its deep verandah and Doric columns, was surrounded by smaller, older, wooden houses—ancestral homes—that the hotel chain had bought from old families and transplanted in the Heart of Darkness. (Roy 120)
>
> CABRAL: Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history… (Cabral 54-55)
>
> ROY: Toy Histories for rich tourists to play in. (Roy 120)
>
> CABRAL: The principal characteristic, common to every kind of imperialist domination, is the negation of the *historical process* of the dominated people by means of violently usurping the free operation of the process of development of the

productive forces. [these forces include human beings/fathers, mothers and children; cultural production of expressions—oral and danced; access to capital relative to the rest of the world]… (Cabral 54-55)

ROY: …the old houses had been arranged around the History House in attitudes of deference. (Roy 120)

(Hannah takes painted photos of dancing images and places them in a tighter, inner circle around her through next few lines, moving/arranging the old houses)

CABRAL: culture is an essential element of the history of a people. Culture is, perhaps, the product of that history just as the flower is the product of a plant… (Cabral 54-55)

ROY: "Heritage," the hotel was called… (Roy 120)

CABRAL: imperialist domination, by denying the historical development of the dominated people, necessarily also denies their cultural development. (Cabral 54-55)

WTO: The WTO...In brief—*the World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only international organization dealing with the global rules of trade between nations. Its main function is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible.* **The result** is assurance, Producers and exporters know that foreign markets will remain open to them.

ROY: …The furniture and knick-knacks that came with the house were on display. (Roy 120)

WTO: Consumers and producers know that they can enjoy secure supplies and greater choice of the finished products,

ROY: A reed umbrella, a wicker couch. (Roy 120)

WTO: components

ROY: A wooden dowry box. (Roy 120)

WTO: raw materials and services that they use.

ROY: They were labeled with edifying placards that said *Traditional Kerala Umbrella* and *Traditional Bridal Dowry-box.* (Roy 120)

WTO: The result is also a more prosperous, peaceful and accountable economic world.

> CESAIRE: My turn to state an equation: colonization = "thingification." (Cesaire 9-25)
>
> ROY: So there it was then, History and Literature enlisted by commerce. Kurtz and Karl Marx joining palms to greet rich guests as they stepped off the boat. (Roy 120)
>
> CONCEPTS: Dependency theory…provided the context for the economic position of the non-aligned movement of the third world…[which] consisted…of an attempt to de-link the economy from a dependent relation to the world marked through policies of import substitution, as in India…in practice many newly independent states followed a broad policy of state socialism. By the 1960's the move to radical socialism and increasingly communism appeared unstoppable. But the oil crisis of 1974 floored capitalist and socialist economies alike. The stronger ones recovered, others did not. (Mishra Hodge 52)
>
> **WTO: The result** is assurance.

This performance shows the ongoing conversation between postcolonial writers, theorists, and economic powers. Roy's novel answers back to globalization in specific, contextual, embodied, and rhetorically compelling ways.

Similarly, Kingsolver's novel Prodigal Summer tells the story of a complex, multilayered, rich and troubled Appalachia through three protagonists who each challenge and/or are challenged by stereotypes of this region. Appalachian workers are as almost the same but not quite modern, urban, efficient—this not-quite-ness makes itself apparent in daily performances of place. For example, the performance of accent is a conscious or subconscious marker of that not-quite-ness. In Prodigal Summer Kingsolver creates a dialogue between an Appalachian and non-Appalachian couple. The woman, Deanna, has her PhD in biology and is a forest ranger. He, Eddie, is younger, a recent college graduate from a northern American university. In this excerpt of Kingsolver's novel, accent determines, defines, reveals or creates an identity that is almost urban, almost educated, but not quite:

> "I'm not Little Red Riding Hood, if that's what's worrying you. I'm twice as old as you are." *Twiced as old,* she'd said, a long extinguished hillbilly habit tunneling into her unpracticed talk. (7)

"Hillbilly" language, something of a "[bad] habit," slips in, makes itself known, tunnels through "normal" conversation (which here has to be "practiced" so as to appear

normal). In this slip, this accidental exposure, Deanna curses herself in embarrassment—we can imagine a blush on her cheek, the ultimate exposure of turning the inside out, blood rushing to the cheeks as the insides (emotion) are exposed outside, made inadvertently, unavoidably and *embarrassingly* apparent, and the performance is undone. Such expressions as "habit" are indelibly linked to accent and tenor of voice—"twiced" as an expression is produced by a habitual (performative) drawl, a word rolled off the tongue in performative ways to become "hillbilly," a manner of *accenting* the end of words by adding the "d," as the same accent would *accent*uate the beginning of "it" with an "h": "*hit* don't matter none." The habit, as a visible (or audible) marker of place and kinship (billies in the hills), exposes itself.

A feminized practice, exposing oneself is linked with the feminine. As Russo writes:

> Making a spectacle out of oneself seemed a specifically feminine danger. The danger was of an exposure. Men…"exposed themselves" [deliberately]…For a woman, making a spectacle out of herself had more to do with a kind of inadvertency and loss of boundaries [the loss of control that modernism claims, as with seatbelts, can actively contain, control, "save lives"]: the possessors of large, aging, and dimpled thighs displayed at the public beach, of overly rouged cheeks, of a voice shrill in laughter, or of a sliding bra strap—a loose dingy bra strap especially—were at once caught out by fate and blameworthy. It was my impression that these women had done something wrong, had stepped, as it were, into the limelight out of turn—too young or too old, too early or too late—and yet anyone, any *woman*, could make a spectacle out of herself if she was not careful. (53)

Like a dirty bra strap slipped off the shoulder, "hillbilly habit" falls out of Deanna's mouth—she was "not careful," and in her "unpracticed" speech she "inadvertently" speaks out of (proper) place. In <u>What's Eating Gilbert Grape</u>, when Bonnie Grape leaves the house, she is "making a spectacle of herself," and she is contained by the gaze—not a single perspective that contains her, but it all corrals her, holds her, re-contained, the wild excesses of her voice and presence over bureaucracy, excess as an exceeding of containment and returning to containment, her voice and presence subsiding as she gets into her car she is overtaken by those who claim her and won't let her go with their glaring looks (Pollock et.al. "Fat"). Inadvertently, caught off her guard, improper speech slips from Lusa's mouth, and in its anomalous presence (and in the heat of the moment, as her vocal volume does rise in fury at

this point in the conversation) her words can be seen to blast loudly, making her the subject a staring gaze by the man with whom she speaks.

The conversation between Kingsolver's characters continues:

> He studied her with a confusion she recognized. She was well accustomed to watching Yankee brains grind their gears, attempting to reconcile a hillbilly accent with signs of a serious education. (7, 11)

The "Yankee" here is struck with intrigue and surprise mixed with fear: the fear of almost-the-same. Like Rebecca Schneider's student who had been "duped" by gay performances of a heterosexual "real" on Wall Street, Eddie has been fooled in conversation—Deanna was almost urban, almost the same, almost educated properly, but not quite. Deanna still must prove herself beyond the (implied) failings of her accent and region—her "origins" (her first home) to attempt to find a second-first home in more urban spaces—to perform urbanity to attain education. Here, Deanna uses her accent as a marker of partial-education as a hiding place, a means to dupe, outwit, trick the man with whom she speaks. As a tactic (borrowing from de Certeau's model of tactics and strategies), her use of "hillbilly accent" in conjunction with "educated" scientific language creates a tactical tool with which to ply the situation, as leverage in her favor—having no *place* (as with a strategy), tactics are temporal and caught "on the wing," as here in her impromptu conversation (Russo 22). Deanna tactically manages representations (hillbilly and educated) to achieve agency in this situation. In her choice of representations here shows the partial, metonymic "camouflage" of a "serious [read urban] education" when combined with an accent that decidedly places her out of those urban borders (Bhabha 90).

Kingsolver's novel also follows the character of Lusa, a Ph.D. in biology from Lexington, Kentucky. She marries Cole, a man from rural Zebulon County, and moves back home with him to his farm on Zebulon Mountain, a fictitious Appalachian community in Kentucky. The transition from urban to rural is difficult for her, because she assumes that no one in that community will be able to communicate on her level. We see into her interpretations and impressions of her newly-adopted mountain life as she experiences them. She feels like an outsider from "a place in the preposterous distance" and is "marooned" there when her husband tragically dies in a car accident soon after her arrival in Zebulon

County (Kingsolver 33). Living there, however, she comes to know this place in a radically new way:

> People in Appalachia insisted that the mountains breathed, and it was true: the steep hollow behind the farmhouse took up one long, slow inhalation every morning and let it back down through their open windows and across the fields throughout evening—just one full, deep breath each day. When Lusa first visited Cole here she'd listened to talk of mountains breathing with a tolerant smile. She had some respect for the poetry of country people's language, if not for the veracity of their perceptions: mountains breathe, and a snake won't die till the sun goes down, even if you chop off its head…But when she married Cole and moved her life into this house, the inhalations of Zebulon Mountain touched her face all morning, and finally she understood. She learned to tell time with her skin, as morning turned to afternoon and the mountain's breath began to bear gently on the back of her neck. By early evening it was insistent as a lover's sigh, sweetened by the damp woods, cooling her nape and shoulders whenever she paused her work in the kitchen to lift her sweat-damp curls off her neck. She had come to think of Zebulon as another man in her life, larger and steadier than any other companion she had known. (Kingsolver 31-2)

As the novel progresses, Lusa's intimate relationship with the land becomes erotic, sensuous, and intimate. Surpassing her love for biology and moths in laboratory tests, the mountain speaks to her in her dreams. Zebulon is her dream metaphor for Cole, and in sleep she creates a fantasy world in which the three of them—she, her dead husband, and the home which haunts her with loss and loneliness—can live together. Fantasy is a site of intervention for Lusa. Her conscious, rationalized world has been shaped by images of this region as backward, stupid, and utterly foreign. Her growing experiences in Zebulon have begun to challenge these popularized portraitures of Appalachia. Dreams are the site in which she allows herself to become vulnerable and listen to place. In dreams, the Mountains speak, touch, and look for themselves. She is no longer the voyeur watching the mountains from a distanced, masculine, totalizing, and pornographic gaze. Place imagery combines with her intellectual passion for moths along with her yearning to be with Cole. In the following passage of Kingsolver's novel, the mountain-moth-man watches, caresses, and seduces her, and she experiences a radically different Appalachia than she had imagined before entering Zebulon:

> Sleep took Lusa away to a wide, steep pasture cleared out of the forest. A man spoke to her by name:

> "Lusa."
>
> He was a stranger to her, no one she thought she knew. She could hear his voice but couldn't see him. She was lying in the dewy grass, on her side, wrapped up completely in a dark blanket that even covered her head.
>
> "How did you know it was me?" she asked him through the blanket, because suddenly she understood there were women lying all over this field, also wrapped in dark-colored blankets.
>
> He answered, "I know you. I know the shape of your body."
>
> "You've been looking at me closely, then."
>
> "I have."
>
> She felt an acute, erotic awareness of her small waist and short thigh bones, the particular roundness of her hip—things that might distinguish her from all the other women lying under blankets. The unbearable, exquisite pleasure of being chosen.
>
> "You knew me well enough to find me here?"
>
> His voice was soft, reaching across the distance to explain his position in the most uncomplicated terms conceivable. "I've always known you that well."
>
> His scent burst onto her brain like a rain of lights, causing her to know him perfectly. *This is how moths speak to each other. The wrong words are impossible when there are no words.*
>
> She rolled toward him and opened her blanket.
>
> He was covered in fur, not a man at all but a mountain with the silky, pale-green extremities and maroon shoulders of a luna moth. He wrapped her in his softness, touched her face with what seemed to be the movement of trees. His odor was of water over stones and the musk of decaying leaves, a wild, sweet aura that drove her to a madness of pure want. She pushed herself down against the whole length of him, rubbing his stippled body like a forest between her legs, craving to dissolve her need inside the confidence of his embrace. It was those things exactly, his solid strength and immensity, that comforted her as he shuddered and came into her.
>
> She woke in a sweat, her back arched with simultaneous desire and release. She touched her body quickly—her breasts, her face—reassuring herself of her own shape. It seemed impossible, but here she was after everything that had happened, still herself, Lusa. (78-9)

The narrative follows a heteronormative and patriarchal formula for love where he pursues her. Within this pattern, however, an "outsider" opens herself up viscerally to what Irigaray calls "sensuous engagement" with the other and with the world (qtd. in Shildrick 113). Kingsolver shows us leaky, seeping contact with place that negates a subject-object split (113). Through intercorporeal witnessing, Lusa makes her body wholly vulnerable to experiencing the other, and she is changed. Though after her dream, she "reassure[es] herself" that "after everything that had happened" she was "still herself, Lusa," as the novel

progresses her dreams "become her life once again" (Kingsolver 79, 344). She interpenetrates with this Other place and finds it a friend: "in the absence of Cole, in the house where he'd grown up, she was learning to cohabit with the whole of his life" (437).

Making do with the scraps of her past and present life, she becomes her own form of mountain woman: living as a goat rancher, selling herds to wealthy New Yorkers for Hanukah celebrations, and using her biology degree to intimately communicate with the land and raise crops. Her love for Appalachian place is not precious or romanticized. She claims the family of place that her dead husband left to her—a farmhouse and acreage where she rips down the wild honeysuckle she once revered because "she could see what she needed to see" through intercorporeal eyes with a loving-touching gaze: "It was only honeysuckle, an invasive exotic, nothing sacred. She saw it now for what it was, an introduced garden vine coiling itself tightly around all the green places where humans and wilder creatures conceded to share their lives" and all the while "knowing this honeysuckle would persist beyond anything she could ever devise or imagine" (440). Feeling "the mountain's breath on the back of her neck," she comes to understand and know place through intercorporeal witnessing.

Postcolonial Photography

The most recent publication to date of photographs from southern Appalachia is a collection by Mike Smith titled You're Not From Around Here. As the title shows, this is not an example of "indigenous" work. Smith moved to Johnson City, TN as a professor in 1981 and for the past several years has photographed southern Appalachian landscapes and people. His collections have toured the southeast, been met with acclaim from art critics, and are represented in permanent print collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago. At home, however, the You're Not From Around Here collection often is seen as another example of an outsider who does *not* know his subjects and who, perhaps with all good intentions, reinforces negative, reductive, and damaging stereotypes. I both admire and am angered by his collection. I offer here a short analysis of his work in conjunction with two other photographers and photography projects.

Mike Smith: Landscapes and Loss

Eng and Kazanjian's collection Loss focuses on theories of loss as they circulate around notions of melancholia and mourning. Eng and Kazanjian begin by invoking Benjamin's hopeful mourning of the *remains* of the past (remains reminding us of Kristeva's archive) as establishing an "active and open relationship with history," a creative process of animating history that he names "historical materialism" (Eng Kazanjian 1). This process does not return to the past by erasing all that followed a particular point in history but brings the past into memory to engage an active tension between temporal spheres of past and present. This continuing dialogue between these two temporal spheres (reminiscent of Conquergood's hopeful description of dialogic performance between audience, performer, and the lives performed) offers an instant of productive possibility. Contrasted with historicism's myopic view of events from the victor's circle, Benjamin claims that such a fixed account is both "illusive [and] elusive" and shifts focus to a *hope* in mourning (a seeming contradiction) that *animates* loss for political change (2).

Loss, the editors claim, is integrally linked to what remains and representations/readings of those remains, and in this collection it is tied to the shifting meanings of melancholia (2). Freud contrasts *mourning*, which is a gradual, bit by bit letting go of/detachment from the lost object (this is key—the loss is not necessarily of a person, but of an ideal, concept, or thing, such as a job or a pet) until that object can be declared *dead* and the mourner can move on with life, and *melancholia*, which is an unending mourning, an "enduring devotion" that does not allow the lost object to die into the past and keeps the lost object in a perpetual present (3-4). According to Freud, the latter is pathologized as an unhealthy block to the ego's recovery and letting go of grief; and yet, it is melancholy that makes the distinctions of mourning and the ego possible. The editors draw from these essays that melancholia is "a confrontation with loss through the adamant refusal of closure" that opens up loss as a space of mobility and creativity, offering unpredictable political aspects to melancholic loss that opens up an ongoing "relationship with the past" for new understandings of lost objects (3-4). Freud marks the ego as constituted through "the residues of accumulated losses," as a repository for these remains, and the melancholic object offers the palimpsest possibility for multiple simultaneous losses. Melancholy materializes in social, cultural, political, and aesthetic domains—as the past bears witness to the present in

this understanding of loss, these essays and the editors ask: how is this loss apprehended, how is history named, and how do we locate "what remains": mourning (6)?

Min's chapter evaluates "contemporary spatial apprehensions of the loss of home and nation" in two art installations/works (Vo and Sameshima's) to complicate notions of melancholia as absolute loss but as incomplete, unfinished, and thus open to a world of becoming "something new, something different" (21). Vo's ambivalent landscape of floor and found objects covered in packing tape refuses to purge the history of Vietnam and its "refugees" of ambivalence (resisting an assimilation model). Sameshima's postcard-like images of sweat-soaked and tousled beds splashed with color refuse stasis in a nostalgia of past excitements, suspending the viewer (or, participant) between past and future in a spatialization and temporalization of loss. In all the essays, Eng and Kazanjian forward, notions of melancholia as pathology are eschewed to look at remains as "insistently creative and deeply political" (23).

Following Eng and Kazanjian's central questions on loss and melancholy from the section on Bodily Remains and the specific questions Moten raises in his chapter, how do (representations of) Appalachian bodies emerge, appear, materialize and others remain ghostly, disappear, or fade? What are the chosen representations of this region, who chooses/decides/edits these images, and what are the possibilities for change (through body art/other mediums) in these representations? And how might we grasp the generative, hopeful, and productive possibilities of melancholy as Eng, Kazanjian, and Min illustrate them, to dwell in that suspended time between melancholy and mourning?

Sameshima takes ordinary objects (the beds, cigarettes) and contextualizes and positions them in such a way, adding colors, to "hint at something more as they evoke specific yet varied emotional states of passion, coolness, and desolate loneliness…conjure fantasy and reality simultaneously and interchangeably, enabling individual desire to break through into a wider social space, from the interior to the exterior" (239). How might this loss (of the lovers in beds, human bodies) which is viscerally present in Sameshima's photographs offer a model for photographs of Appalachia, taking the "already-seen-repertoire" of postcard images and showing them literally in a new light, in contrasting colors, or with other "disruptions" to challenge audiences to see the loss of representation in these images (the images of "trailer trash" that clutter a nostalgic view of this region)?

How might we stage Barthes's notion of the punctum to contrast with the "postcard"-like photographic representations of Appalachia in books such as Moore's Mountain Voices, "a two-dimensional representation, that which can be appropriated within the privatized view of the individual subject," usually showing images recognizable in an "already-seen image repertoire" (Min 238)? Min cites Susan Stewart's descriptions of the *postcard as souvenir* that "reduce[s] the public and the three-dimensional into the miniature…or into [a] two-dimensional representation, that which can be appropriated within the privatized view of the individual subject" (238). Like Moten's aural pictures or Love/Kohn's souvenirs that are so charged with story as to speak for themselves, with Stewart's postcards the image "remains silent"—or, there are silent remains—that yet "force[] the eruption of a narrative" propelled by nostalgia (238). Min connects such postcard representations with Barthes's studium, "images that reaffirm reality without disturbing it…synonymous with what we know as normal representation" where the viewer "doesn't think twice but readily accepts [the image] as a part of the cultural landscape" (238). Moore's collection shows us what we already expect to see, a performatively normalized representation of Appalachia and its people as happy, wrinkled, calloused but ultimately fragile. Such representations are like the repetitive performative depictions of the disabled, such as those David Hevey discusses in his article "The Creatures That Time Forgot," which show imagery of disabled people as a site of fear, loss, or pity (*potentially projected there by the photographer*), where photographers "represent the construction of an 'official' history of blame from the disabling society towards disabled people" (Hevey 73).

Mike Smith's photographs present an interesting contrast to Moore's more reductive representations of this region—Smith's "portraitures" show bodies that excessively seep into one another:

Figure 4 Mike Smith, "Fox Hollow, TN 1996," (Mike Smith 25).

Figure 5 Mike Smith, "Bristol, VA 1996," (Mike Smith 89).

People are the absent presence in these photographs—as with Min's reading of the sweat-stained and soaked pillows and sheets in Sameshima's In Between Days (Without You), Smith's photographs show the *remains* of human life on the landscape, and we see "the absence/presence of bodies" on the (body of the) landscape (Min 237). Like Vo's the

mourning after, Smith's photograph series presents "nonlinear, fragmented, and overlapping narratives" that create "an interruption, a gap that complicate[s] the narrative of melancholia" (231). For Min, Vo and Sameshima's photographs represent the dialectical process between mourning and melancholia through "a performative reading that depends upon the interrelationship between the object and the viewer" (Min 232). Like Jones's intersubjective gaze, the reader is called into relation with the images at hand/sight to co-create meaning out of representation (even as this intersubjective gaze calls the viewer into co-consumption).

Smith's photographs "evoke an ambiguous sense of longing and loss. The presence of human bodies is absent from the scene, yet their absence is palpable" (236). Just as Min's careful inspection of Sameshima's In Between Days reveals artifacts that "arouse[] the still image from its flat immobility and give[] it life," inspecting Smith's photographs we find artifacts that evoke a mobility: the graveyard of decaying metal car hulls, the dog's collar as indicative of human owners—there are people, somewhere, who own and care for this dog, but where are they (239)? Do they live *here*? In denying the vision of human bodies yet showing pieces of their past presence, these visible remains "animate[] a life external to the photograph" (239). Barthes's "blind field," this life outside the borders of the photograph, explodes the frame of Smith's images, creating "the possibility to see the unexpected, to view a drama that has—or has yet to be—unfolded" (239).

Min says that Sameshima's photographs "hint at something more" as they "conjure fantasy and reality simultaneously and interchangeably, enabling individual desire to break through into a wider social space, from the interior to the exterior" (239). The punctum of Sameshima's works literally shifts the frame of possibilities for photographic representation, spring boarding individual desire into social space, "from the interior to the exterior" (239). If the feminine is linked with interior space, might Smith's images—which, as I see them, enact the punctum—counter feminized representations of Appalachia and move the "interior to the exterior" (239)? By inviting an intersubjective gaze, opening up a wound for the viewer so that meaning "depends more on the reader, the viewer than on the photograph itself[38]," might Smith's photographs unravel the "binary opposition between subject and object, viewer and image" (Min 241)? Min says that Sameshima and Vo's work is useful in

[38] This is as with Sameshima's collection which suspends the viewer between an "absence of loss and love" and the blind field of "(in)visible bodies" (Min 241).

uncovering the hopeful possibilities of melancholia, where melancholia as "'an intention to mourn that precedes and anticipates the loss of the object' can transform from an immobile and static condition into a production of becoming'" (247). Smith's photographs of the *remains* of Appalachian bodies suspend us temporarily in this melancholy, where we are intersubjectively pulled into the "drama…unfolded" with/in the image as a state of "becoming" (239, 247).

Mike Smith: Enfreaked Bodies

While I favor Smith's landscape photographs of Appalachia in their evocative absence of Appalachian people, his portraits of Appalachian men and women are not much different from the debasing images of Appalachians in 1920's silent films. These photos of Appalachian people are conspicuously absent from advertisements for his museum shows and recent book, You're Not From Around Here. There is a depth and breadth to his landscapes—they are beautiful and disturbing, showing "pure" nature yet simultaneously resisting the insinuation that this is virgin land, feminized space. This depth is missing from his portraits of human beings, who at times resemble scientific, pinned-down specimen.

In Smith's collection, one man is pictured drooling out the front of his face (Fig. 6)—he has lost control of his body, and it flows out, erupts, presses past the borders behind which it ought to be contained. This excessive, effusive body wears glasses that are just a little too big, with a smile that is just a little too simple, or sly, or *something* I can't quite put my finger on. He is not, as introductory remarks by Robert Sobieszek try to assure me, an *ordinary* person. If Smith's photographs of the *remains* of Appalachian bodies suspend us in melancholy, his portraits of human bodies push me into another place entirely—one of distance and at times horror. I recoil from these bodies, yet I cannot look away. It is like a freak show.

Figure 6 Mike Smith, "Fox Hollow, TN 1996" (Mike Smith 83).

When I bought the book in the student bookstore at East Tennessee State University, the woman at the checkout counter wrinkled her mouth at my purchase as she swiped it under the barcode reader. I asked her what she thought of the book, and she said in a thick mountain accent that she didn't like it because it "just makes us look stupid. I mean, just look at the title—he's *not* from here and the book shows it. He doesn't show us as we really are." In his cover flap, Smith assumes the role of one who *reveals* an Appalachia not commonly seen. Though his introduction denies "preserv[ation]" through photography, he also says that his mission through photography is "to describe—artistically and visually—what it's like to live in Southern Appalachia today" (Smith ix, front cover flap). In this, he assumes representation as the revelation of a true essence that is both knowable and at least partially known by him and those who view his photographs. "Here they are" he says to us. The woman at the checkout counter challenges Smith's role as revealer, taking herself as the "true essence" that Smith left out of his collection. Bridging from this woman's response, I

challenge the ideology that links the image with the notion of the selfsame and ignores the role of the researcher in the production of both image and identity.

From his introduction, Smith assumes a public which is like him, an outsider (despite his 23 years living in Johnson City, Tennessee), and he admits "a perverse pleasure in saying to you, the reader: 'You're not from around here'" (Mike Smith ix). By implication, the audience is *not* Appalachian, a public different in some way than those featured in his collection. How, then, are non-Appalachians to read these *different* Appalachian bodies in relation to their own? What are the implications for the audience's sense of self and body if these bodies are not only different from the public but *essentially* Appalachian? Last Halloween, when I greeted trick-or-treaters in Kingsport with what my mother has called my "college accent" (a more mellowed and less mountain-inflected accent I picked up while in college and graduate school away from Appalachia), one nine-year-old boy looked up at me with a squinted and skeptical expression and stated very confidently, "You're not from around here, are you?" How am I, as an Appalachian woman who is no longer recognized as at home in my own home, to read these bodies as *not-not-me*?

Rachel Adams describes the function of freak shows, in which "'the public' is conceived as a featureless, uniform mass" in opposition to the deviant and enfreaked body (Adams 31). Rosemarie Thomson argues that freaks "assured diverse audiences of their claim to citizenship," saying that the freak figure is "the necessary cultural compliment to the acquisitive and capable American who claims the normate position of masculine, white, nondisabled, sexually unambiguous, and middle class" (qtd. in Adams 31). The performance of freak viewing is an orchestrated gesture of recognition and misrecognition "in which the sympathetic onlooker reads himself into the body on display, obliterating its personhood as completely as the most exploitative exhibit" (Adams 31).

As Adams writes of a photograph of Ishi and Alfred Kroeber (Fig. 7), "superficial similarities only amplify the obvious differences" and "emphasized how alien he was in the modern environment" (52). Ishi is almost but not quite modern, as shown in the differences between his bare feet and Kroeber's polished shoes, Ishi's tousled tie and unbuttoned jacket and Kroeber's neatly tucked tie and buttoned jacket.

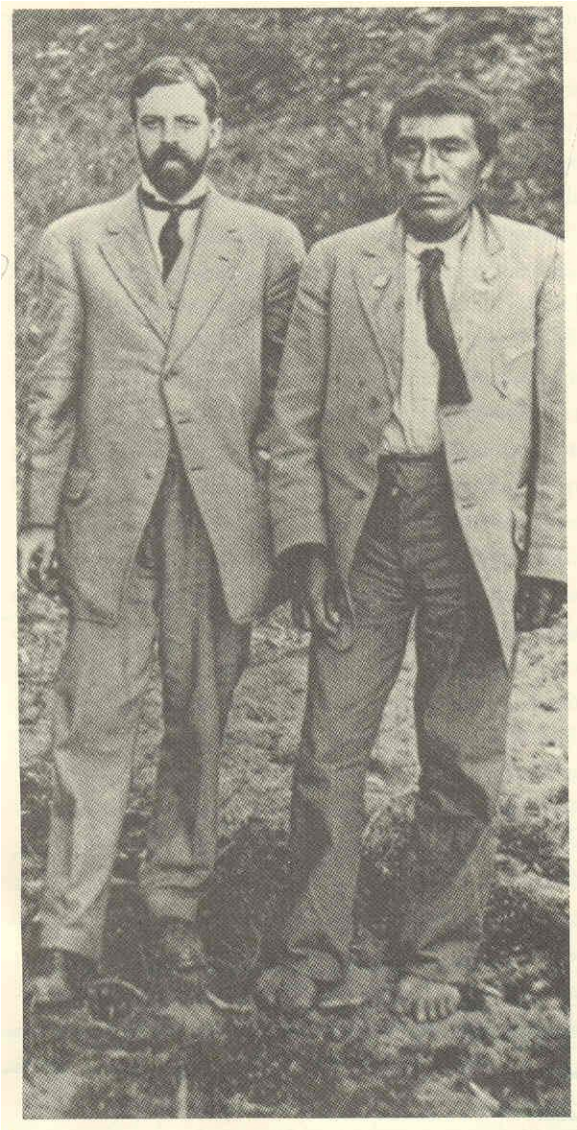

Figure 7 Photograph of Ishi and Alfred Kroeber in Sideshow U.S.A. by Rachel Adams (52). Photo courtesy of The Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology and the Regents of the University of California.

In their difference from the drooling man Smith photographed, the audience is normalized as not-drooling, capable of containing fluids along with emotions and stray hairs. Smith produces these different bodies as freaks: "Freaks are produced not by their inherent differences from us, but by the way their particularities are figured as narratives of unique and intractable alterity" (56).

Mountain Hands

In stark contrast to Smith's haunting and complex photographs—called "Southern Gothic" by Sobieszek—the Mountain Hands collection was created by east Tennessee journalist Sam Venable and photojournalist Paul Efird to document and honor traditional Appalachian arts. Following along a similar line with Moore's Mountain Voices, Mountain Hands presents portraits of Appalachian craftspeople holding their handiwork. Each chapter contains a portrait of the artist with his or her work and an article interviewing these artists. The full-page photos at the beginning of each article are cropped so that only the hands of these men and women are showing. While the accompanying articles occasionally contain additional full-body pictures of Appalachians at work, the focus is clearly on hand-labor, which carries with it layered connotations of "original," "unique," as well as "blue collar" and conjures questions of "matter vs. mind[39]."

The articles valorize these individuals for the skill and devotion they require and employ in their work. The articles also emphasize the inherent *mountainness* of these crafts and of a reverence for family traditions. These are a people set apart by their traditions. Articles praise age-old techniques passed down through generations with little or no "outside" influence. When articles do include the evolution and incorporation of more modern techniques or components such as glue or synthetic yarn in clock- or dollmaking, they are somewhat excused with the understanding that these adulterating influences had not overtaken the sepia tone-stained traditional techniques. The portraits represent the audience's perceived nostalgic desire for a once-upon-a-time simpler life projected onto the bodies and body parts of Appalachian men and women.

Venable's tone discourages any distancing of these people from *pure* hand-work. Though the journalists are admirably respectful in their praise of their subjects, the photographs of disembodied hands holding *traditional* hand-made objects and articles assuring the *purity* of these specimens of mountain traditions resembles the early 20th century journalistic descriptions of Ishi, the "last of his tribe" of Yahi Indians and depicted as a "genuine wild man." Displayed by professor Alfred Kroeber in the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology, his living body and artifacts of his daily life were daily displayed

[39] Following a Cartesian ontology, the body from the ambiguous throat down is associated with all that is low and lesser: the passions, desire as linked with the genitals, maternity, excess, fluids.

as proof of his endearingly freakish wildness. Rachel Adams interprets the enfreakment of Ishi, who is described as having the "perfect" physique, "lending weight to the idea that he was not a normal man but a freak, a rare, untarnished human specimen whose body became a cipher for contradictory beliefs about the Indian" (Adams 54).

Kroeber's descriptions of Ishi "voices the ethnocentric perception that primitive cultures stand outside of history, frozen in place while civilization marches inexorably forward" (Adams 47). The effect characterizes and names Ishi as a less-evolved ancestor of his contemporaries. According to journalist Grant Wallace, the perfection of "the uncontaminated man" is measured by his distance from "the contaminating influences of civilization" (qtd. in Adams 47). Just as more modern additions to traditional techniques are deemphasized in Mountain Hands, Kroeber was uncomfortable when he discovered that Ishi used glue in making his arrows, believing that "the authenticity of Yahi artifacts would be contaminated by the introduction of new resources. He was uncomfortable displaying Ishi's work in the museum because the purpose of museums, as he saw it, was to preserve artifacts of historically and geographically remote cultures. The modern could not, by definition, be eligible for inclusion within the museum's collections, and, in turn , the subjects of ethnography had to remain permanently excluded from modernity" (Adams 53-4). Just as Ishi is "an active participant in the recreation of his own past," so too are the subjects of Mountain Hands active participants in the recreation of Appalachia as forever standing in its past. For all its harmonious praise of this region and its people, Mountain Hands promotes the dissolution of Appalachia's future into its past.

Appalachia 24/7

Countering both the romanticized collections of Moore and Venable/Efird as well as the enfreaked bodies of Smith's collection, the America 24/7 project performs photography as an interactive, collaborative, and more democratic approach to visual representation. The project asked amateur, professional, and student photographers to "go out and shoot digital pictures that tell us about your life, your community, your state, your country" (Smolan Cohen front cover flap). 1,000 professionals and 5,000 amateurs and students submitted their photographs to Snapfish's free online photo database, and 36 "leading photo editors" selected the final published photographs.

Admittedly, the overly simplistic front flap does succumb to selling books as souvenir tokens of these states—i.e., the Tennessee 24/7 volume assures that what I hold in my hands, "This is Tennessee." However, the collaborative process of native amateur and professional photographers and photojournalists collectively submitting digital photographs for the America 24/7 project ensures indigenous and at least moderately diverse perspectives, divided along class lines. Like the highly criticized collection The Family of Man, the editors of America 24/7 and Tennessee 24/7 did not choose to include photographs of the homeless.

However, above the poverty line, variations in race, class, and gender are well represented. Included are many images which counter the repetitive stereotypes of Appalachia as either dirty and dangerous or simple and stupid. We see carnival and drag performances alongside long-bearded craftsmen and a 12-year-old boy driving a power mower. A couple celebrates a Kurdish wedding ceremony. Women and men balance on two hands in the astavakrasana or eight-angle pose in a yoga class. A disabled dwarf second-grader at home makes pancakes with his mother and shows his work to his teacher at school. One photograph (Fig. 8) shows a stock auction splayed across two pages. If cropped on the left side of the page, we look down into a railed-in, dirt-filled pit on a long-horned bull and a collared-shirted auctioneer standing to the right. Panning to the right, the photograph draws up into the stands as we look over the shoulder and green mesh cap of an elderly man entering weekly sales onto his laptop computer, which the caption tells us he will post online that evening. The picture resists any sense of being outside of time: by combining dirt and laptop computers, each is understood as being integral to the performance portrayed. The older man attends to his computer seemingly effortlessly, holding his hands on the keyboard as he looks toward the bull for sale. In this moment, he unites past and present technologies as this place is propelled into the future, similar to Barthes's Angel of History.

Figure 8 A cropped image from Smolan and Cohen's collection Tennessee 24/7 (48-49). The single photograph spreads across two pages of the book—on the left page, a steer being auctioned. On the right, a "field staffer for the Market Development Division of the state's Department of Agriculture, records weekly sales that will be posted online" (Smolan Cohen 47). The man's leg and arm span both pages, connecting the dirt- and animal-filled pit with electronic technology. Photo by Lance Murphey courtesy of 24/7 Media, LLC.

The project is ongoing, and on the project's website you may order a book cover for your state's 24/7 book with your own photograph. A more egalitarian and noncapitalist method might be to print or make your own cover, but the message remains: "This is Tennessee" by virtue of your ever-changing experience—make of it what you will. In shaping their own image of Appalachia as they wish it to be seen, east Tennesseans and southwest Virginians were able to shape their own published image of Appalachia through the 24/7 project, much like the countess in Shawn Michelle Smith's work American Archives[40]. In American Archives, Shawn Michelle Smith asks: Who authors and owns

[40] The self is nothing if not social and representational. In American Archives, Shawn Michelle Smith posits that if identity is fixed in representation, not in the body (following Mouffe and Butler), then body is product and not producer of identity. The self is not fixed and can adopt signs with which to speak and show *but not reveal* the self, creating a string of "doubles."

representations of Woman? (Shawn Smith 101) Shawn Smith cites the countess's agency within patriarchy in/through the 400+ images she authors—she claims the right to mark herself visually (and gains "back" identity) thru multiple poses. In 24/7, Appalachians submitted and published their own multilayered postcolonial photography that challenged stereotypical images and narratives of this region.

V. Summary

I have applied Shawn Smith's question in this study—who owns representations of Appalachia and Appalachians? If it is a feminized region and people, then what sorts of images and representations reproduce or challenge its common definition as "impoverished?" In this chapter, I discussed some of the ways that the cultural image of southern Appalachia has been shaped by popular media. I outlined highlights in southern Appalachian social and economic history and illustrated how these histories intertwine with contemporary cultural constructions of Appalachia as precious, impoverished, dirty, homogenously racist, and dumb. Settlement schools and media served as some of the earlier vehicles for these stereotypes, and contemporary examples such as Disney's Country Bear Jamboree ride continue to shape a simulacra of Appalachian experience. Appalachia has come to be seen as an Other place, a group of simple and stupid people, matter out of place, abject, and often left unseen/off the map. This is a postcolonial space that is (in Bhabha's terms) *almost the same but not quite* urban, modern, or efficient. Postcolonial literature and photography, such as Kingsolver's Prodigal Summer and the 24/7 photography series challenge reductive stereotypes of Appalachia.

Mimicry is a strategy of recognition and misrecognition—fantasy is a site of *intervention*. Toward the end of her article, Smith says that the "true essence" is the mediator of the Countess's images:

> "The countess herself, her essence or "being," is not "revealed"; instead, one sees a mediated reflection which the countess herself constructs and controls" (110).

Smith says masquerade and double mimicry subvert truth claims of patriarchy in Countess's portraits—they bombard masculine gaze with multiple images. She writes, "The body that reflects an unending string of images will not be overpowered by a mesmerizing masculine gaze" (105). The woman is constantly showing different sides of—but not revealing—the self. The effort of creating multiple images in order to avoid being overpowered and controlled by a masculine gaze seems exhausting.

We might ask Smith's question in this study—who owns representations of Appalachia and Appalachians? If it is a feminized region and people, then what sorts of images and representations reproduce or challenge its common definition as "impoverished?"

CHAPTER 3: "HOW COULD A TIMBER HOLD UP A MOUNTAIN?"[41]

Mining culture exists in two worlds—above and below ground. My fieldwork experiences enabled me to travel to the worlds of these miners, in places both familiar and radically foreign to my everyday life. Maria Lugones says:

> Traveling to another's world is not the same as becoming intimate with them. Intimacy is constituted in part by a very deep knowledge of the Other self and `world-traveling' is only part of this knowledge... [but] Without knowing the Other's `world,' one does not know the Other, and without knowing the Other one is really alone in the Other's presence because the Other is only dimly present to one. (Lugones qtd. in Madison "Ethnography Syllabus")

My aim as an ethnographer was to "travel across worlds" with coal miners. I entered miners' social settings, cultural phenomenon, and individual human experiences in an effort, as Tessa Brennan says, to pay "living attention" to their lives—as Soyini Madison elaborates this process, "to be in dialogue with others lives by raising significant and fundamental questions, by engaging in thoughtful participation and observation, and by articulating the critical dynamics that drive *it* and the ethnographic encounter" (Madison "Ethnography Syllabus").

Earl E. Scott Jr. was my first guide into these two worlds of mining culture. He also became my closest friend in coal mining. Earl is a third generation low-wall coal miner from southwest Virginia. I introduce you to mining culture through his story because Earl was my own introduction to these worlds—our conversations and embodied journeys together tell my story of journeying into coal as well as his own. His complex and conflicted experiences in coal mining coupled with his deep and abiding love for mining as a way of life and a context for being resonated deeply with me.

This chapter closely analyzes Earl's personal narrative as a hero story. Low-wall mining, as Earl narrates it, is the descent into an unknown abyss, unearthing treasures

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[41] An earlier version of this chapter was previously published in Storytelling, Self and Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Storytelling Studies under the title "'How Could a Timber Hold Up a Mountain?': Earl E. Scott Jr.'s Coal Mining Narrative as a Hero's Journey." An earlier version of this chapter also won the 2004 Dan Crowley Memorial Research Award from the American Folklore Society.

brought back as boon to the above ground world, retrieving from the underworld an energy source that, out of darkness, brings light to the world. As the humble hero of his own story, I use Joseph Campbell's model of the hero's journey to illuminate Earl's narrative. By bringing Campbell into conversation with Earl and myself, I do not wish to romanticize Earl's narrative but to honor and deepen the poignancy of his story as he performs it. I address some of the well-known concerns with Campbell's work while employing what I see as some of the more useful aspects of his writing.

I. Campbell and the Hero's Journey

"The psyche has many secrets in reserve…"
—Joseph Campbell, The Hero With a Thousand Faces

Experience does not come to us directly—it is always already narrated. We selectively situate experience into a plotted sequence of events, and these stories define the personal, local, and national self. As a part of three years (2003-5) of ongoing research and fieldwork with Appalachian coal miners, I became friends with Earl E. Scott, Jr., a third generation coal miner. Earl is disabled due to chronic back pain and leg impairments, in addition to extreme heart trouble all directly caused or exacerbated by over 30 years' work in low-wall coal mines near St. Charles, Virginia. Low-wall mining, as Earl narrates it, is the descent into an unknown abyss, crawling in spaces sometimes 28-36 inches high at their most capacious, and unearthing treasures retrieved from this cavernous blackness to bring as boon to the above ground world. Miners come back from the dead/underworld custodian of an energy source that, out of darkness, brings light to the world. Earl narrates his experiences and orders the events he has encountered into a story that allows him to *make sense* out of his past, present, and future—this is a tale reworked over time and added experience, shaped by the powerful guiding forces of emplacement and embodiment in a particular locale (St. Charles) and physique (a 60-odd-year-old man's frame battered by exposure to the mines).

In his narrative, Earl is "the hero[] in [his] own drama[]," as Victor Turner writes (Turner 75). It is within stories that meaning is made, that a past is put in relation to a whole of events—meaning requires retrospection, reflection, a looking back. Meaning can only take place through memory, and memory is made manifest through story. Through the careful crafting and (re)shaping of ideas, events are re-membered (to re-order the members of

events into story) and re-called (to call again *back* from a *past* time/place and into the *present* events which are always already narrated with a *future* in mind)[42].

At the time when Earl and I became friends, I also was rereading Joseph Campbell's The Hero With A Thousand Faces. As I read, I found myself again and again returning to Earl's story. As I transcribed our conversations, the force and power of Earl's words resonated deeply through my recent engagements with Campbell. Since my first reading of this text many years ago, I have encountered and agreed with the many postmodern critiques[43] of structuralist views. To name a few: Roland Barthes (2001) and Michael Foucault (1984) voice the dangers of universalizing stories of a particular culture or individual to create supposed objectivity; Jacques Derrida (1973, 1978) stresses that meaning is made through difference (differance), and comparative methods ignore distinctions; and Homi Bhabha (1994) warns us of how colonialism masquerades as objectivity and naturalized thought. Postmodern theory urges us away from archetypes as a veiled reinforcement of dominant ideology, creating and keeping social mores and taboos firmly fixed. Campbell's methodology often conflates versions cross-culturally—Robert A. Segal (1987) says that Campbell focuses too much on archetypes and ignores individual plots of whole myths. He says Campbell asks why and how myths are created but not *who* and for *whose* interests. David L. Miller (1996) says, however, that Campbell dared to be wrong, and that despite the structuralist underpinnings of his work, his tenacity brought us to question myth, passionately. Miller hopes that we might strike our own "fire in the mind" to appreciate what in Campbell is useful and compelling.

I find Campbell most useful when I put him in conversation with Norman Denzin's understanding of life narratives and story performances as Universal Singulars. Earl is a Universal Singular: his personal narrative is both more than its single instance and like no other (Denzin 39). I find that Campbell's understanding of the hero's journey illuminates Earl's narrative, while Earl's stories qualify Campbell's model of the universal hero. In this chapter, I bring the particulars of Earl's story performance to the fore while using Campbell to deepen Earl's narrative as a hero's journey.

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[42] See Ganguly (1992), Langellier (1999), Madison (1998, 2005), Myerhoff (1992), Myerhoff and Tufte (1992), Peterson and Langellier (1997), Pollock (1999), Reissman (1992), and Scott (1992) on narrative, performance, and re-membering.

[43] See Golden (1992) and Noel (1990) for specific critiques of Campbell's theories and methodology.

II. The Miner's Call to Adventure

Earl is one of my closest friends in coal mining, and we built a sustained friendship starting in the Summer of 2004. During these co-performed[44] conversations, I traveled with Earl to his hometown of St. Charles, Virginia. Earl describes the town today as a shadow of its former self, ghosted by the past-presence of "five major coal companies." In the streets of former coal camp communities near St. Charles, coal particles settle on front porches and mingle in almost equal part with dust in the road. The border between adventure and daily life, hero's journey and the realm of home stands blurred—visually, the substances of above ground (dirt) and below earth (coal) are mixed to produce a gray haze that seems to settle over everything. Coal is a substance that is as stubbornly present and pervasive for those who live just outside the threshold (the mouth of the mine), as it is for those miners who work beyond it. Coal and coal mining communities (camps) seemed to spill down the gaps of the mountains and eddy into a pool at St. Charles:

> Earl: Where that town / was a boom town, as you can call it / as, as coal mining
> started to thrive / in *the* 30's,
> which, that [coal mining and miners] came out a Harlan, Kentucky.
> And Harlan, Kentucky from where we're talkin' about Saint Charles
> you're only talkin'
> about 25 or 30 miles [away]… In fact, my grandfather,
> on my dad's side, he came out a Harlan.
> He came out a there when it was known as Bloody Harlan.
> And uh, all this / mining camp in there, run on into Saint Charles and everthing.

Coal and ancestors running down the mountains, exceeding artificial political borders, the camps ooze out into one another, from Harlan to St. Charles. Shifty and changing, the boundaries between above and below ground, mining camp and the actual mines are hazy, distorted, ever-blurred by the cloudy presence of coal dust, a scrim settling in this liminal space between here and there, this world and the other.

Earl tells the story of how he left his hometown of St. Charles, only to return again, in desperate need of work (circumstances which set the stage for his mining journey).

> Earl (*steadily*): But I went North, after I got out a high school…
> and I worked in a, believe it or not, it was a corrugated box factory.

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[44] Peterson and Langellier describe personal narrative as *performances* of everyday life, echoing HopKins's call to investigate how performers negotiate roles and occupy multiple subject positions (Peterson Langellier 145). At a conference on Diaspora Performance given at Northwestern University in the Summer of 2003, Dwight Conquergood said to me that ethnographers are co-performing witnesses with others.

But I mean, it was, / now I'm not gonna say it was, uh
clean work. It's hard work, it was hot.
And it was right down my line, I thought at the time.
And uh / to me / to me, it was good money.
And there it was, and I did, I couldn't say, "Why didn't you go to Ford
motor company or Cheverolet?"
Well, I did. / But I couldn't get a job because of one thing:
I had no experience.
If you was an experienced person at my age / you'd go to work.
But I never could get on with them. / I, like I said
that uh, that I made good money there. / I liked it.
But the word that we don't like to hear anywhere / that uh / about ever 14 to 18 months
was "layoff." / Even back then, I mean / and I said, "This is just not gonna work."
Well, the last time that it happened, I come back down home
and I said, "I'm gonna / have to try to get me a job somehow, some way down here."
And I said, "I'm happier down here than I am up North."

Earl tells the story of an unwitting hero who sets forth from his everyday world and is lured to the "threshold of adventure" (Campbell 245). Earl was taught from an early age that it is wrong to go into the mines, and his father forbade him from becoming a miner. Yet as he came back to St. Charles, he was happier at home than he had been "up North," and the mines held a certain irresistible lure to him—peer pressure, economics, and other variables added to this conscious and subconscious lure (carrying on the role of the father as modeled for him by two previous generations of good fathers who were miners).

Earl: Well, / and I knowed what my dad had told me
and uh, / I didn't want to go against him, and I had watched his life, I'd watched
his, health and by the way my dad died
four days before he was 49 year old.… It was black lung.
(*long pause*)
Dad, dad couldn't go from here / at that age Hannah / from here back to
the front part of the building, I mean he was so short winded and everthing.
And it was so sad. / And / at that age there, you come back
you come back and I can say—or, (*he bends his head down, correcting himself*)
see where my dad's a comin' from more so
every day. / At dad's age
at dad's age he had 30 years, his whole life what you'd say, in the coal mines…
30 years and him 48 years old, four days before his 49th birthday
he had a massive heart attack… And more than likely / my dad,
my dad has worked, I do know this / for wages / that's ten and twelve dollars *a* day.
And he wasn't the only one.
You can say, "I wouldn't a done it—"
yes [you would], when you've got a family, if you'd loved em.
And that's why I say I'm proud of how I was brought up, very proud
because uh / we didn't / we didn't want, I mean for food.
That uh, we could hold our head high…
Where dad work[ed] / it was, they was United Mine Workers.
And my dad was / chairman of the mine committee at that mines…

As the chairman of the UMW in St. Charles, Earl's father was an important figure in his community, speaking for and protecting his peers. As the son of the UMW chair, Earl is the "son of a king." Following Otto Rank's (2004) interpretation of the hero myth, Earl was conceived of noble heritage but given over to surrogate parents (his family of fellow mine workers, who—as we see later—give him a new name). Interestingly, Earl later becomes a UMW spokesman himself, hence claiming his royal birthright.

Earl narrates the seemingly chance circumstances surrounding his invitation to enter the low-wall coal mines as a worker. To Campbell, such chance blunders are actually "ripples on the surface of life, produced by unsuspected springs" welling up from suppressed desires and repressed conflicts (Campbell 51). At his father's funeral, he receives the call:

> Earl: And then, you can say, "Well why didn't you *learn*?" and, "Why didn't you *listen*? I could think about my dad, like I said I had a great deal of respect.
> And uh / and I hesitated and I hesitated.
> And uh / I went to a job, I went on a job / Hannah, what's known as
> not a popular word up in our area
> or anywhere else I guess right now, I went to work on a strip
> mining job, which is outside strippin' the mountains, / and uh, everthing. And uh,
> and the same person that I went to work for
> there, the feller that my dad worked for, he owned that property
> but he had the / he had a lot a the other coal
> mines and / and right away and to it and everthing / tied up.
> And uh / he told me / the night that my dad was / corpse laid at the funeral home he said,
> "Earl," / he said "I know you talked to your dad several, several times / but," he said "I'll tell you something."
> He said, "Earl if you want to go inside / a coal mine," he said "I'm gonna, I'll give you a job."
> He said, "Now ye dad," he said, "we had our"—now these are the words he told me!
> He said, "We had our differences / but" he said, "your dad was a fine person
> and a good worker."

Taking this narrative as a storied account with significant symbolic and metaphoric embedded meanings, Earl's narrative of an unexpected meeting with his father's boss (hereafter "Boss") was not a chance accident. The crisis of the herald's (Boss's) appearance is the "call to adventure" (51). The Boss calls Earl to seek underground treasure, the compressed remains of countless rays of sunshine and energy—plant life itself—now concretized in the blackest coal. Coal itself is a shunned substance in some cultures ("Children be good, or it's a lump of coal in your Christmas stocking!"), yet this same substance is the jewel that brings light to the world in many material means—it is the root of

diamonds, the warm spark of fire, and the source of nearly every major energy source in modern America: "Yet if one could follow, the way would be opened through the walls of day into the dark where the jewels glow" (53).

The Boss "appears suddenly as a guide, marking a new period, a new stage, in the biography" of Earl's life (55). As with the story of the Future Buddha, the proper heralds wait until the time is ripe—Earl has gone off to the North to seek his fortune and found it a barren land for someone with no experience as a mechanic (he cannot work for Ford). He is laid off often from his work in a corrugated box factory. When he returns home, after generations of mining ancestors have primed him for this role, after his trials in the North have passed and he is in need of work to feed his family, then "the moment he was ready, the proper heralds automatically appeared" (56).

In Earl's call to adventure, the hero's spiritual center of gravity shifts to a place unknown, a "fateful region of both treasure and danger" variously represented through myths and folktales as "a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky, a secret island, lofty mountaintop, or profound dream state" (58). The miners' underground kingdom—a subterranean network of passageways and rooms (sometimes called the "room and pillar" system), inhabited by men and women who labor together as they constantly face death, and structured by political hierarchies between workers, foremen, and the company owners above ground whose powerful hands stretch under the earth—is, as Campbell describes all such adventure zones, "a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delight" (58). Earl goes "of his own volition" into the mouth of these underground tombs to seek the adventure to which he has been called (by the Boss), for which his desires have been suppressed (by his now dead father), and from which his only means of hope can come (forced by the crisis of poverty, these dark holes offer the best economic means to support his family, an offer from which he cannot turn) (58).

Before he entered the mines, and even afterwards, Earl did not "rightly underst[and]" the journey set before him (51). Throughout his narrative, Earl incessantly struggled with describing life in the mines. His experiences were deeply felt and thoroughly embedded into his skin kinetically, noetically, and intellectually, and his words and gestures painted a vivid and richly textured picture of the tiny cavernous spaces and coal dust that constrict

movement and breath. But despite this, he repetitively earmarked his inability to express just what this place is/was like: "I wish I could make you understand what it's like down there." Through this protestation, there is an element of his experience that is elusive for him as well, unable to put into words, as it was for his father before him—a sense of a world that is at once known and utterly unknowable.

Inadvertently, Earl's father set up a path for him by example (hence "lur[ing Earl] into the realms of trial"), enacting a dual role of both guardian of the threshold and first-guide/helper (73). Though Earl's father forbade him from ever working in the mines, the life of the miner was born into Earl, even into his very flesh. His grandfather's blood, the blood of "Bloody Harlan," the miners' blood spilt by "company thugs" during strikes (and vice versa), this blood is also a substance not fully known—infectious, it spreads to St. Charles as a humor that exceeds its own material substance:

> Earl: Bein' brought up that way [the way his father did] they was more
> to me, I've said today, a coal miner is a special type of a person.
> They've got different blood or something.

Mining gets into the bodily system, an infection that transforms the blood, transubstantiation of common blood into something/someone "different" and somehow more than it was before. This is his father's blood and his own. In Black Sheep and Kissing Cousins, Elizabeth Stone notes the thin ties between DNA blood connections and the strongly felt sense of familial connection between relatives close and distant—a connection forged through family stories more so than genetic ties. This recognition that mining "gets into your blood" is also materialized as a substance that lives in and courses through the body. In a symbolic sense, Earl's father lives in his blood, and the wisdom of his father (passed onto him before his father's death) is captured, like an amulet, in the blood beneath his own skin. He carries with him the presence of his father and his grandfather—both miners—as a powerful talisman of knowledge and strength. Earl says that before his father's death,

> Earl: When my dad was alive, / dad would tell me a lot of things.
> I mean, and that's why I knowed…how it is.

Earl "knowed…how it is" because this first protective figure—who continues to guide him and indeed haunt him in the mines (elaborated below)—told him "a lot of things" that helped him on his journey.

III. Earl Crosses the First Threshold

Earl presents a series of thresholds in his narrative, borders he must cross in order to continue along his path. Campbell too describes the next phase of the hero's journey as that of crossing the first threshold leading to "the zone of magnified power" where threshold guardians serve much the same role as the parental figures who warn and guard the gates beyond society's known boundaries (social, geographical, political), for "beyond them is darkness, the unknown, and danger" (77). If Earl's father is his first guide, this figure is also certainly a Jungian shadow presence that serves as a guard to the First Threshold, who, in a form of "brother-battle/dragon-battle" (more appropriately, "father-battle"), Earl must pass by if he is to continue his journey (Jung 93, Campbell 245-6). Physically, Earl's father dies before Earl decides to go down into the low-wall mines, but Earl must put his father's warnings—given to him in life and persistently haunting him after death—to a *second* death before he can enter the mines. Earl must overcome his father's negative shadow presence, and he decides to put his father's voice in back of him (as he passes by the threshold). Beyond his father, that parental figure whose body guards the mouth of the pit, is darkness impenetrable, and yet also endless possibility and hope. In nautical terms of the 15th and 16th centuries, this is the place beyond the edge of the known world, where the waters of the earth spill over the frame, the periphery of the map on which was written "Here there be monsters."

IV. The Belly of the Earth

Earl was swallowed whole, into the mouth of the abyss and down through its gullet. Earl describes his first of many rides in what is known as a "man trip" (interestingly, he often pronounces this "man *trap*"), in which a car travels through a small opening not over two feet high, sometimes stretching for three miles or more into the mountain. This is the only way into the mines:

> Earl: Well, / once at you, once at you start in at, where you,
> we had what you call / a man trip, this was
> the one [the car] that / go to the workers then. And it had uh
> you had uh / what they'd call a motor.
> And uh / you had these / cars down here.

> You did not set up in 'em. / You couldn't stand up nor nothin'.
> Once that you laid down you had to stay / on your stomach
> and your head turned sideways.
> And uh, they's some place that uh, I guess about the farthest that I've rode
> in that position, is when I was in *the* low coal / and that was about three and a half miles.
> And that's not one a them deals, "Hey we can fly!" / because I mean it'd beat you to death.
> (*slap slap—he beats his hand on the table*)
> Slappin' you up and down. They's some places that uh / I can remember
> that you'd go through the top of the car, / which was about that deep I'd say, a foot or so
> that uh / there it was (*he looks at an imaginary ceiling just above his head).*
> The top a that car / would rub the top [of the mine] at times.
> And that's why I say you couldn't raise up nor look around or this and that.

Even in this first encounter with the mines, Earl is literally thrust down into a world that is both *strange* in its newness and, through the powerful symbolism of his penetration and body-to-body rubbing with the earth, sexually *intimate* in nature (Campbell 246). Sliding slowly down this canal and into the womb of the earth, the journey through the "man trip" is highly symbolic of a form of self-annihilation, a willing disappearance into the belly of the whale (here, the belly of the earth) that Campbell connects with this threshold passage (91). Beyond the threshold, the hero enters a world of "unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces," some of which threaten him (tests), and others who give magical aid (helpers) (246). Campbell writes that "the hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died" (90). At this point, the hero has entered into a morphological state—his secular character remains outside, and like a snake shedding its skin, he dies to time (carrying the eternal promise of the initial helper with him) and "return[s] to the World Womb, the World Navel, the Earthly Paradise" (92). Through image and allegory he dives through the jaws of the whale in a life-renewing act.

V. Earl's Road of Trials

Earl plunges into this chimeral, pitch-black underground with the memory of his father's descriptions, but these cannot fully encompass the world into which he has just thrust himself, "a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms" (97).

> Earl: Then I went in the deep mines where my father worked.
> And uh / Hannah, that coal / part of it we worked in
> a whole lot of it, 'fore I worked at Westmorland that was only 26, sometimes 28 inches high…
> And once at you got to your workplace / at uh
> you would say, they ain't no way a man or a woman could work like that.
> *And I know they is.*

And / people like my father, my grandfather / and a lot a the others
that's, that's the biggest part a what they had worked in: / coal that little.
But once you get in there / it uh, you ball up. / I always kept one foot
most a the time / and under, my backside / or / you had to / be on ye knees all the time.
And uh / you say, "Did you get the head up?"—no, / you worked with ye head / sideways.
And where you would do that, / naturally, *the* top of the roof / it was, damp and wet, dusty
and coal would build up on ye head or / side of it or
water'd run down ye ear or down your clothes.
And where it was so low / they was no way that you could keep ye back out a the top.
All the time, and where you were workin' and movin'
time, uh / the shift was over, you was drenched…
And in the winter time / the temperature in the mines
the temperature in the mines, once that you get down underground
the temperature doesn't change.
That's one thing about it, but once that you get in there and go to work
and ye, work shift's over and you head out
—now, now in the winter time mine has done it, I couldn't tell you how many times
and it's not just mine, but ever man that worked on
a section together—you'd come out and that air would start hittin'.
And honest, ye come out and ye pants / or ye jacket, it was froze.
And I said, it really was.
And then, when you stepped out of that, in the opening / it, you think for a while,
"Lord, I'm gonna freeze to *death*," I mean you couldn't….
We didn't have what you say all the time
the best air [quality], which is really federal law that ye supposed to have this and that.
But / it's not so, / what I'm a sayin' it… (*he trails off searching for the words*)
You'd get to workin' and / and if they wasn't so much [air] there
You couldn't, you couldn't stand it Hannah cause as far as tryin' to breathe or anything, it's just about non-existent.

Earl's story takes on the "difficult tasks" motif (97). Folklore of the Lapps and Finland tell of the land of the dead, where a shaman may enter as an emissary who is made to encounter and overcome a number of difficult obstacles, or pudak. On his journey to find the Lord of the Underworld (in Finland, Tuoni is this figure), he must wander "through dark forests and over massive ranges of mountains, where he occasionally comes across the bones of other shamans and their animal mounts who have died along the way" (100). The threat of death is constant in the mines, and "rock falls"—sudden roof cave-ins that often happen without warning—create an underground menagerie of dismembered arms, pieces of flesh and blood stains mixed in with the coal.

Coming across "the bones of other shamans," Earl relates:

Earl: I've, I've seen some people / not get killed
but I have been / close in the same mine
you know, where someone has gotten killed on that shift.
And it's one a the / eeriest feelings that you'll ever have because (*he squints his eyes)*
like I said, coal miners to me are different.
And it *literally breaks ye heart*.

> Because, I mean, I don't care who you are, if you're one a them tough guys or you're not,
> now it brings tears.
> Because you can say, there it is. / Anotheren's gone.
> And I've seen some, oh, like I said I've seen some lose a finger.

Helpers guide Earl along the way. Sometimes these helpers take a human form, through the guidance of older men. These older mentors teach the "young buck" how to timber roofs and install bolts to support the weight of a mountain above their heads. Older men give "young bucks" their new name for the underground world—Earl received his nickname "Hop" (given because of the hop in his step) early on in his mining career, and the name served as a rite of passage as much as it created an intangible token that initiated him into a larger family of helpers who now know his name and whom he can now call on for help if he is in danger.

> Earl: And like I told ye / most coal miner, most coal miners
> —why? I can't give you an answer to this—
> they've got a nickname.
> And the nickname / their nickname, you could mention a name for years to come,
> they don't know who you're talkin' about. / But that nickname comes—oh yeah!…
> That's, that's something that just sticks…Once that it's sewn on ye, / that's it.

Like the coal dust that permanently stains their knees, so are the miners' names "something that just sticks." "Sewn on ye" and stitched into the flesh, these names, like the coal itself, are imbedded into their bodies and psyches.

Sometimes help comes from the mines themselves—interpretively, Earl's stories are reminiscent of the above ground fairies in "The Wood, The Wonderful Wood" who, if respected, will let a person pass unharmed and protect the hero (Folktellers). As Earl says, "you got to respect the danger," and through his respect he discerns the voices of the mines that "speak" a series of warnings to protect him and others from rock falls. When a miner taps the roof through a process called "sounding," the roof (the spirits inside the rock?) answers back with a hollow or solid resonance (Timbering). A low, hardy thud in return is an omen and portent of safe passage, but a high, dull echo is a warning that the roof is not solid—gasses trapped between layers of sandstone create instability and eventually failure in the integrity of such a roof. Older men who interpret this mine-language serve as guides and translators, teaching Earl this new tongue spoken by stone, gas, and decaying plant life.

> Hannah: When the rock falls happen, can you hear them coming?

Earl: It happens so fast, Hannah, that uh / you'd get a warnin' sometimes if it's gonna be
what you call a major fall, or something like that, you can hear it to rumble
a long time, it sound like thunder over here or something.
(*he motions above his head and looks all around, wide-eyed*)
And then you can hear it get closer and closer and then
they's some of them that they's no warnin'.
That you'd be there, and uh / most times if you see a little / dribbling or, or we call it
a squirrel cuttin' like in a hickory oak tree?
You see this top start dribbling a little bit like 'at?
That uh, / you, you'd better back up!…
And most a the time, uh, when we were extracting coal
as we advanced and everthing, that uh, / the way the top was supported then,
it would be partways spot bolted [with bolts screwed into the top/roof].
It would be partway cribbed [adding more timbers for roof support]
and it would be partway timbered but they was always
a timber like I was telling you, [at every] four foot?
(*he points on the table to indicate how timbers were set every two to four feet to support the roof*)
But you had a timber and then another timber here where you'd
where it was really made on about a two foot, it was staggered.
And uh / and you'd say, ***how could a timber hold up a mountain?***
If you've got uh, if you've got pretty good top
and the best top that you'll find in the coal mines is what is known as sandstone rock…
And what those things [bands of sandstone in the top above] will do, is
they'll pop, they'll crack.
You can hear the roof bolts "ping!"
And, and that's / that's when it comes down to / that ye pray that uh
that "God, I done, I've not made a mistake here!"
But / experience is how / you get used to / to accustomed [to the mine language], Hannah.

Crawling through the dirt on his hands and knees, Earl bends his body, contorts it to the contours of the tight holes sometimes no higher than 28 inches. As the hero of his own adventure, Earl "must put aside his pride, his virtue, beauty, and life, and bow or submit to the absolutely intolerable. Then he finds that he and his opposite [his anima/her animus] are not of differing species, but one flesh" (Campbell 108, Jung 30). Here indeed, he joins his body with the matter (mutter—mother) of the earth, inhaling coal dust so deeply for so long that he (and other hero-miners) develops black lung disease. Living body to body and breath to breath with this womb, he finds and joins with the feminine—for Campbell, the mother earth, inside these womb-like caverns—in this story full of masculine bodies. Seeking his anima, he finds it all around him, literally consuming him: as he says later, "'Cause the shape my lungs are in,' I said, 'the coal mining's done and eat me up and everthing else.'" A Promethean bargain, Earl brings fire and light to those above ground, but at the expense of his body (Bulfinch 18). Jupiter tortured Prometheus by causing eagles to devour his liver,

and so similarly Earl is punished, his lungs "eat[en]" up by the mountain. Earl gradually becomes the coal he inhales, man into stone, a painful and lethal transformation.

VI. Earl Meets with the Goddess

Tunneling through, crawling on his hands and knees and cheek-to-roof with the coal, Earl describes the experience of seeing a new room that has just been blasted:

> Earl: I'm really I guess just as more fascinated / with bein' in the mines…
> If you look at a coal mines / and if you're there where they're extracting this coal
> that you look, and it hit me one day.
> And I said "Earl," / I said, "you're comin' here every day
> and you *know* what you're gonna do. / You know what to do.
> But," I said, "thing about it," I said, "your eye sees something every day
> that it didn't see yesterday."
> And I got to thinking and I said, "That's sorta crazy,
> but as that coal, Hannah, is bein' extracted / your human eye sees every bit of that."
> And I said, "That's never been seen by a human eye before."

Often these miners are the first and last humans to see these places—as archaeologists, they discover what the compression and slow decay of millions of years of plant life creates: across the walls of the mines after the initial blast into a room are hundreds of fossils, their outlines dark and hard against the glittering coal. Like the dwarfs of Norse and German folklore, miners dig for treasures underground and retrieve the dark coal, the essence of energy and a source of fire and light. Coal, deeply compressed, becomes diamonds, refractors of light and containing every color in the visible spectrum—pure light in pure darkness.

Earl narrates a sensual and symbolically sexual union with the earth that peaks at this meeting and extraction of the coal. Earl "comes to know" what is already known within the earth's body, and in this "sensuous adventure" these bodies rub and mark one another: coal stained with skin and blood from the bodies of miners who have been crushed beneath rock falls, and miners' knees permanently marked by the coal from kneeling repetitively on (and symbolically, to?) the ground (Campbell 116). Miners inhale coal dust and consume place, this substance taking up residence in their lungs and eventually driving out breath, a jealous lover of the whole miners' body (116). As one former miner said, pointing to large dark coal spots on his knees, "You see these spots? / they're from the mines / you can't get em out can't get em out can't get em out"—this disabled miner had not been in the mines for over 10 years (Lanthorn).

I stress that I do not wish to generalize these symbols of feminine/earth/mother outside of Earl's narrative. I use Campbell's theories in the specific cultural context of Earl's coal mining narrative to illustrate the deeply sensual relationship created between person and place in his story. But I am troubled by Campbell's wide-sweeping gendered valuations on the sensuous potential of masculine/feminine binaries. In The Feminine Grotesque Mary Russo warns of the perilous slide from nonacademic cultural feminism metaphors of "earth mother, the crone, the witch, and the vampire…a natural connection between the female body (itself naturalized) and the 'primal' elements, especially the earth" into the misogyny that links the *cavernous*, hidden inner space with the visceral, literally those organs in the abdominal and thoracic *cavities* of the body (Russo 1-2). She says, "In theories of the grotesque, the etymological starting point that links the grotesque with the grotto-esque, or cave, proceeds quite swiftly to the further identification of the grotto with the womb, and with woman-as-mother" (29). In relation to Bakhtin's use of the 'female pregnant hag' as the "deepest expression of the grotesque," Russo argues that this slide from anatomy of the cave to womb and birth mother is "certainly regressive in both the psychic and the political register" (29). Campbell's theories offer a useful illumination of the symbolic elements of Earl's particular narrative, but I heed Russo's warning of how these symbols (the earth as Earl's anima), when taken outside of their specific context, can operate politically in terms of creating a feminized landscape, ready to be penetrated (a gendered valuation which carries implications for environmental rights and the objectification of Appalachian spaces).

Earl strives in the mines, here a symbolic womb-space, and is now one with the feminine (and hence, joined with the Self, finding his anima in her, the earth). In this context, the coal is a highly charged object—symbolically it is a child, gestating for millions of years and only now, when the time is right, birthed out of the mines by Earl and his companions. The product of mutual groaning between person and place—timbers creaking, bolts popping, water trickling, rock falls crashing down in thunderous roars, bone and flesh steadily grinding against rock, metal picks and continuous miner machines cracking away at the coal—this baby (the boon) is born. In a literal sense this coal-baby is "the light of the world," the Christ figure of salvation for a world whose economy (a metaphor for society) spins around the incessant need for fossil fuels to create energy and light.

Having arrived at the nadir of the mythological round, Earl enters the newly blasted rooms (virginal spaces as yet unseen by human eyes—symbolic of the sexual union with the goddess-mother of the world, a sacred marriage), meets this new coal (the baby, the boon), and extracts it from the womb (the supreme ordeal) (Campbell 114). The mine is both the womb and the tomb, a place of discovery and burial—the "devotee," or the miner, must contemplate the two, and does so with a complexity of balance that consciously narrates both the overpowering desire that, as Earl says, "I'd go right back in there if I could," as well as the knowledge that this hole in the earth crushed his grandfather, slowly suffocated his father through the wheezing of black lung, and presently peels his own body away one nerve at a time (his ever-crippling leg and back).

VII. The Ultimate Boon

In the act of extracting the coal (boon), Earl becomes a miner and hence is transfigured. As Campbell notes, "The gods and goddesses then are to be understood as embodiments and custodians of the elixir of Imperishable Being but not themselves the Ultimate in its primary sense…the miraculous energy-substance and this alone is the Imperishable; the names and forms of the deities who everywhere embody, dispense, and represent it come and go" (181-2). The coal-child is itself the regeneration of life: physically, it is the manifestation of once-living plants, now dead, but their living energy harnessed and waiting to be released (burned as fuel/fire); symbolically, it is life from death, the unending and regenerative creative energy that burns from within, the union of body with earth (which is also the story of the Green Man). Campbell points to the irony that the boon desired is usually "longer years to live, weapons with which to slay his neighbor, or the health of his child" (189). Earl's greatest desire is to take care of his family, mining coal in order to provide for "the health of his child" through company health insurance, to gain a "weapon with which to slay" his hunger, and to seek an improved standard of living, even while it inevitably shortens the years that he will live.

VIII. Earl Crosses the Return Threshold

Earl retrieves coal as a precious life-source of humanity. For Campbell, he has discovered another world and the divine within it—and in the journey, in which all characters are the hero himself, he discovers the divine within himself. The hero is called to return

home, "where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds" (193).

As Earl crosses the return threshold, the transcendental powers that he received remain behind—timbers stay in the mines, as do the prestige and techniques applied and cultivated in the mines, for these skills are not applicable above ground. Many disabled miners (though not specifically Earl) report that the friendships forged in the mines between fellow miners dissipate once a miner is no longer able to return to the mines—this is a special bond between current miners, and once out of that realm the transcendental power linking these men and women fades. The hero re-emerges from dead (return, resurrection), and Earl returns from being buried alive underground.

The miner is the "master of two worlds" who, unlike the unfortunate Oisin in the Celtic Fennian Cycle, does survive the return trip from this Otherworld (Tir-na-n Og). Campbell cites Nietzsche in noting that the Cosmic Dancer does not rest in one spot but "gaily, lightly, turns and leaps from one position to another" (229). So the miner travels from lightness into dark, from above ground to the underworld, and back again, and again. While each of these journeys is unique in its occurrence, Earl narrates these multiple journeys as part of a larger journey that he uses to define coal mining culture. Earl shapes his identity as a coal miner by virtue of these journeys. Each story of entering and returning from the mines can be understood as a Universal Singular, in Denzin's terms—each journey is unique to the bodies and circumstances belonging to it, yet these journeys are universally linked for him in defining Appalachian coal mining culture.

IX. Freedom to Live

The boon that Earl brings back from the mines restores the world—it is the elixir, in a physical and symbolic sense, that gives light to the world. Coal is burned to create energy, powering light bulbs, heat pumps, ovens, refrigerators, incubators, electronically mediated communication… An inky substance that shines bright: brought from darkness into light, it brings light to the darkness.

Through his experiences in the mines, Earl also experienced an Apotheosis similar to the Tar Baby story of African American traditions, or the story of the Future Buddha and Sticky-hair. For some miners, the tar baby battle comes quickly within the mines, in rock falls where, like miner Donzil Cutlip, both arms, multiple ribs, and the entire body is

squeezed out, pressed against the tar-colored body of the caved-in mines (Cutlip). For Earl, this battle comes later, in a slow process of giving up his five weapons (his left leg, his lungs, and now his heart—in essence, losing the body completely) to bring him to realize the lightning within him. This lightning, as Earl understands it, is the Christ within him—his belief that his salvation is in his abiding faith in Jesus. With this assurance, he says "I'm a winner either way," whether he dies or lives through his heart-transplant operation:

Earl: Once that ye minin' days are over / as far as havin' great health and everthing
you don't, because ye lungs are / affected, in / many different ways. It's the dust.
And you're uh, / and I had pneumonia / three, two or three years ago…
And that was after, they done pulled me out.
And I had double pneumonia.
And uh / I really did, / that, I / that's the only time in my life—and I got so ashamed then—
that, I asked God / to just let me die…I mean I couldn't *breathe*, I *hurt.*
And then I got, I got to thinkin' / that, "You've [God has] got no right to do this."
And uh / I'd, but down deep / I said, "God I'm yours."
And, I mean when it did, it uh
it just hit me there, "Hey look, I've still got a reason for you, Earl!"…
It's been eight years, two weeks, I mean two months and one week right now that
my back, that's why I had to come out, that
I mean it was messed up, it

Hannah: From / bein' like this *all* day long (*Hannah bends over, Earl nods)*

Earl: What happens, uh, / what is known as degenerative disk disease
sets up. What it is, once they start to rupture, / it's a chain reaction is what it is.
And uh, they kept tellin me / for two and a half years,
"You need to get out a the coal mines."
Well, I ran into somethin like I told ye, something I loved.
It was *different*, I *enjoyed* it, it was hard *work.*
And I, like I said, my family / I's lookin at them. I got to take care a my family.
The longer I went down under, the more damage I done to my back…
They [doctors from Birmingham and Vanderbilt] come down, Hannah, to see if
[I] might not qualify / for another heart.
And [when] they said that it, it hit me a little
hard and I, I looked at the people, and I said "I don't want to do that."
And he said, uh, "Ye heart is really,"
he said, "Earl, it's, it's not the best." I said "Well,"
I said, "Why don't you all want to do it here [in Kingsport]?"
He said, "Like you said," he said "when it come down to a transplant—" I said "*No*."
I said, "People please listen to me. / Don't send me back home."
I said, "I don't want to die in front of my wife and my children."
And I said, "If that has to come," and I said "I want you all to do it over here [in
Kingsport]." But he said there
he says, "If you come down there [to Birmingham]—" and I said,
"No, I don't want a transplant.
Even, if I was to qualify," I said "God's the one that gave me the heart, and if it's worn
out, I accept that."
I said, "Cause the shape my lungs are in," I said, "the coal mining's done and eat me up
and everthing else, that,"
I said, "my lungs or my body would reject."
And I laid over there and I never will forget, / Doctor Malik was the one that

done the open heart on me.
And uh, he come over there the night before and he looked at me and he said "Earl?"
I said, "Yes sir?"
He said, "Are we still on / for in the mornin'?"
I said, "What do you mean?"
He said, "Are we really
still on?" And I said, "Why shouldn't we be?"
And he looked at me and went to shakin' his head and he said, "Earl I wished I had some patients,"
he said, "was much better shape than you are and had that / attitude."
I said, "I'm gonna tell you something."
I said, "Where ya'll keep tellin' me I can't survive surgery,"
I said, "I don't feel that way."
And I said, "Doctor Malik," I said, "you might not
believe, you might not want to hear what I've got to say but I'll still tell ye that," I said, "they's one thing that you've got to understand."
I said, "If God leaves me here,"
I said, "I'm a winner."
I said, "If He takes me on, I'm a winner that way." I said, "Either way I'm a winner."
And that man looked there just like, "Man you *are* a fool!"
And, and I said, "I'm gonna be alright."…
And the way I look at it today.
I said, "I don't deserve to be alive."
I said, "I don't deserve one precious drop of Jesus's blood."

His miners' blood, distinct itself from other people's blood as described through his narrative, is redeemed by another blood, of which he feels he "do[es]n't deserve one precious drop." By delving into the mines, which destroy his body but transform his consciousness, Earl engages in the "energic process of transformation within the Self" (Von Franz 136, Jung 128-9). As Campbell writes, "the hero is the conscious vehicle of the terrible, wonderful Law, whether his work be that of butcher, jockey, or king," or miner (Campbell 239).

Those listening to the hero's story "are oriented to the Imperishable in themselves...Though he had feared the terrible hag, he had been swallowed and reborn. Having died to his personal ego, he arose again established in the Self" (243). Having died to his own ego, sacrificed to and in the mines, Earl rises established in the Self that is both balanced (androgynously) in the feminine (his anima), and assimilated into the Self; having faced the hag (his own dismemberment, a rending of his members), he is reborn (through that "precious…blood"). It is this story that pervaded our conversation—Earl's union with the Self through his own dis-memberment and rebirth (according to the Christian myth)—and it is this story, that "wonderful Law," that he repetitively and performatively tells again and again. This is his "Testimony," in the language of his church: his story as a humble hero who has answered the call, journeyed among helpers and tests, and emerged bearing the lamp of

hope—a burning coal brought out of the darkness of the mines that physically, spiritually, and symbolically for Earl is the light of the world.

CHAPTER 4: MINES-BODIES, MINERS' BODIES[45]

Knowledge is contextual. The question "what is Appalachian coal mining culture in southwest Virginia?" is a question of shared understandings, rules of exclusion and inclusion, private/ized secrets and public knowledge. What understandings are taken-for-granted in coal mining culture? How are common experiences framed and interpreted? Culture is "a set of solutions devised by a group of people to meet specific problems posed by situations they face in common…This notion of culture as a living, historical product of group problem solving allows an approach to cultural study that is applicable to any group, be it a society, a neighborhood, a family, a dance band, or an organization and its segments" (Van Maanen & Barley qtd. in Rubin Rubin 20). What are the particular meanings of the words and phrases used by this group, the emplaced symbolic values and cultural baggage packed into "loaded" terms?

Having grounded the reader in the context of southern Appalachian culture and Earl's coal mining narrative as a universal singular, Chapter Four more closely examines mining culture in terms of miners' construction of the coal mines as a body and a character, what I call the "mines-body." As we have seen in Chapter Two, this body of the landscape has been commonly romanticized as quaint and full of backward beauty. I outline how coal miners' narratives expose what could be understood as the "womb" of this above-ground landscape-as-body, and that these stories might serve as a form of aural/oral body art that challenges romanticized notions of this region. I investigate how coal miners conceptualize this mines-body and interact with it through learning its language.

I. Mines-Bodies

The most prominent and poignant feature of coal miners' narrated experiences were their particular descriptions of and attachment to the place in which they work(ed). What is coal miners' relationship to the mines themselves? How do they learn the language of mines

[45] Portions of this chapter were presented at the 2004 National Communication Association Convention in Chicago, Illinois under the title "Performing Appalachia: Bodies of Earth and Flesh" (Performance Studies Division).

as living and speaking body? Coal miners narrate the mines as a physical and communicative body. Working with and in the ground, coal miners become a part of this place, breathing in the dust of the mines even as they spill blood daily within that place. This place becomes them as they become a part of it—coal lines the lungs of miners, just as a thick layer of coal dust lines the interior walls of some of the older above-ground houses in these coal communities. The miners' unique configuration of mining space as a *body* is central to miners' conceptions of their work, the ways they negotiate that space and construct their own identities in relation to this mines-body, and how they later cope with disability as separation from a community of other coal miners *and* from the mines-body with whom they have formed a sustained relationship.

Anatomy

What is the "body" of the mines, or what I call the "mines-body"? The plural term "mines-body" honors the speech of coal miners who almost invariably refer to mining spaces in the plural—one does not go into a *mine* but into *the mines* or even *a mines*. I first began to understand the mines as having a body through the terms coal miners used to describe the place in which they worked. I interviewed two brothers—Palmer and Albert Maggard—on September 21, 2004. Palmer had worked as an underground coal miner for about 18 years in Ohio and in Keoke, VA. He was disabled in 1988. When Palmer met me for our interview in Kingsport, he brought his brother, Albert, with him. Albert is legally blind and wears thick glasses, through which he can make out solid shapes and images. He is not allowed to drive, and Palmer's steadfast dedication to his brother was evidenced in this everyday gesture of taking Albert with him, along with Albert's friendship and willingness to companion his brother on this trip. The brothers showed a loving devotion to one another from the first moment I met them.

The brothers' father had been a coal miner. Albert said he always wanted to follow in his father's footsteps, but because of his eyesight he wasn't able to work underground. Albert's passion and desire for mining spilled into his brother's first-hand stories about mining, and each brother fed off of the other as the three of us made conversation. Albert got very excited about accounts of death and explosions—something that his brother tempered with caution and reservation in his voice. In one story, Palmer mentioned the "mouth" of the mines in the context of a mine explosion in Derby:

Palmer: It killed 30 some people or 60 some people.

Albert: (*with energy and excitement*) Yeah I remember I went up there that day when all that [mine] blew up!

Hannah: Hmm!

A: Yeah, hit blowed that whole, mountain off up there it
they, roads and all was gone. And there was a poor old blessed woman down there
in the house and uh she / was, she was uh, couldn't get out hardly.
And they finally did get in there to get her out a that house.

H: Mmm.

A: Yeah, where it blowed up, yeah! (*he looks to his brother and resettles himself in his chair, fidgeting with his legs and arms*)

H: It blew, in the town, like / out at…?

P: Yeah it / what it does / it / it ignites the, the dust / coal dust.

H: Right.

P: And it it just keeps burnin…At, a lot a dust build up, back / in behind ye.
Well when that, ignited hit / as it come out it just kept / getting bigger and hotter.

H: Mmm!

P: And, it shoot plumb out the drift mouth.

Palmer was quick to ask me "we're not just going to talk about the sad stories, are we?" after he and his brother told this story—although to Albert it seemed that sadness was superceded by the thrill of this tale. We created this conversation together, and I tried to give them power and authority over where our conversation went. In this story, though, the brothers introduced me to the concept of the mining "drift mouth"—a mouth that literally spat fire, hot ash, and charred bodies out of a mountain that smoldered from underneath the town. The "drift" of this mouth refers to the style of entryway—a horizontal entrance into the side of a mountain, where access to the underground passage is above water level and usually on the slope of a hill, drilled horizontally into the coal seam inside the mountain. Because of the steep topography of southwest Virginia, most of these underground mines are "drift mines" ("Glossary of Mining Terms").

That miners enter the mines through a *mouth*—the orifice through which humans eat, consume, speak, vomit, and spit—is significant. The mouth is a liminal zone of the body—

kissing lips and tongues play at the border of my-your-our bodies. My mouth is where my insides violently turn out—I bring what is outside my body inside, I invite food in. My body swells, secretes juices that surround foreign objects, touches, breaks apart, senses—my gut considers the matter. It rejects what I put into it. I throw it up and out of my body through my mouth. I chew, making food malleable and more manageable for my stomach to consume. I swallow—it tastes good. The mouth of the mines invites miners inside—through symbolic mastication, they are swallowed and passed into the gullet of this body.

Once inside, the miners pass through tunnel walls called *ribs*, which can sometimes break off and roll over onto you. Donald, a close friend who helped me to visit and enter a coal mine during my field work, warned me about these mine ribs, which were more dangerous in high-wall mining than in low wall. Donald has a thin frame, tall, with a warm smile and soft, quick-paced voice that hit Appalachian chords high in the back of his throat.

> Donald: And you had to watch the ribs / as close as you did the top [or ceiling] because
> you're talking / two ton, three tons
> all of a sudden just, whoosh (*breathes out heavily and sweeps his hand across*) roll over on ye.
>
> Hannah: Roll on you.
>
> D: And, you'd better be ready to *move*, make some *tracks* and do this! (*Hannah laughs*)
> And you learn it, you know, after a while.
>
> H: Oh my gosh.
>
> D: And it's just / an experience somebody can never tell ye, you know, it, it's unbelievable.

This snippet of Donald's story pierces me because it highlights the visceral nature of the mines-body. The mines have ribs—in the human body, bones that expand and contract in response to involuntary muscle movements that pull and push breath in and out of the body. Donald had to "watch the ribs" in case a three ton slab might roll on top of him and the other people in his section. The chest walls that frame this body are shaky and unreliable—they sit between constant pressure of the mines-body ceiling which can "drop straight out on ye." Donald coupled this story about "rib rolls" with a description of a "horse's back," which was similar to a type of rock called a "killer bottom" or "kill bottom" by Earl:

> Donald: And that's why they call 'em kill bottoms cause people, / they was very hard to detect.

Hannah: Mm hmm.

D: And uh, when they dropped out it would make you wonder, you know. I've had em drop out would weigh half a ton / a ton, and
it'd sit right down beside of ye, ye know, and you're sittin there thinking, whew! (*laughs*)
Lucky, you know, and uh…Then you'd have what they'd call a horse's back.

H: A horse's back?

D: Yeah, we called em a horse's back.

H: Huh.

D: They laid in there on the "V." (*he brings his hands together to make a 'V' pointed up into the air)*
Very dangerous, and undetectable, killed many a people.
But, like I say, they'd have just *enough* coal / uh, around that hard sandstone remnants that onced you took and let that air hit it after a bit, / it would drop straight out on ye.

The mountain is a body that "sits," or in Appalachian drawl "sets," down beside of you. One miner described eating his lunch when a chunk of the mountain sat down beside him. Steve, another miner, described this pressure of the ceiling—sometimes over 300 feet of mountain above your head—as it pushes downwards. As the miners "pull pillars" (literally, ripping out the pillars of coal that hold the ceiling up), they try to make the ceiling fall in on them as they pull out of the mines. Steve said, "it's real wild when the mountain falls—the mountain sets down." Steve corrected himself—the mountain doesn't fall, it "sets," in the sense that a body could "set yourself down for a spell." The implication is that miners understand the nature of a body that would feel tired or pressured and need to "set a spell." To the miners I interviewed, the mines-body is a feeling creature with needs that must be "respected" along with the dangers they can cause.

Donald reveals a gap in what cannot be said or expressed in words because it's "an experience somebody can never tell ye." These are elusive memories that he cannot put into words—literally, language are not capacious enough to hold or fit experience. He supplements language with "whooshing" and motioning violently with his hands. Wildly gesticulating, sounding out the noises, he embodies the movements, language, and persona of the mines-body.

Miners learn and become vulnerable in the presence of the mines—they put themselves inside its *belly* (their word). Palmer and Albert explained to me how the mines ceiling will "take weight" and "belly down" on top of you as you work.

Palmer: I noticed this one place evertime we'd go through there it, it got lower…

Hannah: Yeah.

P: And / evertime they'd make a trip / it'd, uh, more coal would drag off their car you know.
And, and you could hear the top just, crackin.

H: Mmm!

P: And what it was doin it was, what they call takin weight.

Albert: Yeah!

P: And uh, / it would squeak?

H: Yeah.

P: And and by that, end of the shift / they couldn't even get a car through that place.

H: Oh my gosh.

P: It bellied down, to / where you couldn't even get the car through.

H: Oh my gosh.

P: But the next morning, it had fell in?
But you know it's just lucky you know that nobody was there?

H: Yeah.

P: But we knew this was happenin
because ever time the car would go through there you could tell it was getting lower.

H: Mm hmm.

P: And you could see it bellyin down...
But in the next morning we come to work and that, whole section fell in.

In Palmer's story, this place-body *bellies* down—I imagine being on the underside of a mattress when someone sits on top of it, pushing hard metal coils closer to my cheek—and *sits* on them, speaking a language of squeaks, pops, and cracks above them to communicate signals of warning and danger. Beyond personification, miners narrate this place as a body that moves, interacts with miners, speaks to them and with them: miner and mines-body feel each other and hunker together body-to-body. This place/character has agency to eat,

destroy, and consume in their narratives—these are co-consumptive bodies. As Earl says, "the coal dust has done eat me up and all." It has eaten up his lungs and currently is eating his body alive as he breathes with these already-consumed corpse-lungs. His moving body breathes life into lungs which are already dying and digested by the mines.

Miners enter into the "drift mouth," pass between "ribs," travel underneath a ceiling that will "belly down" on top of you and sag, and finally approach a "face" where they work. The face is the end of the mining tunnel where new coal is mined out by remote-controlled mining machines called "miners[46]." Eddie Cantor described what being at the face meant to him:

> Eddie: What does it feel like to me was just, amazing.
> Have you ever been in a cave?
>
> Hannah: Yes, I have.
>
> E: It's like that.
> Just like that feeling.
> What really amazed me, Hannah, was
> I was somewhere where somebody never, never has been before…
> So they was the first ones to go on that / piece of / rock / and earth and whatever.
> After the, miner come out / they were the first it was kinda like
> first man to the moon you know to step on it?
> That's the way they were.
> And then I would go in there / up where, you know, nobody else has been before…
> And that's what I always thought about.

In this cave-like place, Eddie is an explorer—working at the "face" of the mines as a "face man" meant that he daily witnessed something that had never before been seen. Because miners let these tunnels fall back in on themselves as miners retreat from the mines, Eddie knows he is one of the only people who will *ever* meet and witness this specific place. Integrally tied to his story of excitement and adventure—similar to the intrepidly important work of an astronaut—is the story of work and effort to get to this face. To meet face-to-face with the mines requires skill, artistry, and labor. Throughout this physical labor, Eddie "always thought about" meeting the face of the mines—this desire overshadowed the hardship and threat of danger that was entailed in reaching the face, symbolically meeting eye-to-eye with the mines-body. The mines' face is found at the end of a long tunnel of ribs,

[46] The mining machine itself is called a "miner," making it difficult at times to distinguish between man and machine. This morphing of human and tool links them in concert underground—miners' bodies expand into the machines they carry, and the machines themselves take on human characteristics through naming.

beyond its belly, and past its mouth—a multitextured and amorphous body in constant motion, effusing sounds and smells as it reacts to the seasons and to the miners' movements within its body. Miners' stories about this place shape a body that seems to take on a life of its own, with agency to eat, speak, and destroy. This is a place—a *body*—that they interact with, listen to, speak with, and work *with*. This is relational, dialogic space created between person and place, a relationship embedded into their skin, pulsing through veins—"it gets into your blood."

Land-Marked Bodies / Landscape-as-Body

Wet. Tight. Cavernous. In the *belly* of the earth. In these conversations with Earl, Eddie, Palmer and Albert, I began to imagine this place as having a body—a character—all its own. Seeing place-as-body, I also began to question how this body was viewed outside its own borders and what impact these images had on coal miners, who are in body-to-body relationship with the mines-body. If this place is a character, how is it pornographized in popular media? Many images, such as those analyzed in Chapter Two, display lush and delicious landscape images of Appalachia with its charming inhabitants in harmony with nature—Mike Smith's landscapes are exemplary for their break with this tradition. Warren Moore's romanticized images of Appalachian landscapes create a feminized vision of this region—the land is presented as a luscious object to be viewed and enjoyed. Images of mining culture and mining spaces are not often present in such collections.

Coal miners have described the mines "as if you were in a cave." Etymologically, the grotesque evokes the cave, the grotto-esque: "Low, hidden, earthly, dark, material, immanent, visceral" (Russo 1). The archaic grotto-esque can be literally read as a bodily metaphor, looking like the anatomically cavernous female body and associating the female with the earthly, the material. The nonacademic cultural feminism view of the grotto-esque "valorizes traditional images of the earth mother, the crone, the witch, and the vampire and posits a natural connection between the female body (itself naturalized) and the 'primal' elements, especially the earth" (1).

But Mary Russo warns of the perilous slide from such archaic metaphors into the misogyny that links the *cavernous*, hidden inner space with the visceral, literally those organs in the abdominal and thoracic *cavities* of the body (2). She says, "In theories of the grotesque, the etymological starting point that links the grotesque with the grotto-esque, or

cave, proceeds quite swiftly to the further identification of the grotto with the womb, and with woman-as-mother" (29).

If we begin to construct an "anatomy of a landscape," the coal mines-body of southwest VA function as a particular aspect of the Appalachian landscape-as-body. This is an interior space, enclosed, cavernous, "constant wet," slippery, mud caking the hands of those miners who thrust their bodies into this womb-like place, belly-to-belly with the interior of the Earth. The mines are (in)visible, interior, subcutaneous, orifice- and womb-like. The cavernous interior space identified with woman and linked with the cave-like grotto-esque low-wall mines of feminized Appalachia presents a configuration that Russo reminds us is also identified as a passive space, a receptacle. These wet, tight caves are not a prominent aspect of popularized portraitures of Appalachia. If the caves are seen as womb-like, then normative, performative representations of this place cover up these "private parts."

In her book Body Art: Performing the Subject, Amelia Jones writes that a critical component of body art is that "by surfacing the effects of the body as an integral component (a material enactment) of the self, the body artist strategically unveils the dynamic through which the artistic body is occluded (to ensure its phallic privilege) in conventional art history and criticism" (Jones 5). Body artists such as Hannah Wilke and Carolee Schneemann directly expose that which is not to be seen (genitalia), exposing the Freudian lack that threatens the male gaze with castration anxiety. But in normative representations (according to Bouvoire, who looks to Mulvey) the "lacking" female body is "forced to act as phallus/fetish in order to palliate man's anxiety over losing his penis-as-phallus" (152). Showing the caves directly could be seen as exposing a maternal site as the womb of the earth, which brings the image of men emerging from these wet and sticky mines perilously close to, in Kristeva's words, a

> birth-giving scene…something *horrible to see* at the impossible doors of the invisible—the mother's body….Giving birth: the height of bloodshed and life, scorching moment of hesitation (between inside and outside, ego and other, life and death), horror and beauty, sexuality and the blunt negation of the sexual. (Kristeva qtd. in Russo 64)

As such, we might look at descriptions such as those that coal miners offered as an aural representation of body art that lives on after the initial performance.

Also, performative writing offers another forum for body art—while Moore's book Mountain Voices presents a homogenously "cleaned-up" group of landscape images, the poem "Anatomy of a Landscape" undresses this landscape to expose through discourse and art poetry the ways that this landscape is commodified and made endearingly precious and frivolous—the "sex appeal" of this body/landscape is laid bare.

Tiny
Hairs
Poking
O
U protruding breasts
round, T soft, U
"whole" B ^ M sa
uneven, PY falling, ^gging

must hide cover one larger than the other,
not show over onestubborn**ingrownhair**fromplucking,
(too much) nipples pu ck er ed with mam ma ry nodes, M
not allow extra BU ^ PS, vat
the nipple too many ele ^^ ions
to show on the surface
through S hairhairhairhair lotion-
my W h-a-i-rh HAIR hai ed and
t-shirt E rihairh ha irhair ha pamp-
A hair hAir hai rh ered metic-
T S O ulous-
SW M U ly
so hav EAT u p C H un face
flat surface in front, ^ much hair, s ^^ e SW the sides, b ^ m ^ s from too much shaving, ingrown hairs, redness and ^ even sur ^^ s, no penis, a lack
my hands, my breasts, my vagina, my EATS clit my anus, my nails, my hair, my eyes, my feet, my ankles, my ears, my eardrums, my heart, my
pancreas, my brain, my mouth, my WEATSW tongue, my teeth, my scars, my ovaries, my womb…….....a tunnel,
EATSWEATSWE a cavern,
ATSWEATSWEATSWEATSWEA (un)discovered
TSWEATSWEATSWEATSWEATSWEA territory , territory
TSWEATSWEATSWEAT SWEATSWE to be claimed
ATSWEATSWEATSWEATSWEATSWEATS either by me,
WEATSWEAT SWEATSW EATSWE or by another;
ATSWEA TS W EAT a separate territory,
a separate part,
not my own but "for" someone else, a gift for my husband, a spoilable package,
don't open, don't secrete, don't spill, don't bleed, catch it all inside and dispose of it
quickly, orifices, multiple holes, "it gets complicated down there" say Masters and Johnson,
wet, must clean, smelly, making its
smell and presence known
through noises of
trapped air effusing,
tissue escaping, dead possibilities of birth escaped monthly,
did I ever really own this part to begin with??????????

"Anatomy of a Landscape"
–Hannah Blevins Harvey

Figure 9 "Anatomy of a Landscape," by Hannah Blevins Harvey.

II. Mines-Body Language and Space

Low-Wall

Coal miners describe 'real' mining as 'low wall' coal mining. Earl's narrative is filled with stories of working in low coal, as were many other miners' narratives. While different underground mining techniques[47] are gaining in use and popularity by mining companies in this area, miners young and old point to their low wall experiences as the *real thing* in mining. This is to say, if low wall mining is not currently commonly practiced according to mining technicians at Virginia's Department of Mining and Mineral Resources, what is learned through experiencing low wall mining is *absolutely* common and shared knowledge within mining culture. Through the low wall process, miners intimately experience the mines-body.

Wayne Lanthorn, my primary contact and also my stepfather (Papa), summarized what many of his mining friends had described to him over the past 20 years:

> Wayne: I / just in that, I think it's everybody's inherent fear, you know, Stephen King-like fear
> of being in an enclosed place with a lot of danger and uh, you know, sometimes a mile's worth of earth up above.
> Sometimes going underneath lakes, I mean and
> so you've got this seepage kind of coming down.
> It's always muddy and it's always 55 degrees and it's filthy.
> And when they have to go to the bathroom they just go to the bathroom there.
> You're not going out again, you know it takes / half an hour or 45 minutes to get out.
> So it's just uh / it's a very
> I think almost like no other job that I can think of relationship with the earth.
> I really, I can't think of another thing than
> being an underground miner that—
> and these are low wall people, these are
> mines about 28 inches to 36 inches and a real good
> seam, you know, goes up to maybe 5 or 6 feet, so they,
> it's what they call a high wall or a higher wall, but most of it is again 28 inches, so they're crawling.
> So all of them the ones that I've seen have had bad knees
> busted up knees and they're limpin' and if they aren't bad they're going bad and they all have arthritis, and they work in the cold you know. And,
> then again, about all of them have been hurt one way or another.

[47] One example is longwall mining: "one of three major underground coal mining methods currently in use. Employs a steel plow, or rotation drum, which is pulled mechanically back and forth across a face of coal that is usually several hundred feet long. The loosened coal falls onto a conveyor for removal from the mine" ("Glossary of Mining Terms").

Papa's story haunted me. I returned to this snippet of our first conversation many times—miners' bodies squeezed, pushed, pummeled by exposure to and experience in the mines. Harley Colley worked in low coal, and I asked him to describe his experience:

> Hannah: Now did you work in / low wall coal? (*Harley nods his head*) / How high?
>
> Harley: Some of em about (*motions about 2 ½ or 3 feet*) under this table.
> And I, have worked in like uh…20 foot. / But that's the highest I ever did get.
> Narrowest, you know, I worked in, you could lay ye head over like this and walk. (*he leans his ear to his shoulder*)
> When I got hurt / you know I was still in 30 inches. (*pause*)
> So I'd say that table was 30 inches. (*pause*)
> Well you've got it set up, you set / you settin, on,
> you'd have to lean ye head like this to get at the coal. (*leans head sideways again*)
> So you're cutting through this— / you see how high I am, from my butt up?
> My hat would hit the roof!
> When you laid ye head back then (*Hannah laughs*) / you had to try to lean over.

Harley emphasized that these spaces shaped particular movements for miners. As Earl similarly described earlier in Chapter Three, low wall miners work ear-to-coal with the roof of these tunnels. Harley later described how he would "duck walk" in the mines—walking on his feet, knees bent, torso crouched, and head leaning to the side. Harley brought some of his mining equipment—hardhat, light, belt (with his brass identification tag, similar to a dog tag in the military), and other mementos. Harley dressed me up in his mining outfit and then told me, "Ok, now you get under that table there and try to walk around." We laughed as I klunked under the three-foot-high plastic-topped desk that had sat between us during our interview. I could consciously keep my head bent to the side while he coached me through duck-walking, but every time I spoke up to answer or ask him a question I unconsciously plucked my head upright and bumped it on the underside of the desk. Harley was now the teacher, in full command of the performance space, and we laughed at my untrained body as I struggled to keep myself hunched yet upright.

Yet operating in such close quarters made many miners feel safer because they were better able to see coal dust "dribbling" out of the roof of the mine roof as a telltale sign that a roof fall was about to happen. With a lower ceiling, rib-rolls (where the mine wall caves in on itself) were less deadly because there was less rock to fall over onto a miner. But what many miners stressed most about the advantages of low-wall mining was a more intense and intimate *relationship* with place that made them constantly aware of and in communication

with the mine itself—miners' bodies and mines-bodies were pressed together moment to moment. As I listened to their stories, watching them tell about this place and their work with it, they seemed to weave a dance between two bodies, each shaping the other. The corporeality of that experience shaped miners' conceptions of their bodies and selves, crafting a subtle dance of movement between person and place.

In one of Steve's stories of working in low coal, he emphasized how interrelated the environment was to daily life. Context matters. Steve braided together stories of eating-socializing-defecating—this easy slide from one story into the next stressed the importance of place to the formation of daily habits and relationships:

Steve: And then it got to where / you started workin in, real *low* / stuff.
And you was crawlin in water.
Uh / I seen times that, I couldn't / in order to take a drink a this (*he holds up his coffee cup*)
I had to have a straw.
I could, didn't have room to turn it up. (*he demonstrates, tipping the end of the cup and watching it hit the mine roof*)

Hannah: Oh my gosh.

S: If you wanted a drink / your, you'd tell your wife, "Hey, put a straw in my dinner bucket."
Or, you know, because they wouldn't be / it would be like, tryin to set under this table and take a drink a this pop, well
uh, you'd have to, you'd have to have a straw.
(*pause*)
And / if it was dry and it was that high I didn't mind it.
But when it started getting wet, and it was that high, well (*he shakes his head*).
Now, people, uh / there's no bathrooms in there. (*laughs*)
I mean I don't, you know, I don't want to get nasty or anything but

H: No, / any practical detail you've got is good.

S: There's no bathrooms in there.
Well, uh / most a the time, if you have to use the bathroom / well, if you have to pee then you just do it wherever you are.
But if you have to, take a crap / you's supposed to go over here where the all the air is goin—

H: (*nods*) —circulating out?—

S: —towards the outside (*nods*).
And you're supposed to go over here in this heading and / do your business or whatever.
(*pause*)
But / see, where this water comes in there? (*laughs*)

H: Oh my gosh.

S: You see what I'm sayin if, if there's a little water in here and it comes through here and it runs across this pile,

H: Oh no!

S: comes over here and it runs across *this* pile and then it comes up *here*
and here you are, up there / crawlin around in it! And / and I've told people all my life I said,
Mom'll say, "Hey, you're not gonna wash your hands before you eat?" I said, (*laughs*)
"What's the use, you know?" (*Hannah laughs*)
I said, "There I worked in the mines all them years and crawled around and this, you know,
and that you know," and I said,
(*pause*)
"Why not wash your hands?"
(*pause*)
I said, "I couldn't wash em in there!"
And most people they would, like their baggie?
They would, / get their sandwich in their baggie and just sort a peel it off like it was
(*Hannah laughs*) / like a banana?
And try not to touch their sandwich.
(*pause*)
And, and that would uh / that way.
I mean it, it's nasty.
Uh / and it's a wonder that people, a lot a the people—
now uh / settin right here / I can't smell you.

But if we was in the mines
I could smell you if you was out there at that car. (*he motions to outside in parking lot*)

H: Mmm!

S: Yeah.

H: Because of the circulation? Because of the way it—

S: Right, the way the atmosphere was.
And / sometimes / you could smell this guy and say, "Hey, man, you,
Polo!" You know, "Polo!" (*Hannah laughs*)
And this guy over here, "Hey, Old Spice!" you know.
And sometimes it would get, pretty rank? (*both laugh*)
You know, so uh / if this guy over here had bad breath
then everbody ah knew it! (*Hannah laughs*)
And / uh I mean it's uh / and it could be, a long ways away,
(*pause*)
you could smell somebody comin.
(*pause*)
And / a lot a people you know
I, I could be settin there and certain guys wore certain perfume, and you knew that!
(*pause*)
You could smell em!
Well, I'd be settin there and they'd try to sneak up on ye, a lot a people try to sneak up on ye
and jump on ye and scare ye?
(*pause*)
Well I'd just let em get so close you know,
(*pause*)
and I wouldn't even turn around I'd say, "Hey what're ya doin Dave?" (*Hannah laughs*)
He'd say, "Hey man how'd you know I was back here?"
I said, "I could smell you, 10 minutes ago."
You know, "I could smell you, " you could *smell* these people.
(*pause*)
And *everbody* has their own odor.

And out here you don't / you might not / know it.
But in there you do.
You get to know people.
(*pause*)
Even what they smell like.
So / what they eat / most, you know / most of em can eat / a tin can
and it wouldn't bother their stomach because / I mean they got used to
eatin, all hours or, whatever you know.
Like, the guys that worked on hoot owl, well, could you imagine / uh
getting up of a morning and eatin, onions and, and / for breakfast I mean.

H: Yeah.

S: Cause this guy when he come out a the mines he was ready / to eat his, supper.

H: Mm hmm.

S: And that would be at 7 o'clock in the morning and this guy's ready for a hamburger with
onions, uh, onion rings uh,
or you know, whatever, throw some hot sauce on there!

Steve's story was packed with smells and textures—onions, thick cologne, piles of feces, and water intermingling through these piles and seeping into the work area. There was so much so fast in his stories—one flowed into another, and each question seemed to have so many stories attached to it. Asking about working in low-wall coal is a question of eating habits—eating with the head sideways and drinking "through a straw" because you can't raise your head up straight. I remembered playing the part of the coal miner under the desk with Harley—hunched over, bumping my head, neck arched and extended—with a shudder. Low-wall also means being aware of your own and others' shit, which combines with the "constant wet" of the mines to ooze fecal sludge into the work area. Low-wall mining meant so many things to Steve—a way of being, filled with ritual practices and rules of order: pee in the returns, wives pack the husband's lunch each morning, husbands eat with their heads turned sideways.

Close quarters bring men and women together into a different bodily relationship than aboveground work. Miners know each other by smell—from pheromones to Polo. Steve pairs life in low wall mines with stories of the most basic human tasks: eating, breathing, defecating. Each act is transformed into something wholly new in this space—bodies know one another by scent stronger than sight because, as Palmer said, "there's not a darkness / made / that's any darker" than being underground in these mines. Mom's aboveground

manners take on a different form: proper rules of behavior—wash your hands before your eat!—are replaced by a sandwich baggie glove for food.

Steve concluded his story with a homily on strength and identity:

Steve: But / coal miners are a tough breed of people.

Hannah: Yeah.

S: And they've been through a lot.
And if they set their mind to do something / they'll do it.

H: Mm hmm.

S: And, no matter what it takes
(*pause*)
they'll do it.
And uh / they're uh / you know I, I guess that's the reason maybe, that, that sorta impressed *meee* and got me sorta leanin toward that way.

H: Mm hmm.

S: Because I always looked up to / my dad, I thought, "Hey man, a coal miner, don't mess with him! / He's a coal miner!"
Because, they were *tough.*
And, I guess that's, when I got to be a coal miner I said, "Hey, (*Hannah laughs*) don't mess with me man!"
Cause that's how I, that was, how I felt about myself.

H: Yeah.

S: But as I, you know, life went on I said, "Hey I'm not a bit different than anybody else."
I got feelings like anybody else.
But, I, I mean when it come down to it / if there was a pile a oil out there or I wouldn't care a bit to get in it.

H: Hmm.

S: A lot a people wouldn't.

H: Mm hmm.

S: My younger brother, I don't believe he's ever had his hands dirty.

H: Really?

S: Yeah. / But / I'll uh, / coal miners they don't care if it's nasty or / they just,

H: Yeah.

S: just that kind a people.

Steve says that low-wall[48] miners are a "tough breed of people." The negative notion of southern Appalachians as "inbred" and of a different animal-like breed was commonly circulated through turn of the century silent films such as Sparrows (1926). Mary Pickford is an orphan sold to a baby farm run by Mr. Grimes. The oldest, Mary ("Mother Molly") tends the litter of 14 wild and dirt-covered children and fought off the sexual advances of her Mr. Grimes. Grimes resorts to kidnapping for ransom. In these scenes, Grimes's menacing and mud-moated backwoods farm is juxtaposed with clean city home with its polished hardwood floors and white-clad live-in nursemaid (complete with her scientific nurse's cap).

Figure 10 Ambrose Grimes (Spec O'Donnell) threatens to throw one of the children into the swamp while Mother Mollie (Mary Pickford) reacts. Still image from Sparrows. Photo courtesy of The Mary Pickford Institute for Film Education. All rights reserved.

[48] Low-wall means strength, determination, and "real" mining. If the Country Bear Jamboree presents a simulacrum of Appalachia full of "fake real"s, this story is the "real real" on which all other versions are based for Steve.

Figure 11 Mother Mollie (Mary Pickford) and the orphans in Sparrows. Photo courtesy of The Mary Pickford Institute for Film Education. All rights reserved.

Steve's narrative appropriates this story of breeding and turns it on its head—inbreeding becomes pure-breeding; inhuman animalistic behavior becomes superhuman strength: "they were *tough*." He has inherited this *tough* trait from his father, another coal miner. Tied with notions of heritage and tradition, mining strength comes into his blood through the process of coal mining and through blood passed down from his strong and loving father. As Elizabeth Stone urges, the "myth of the blood" is less about a genetic relation to others and passing down of personality traits as it is the belief that these traits are definitive of the family bloodline. Steve's brother carried their father's genetic blood in his veins and "didn't work a day in his life." Miners' blood is created through performative enactments of stories and rituals among a community of men and women. Steve's inheritance of miners' blood is in the stories he tells about his mining work and in the performative enactment of daily mining habits and rituals as he goes down into this hole again and again—eating, defecating, and breathing in concert with other miners.

Whether or not coal miners actually care if it's "nasty" in the mines is not as important as the *belief* that dirt means something different here. 'Not caring' about nastiness in this story is more about taking a physical element (dirt) which is coded as 'nasty' by abovegrounders, reappropriating it through his story, and recoding it as *tough.* Donald laughingly said that the only thing he found that could get the coal and grease off of his hands at the end of the day was Joy dish detergent mixed with water. Stubborn coal stains on knees are embedded into miners' flesh—Papa's repetitive, performative iteration "you can't get em out, can't get em out, can't get em out" implies a *dealing with* and living *in spite of*

the 'nastier' elements of mining life rather than Steve's living in harmony with nasty stains and dirty hands. But Steve's story buttresses an identity of honor, determination and impressive strength against those who would code these dirt stains as just plain 'nasty.' What is otherwise taboo (dirty hands) becomes sacred to Steve, reappropriated into a symbol of strength.

Low-wall coal miners position themselves in opposition to those who do above-ground strip mining, even though many of these same miners have performed strip mining when they were laid-off from underground mines and in need of work. Many underground miners complain that strip mining ruins their homeland and hunting grounds. When I drove around Norton, Virginia with Donald and Buckwheat, they pointed to land that had once been good hunting ground and asked me to "look at it now," barren of trees and leveled from excessive runoff from strip mine operations on top of the mountains. Runoff from strip mines also spoils the towns themselves and threatens access points leading into remote areas where towns are located—in the wintertime, runoff covers the sides of mountains with thick sheets of ice that break off onto the road below (similar to rib-rolls inside the mines), creating lethal road hazards on the tortuous passageways in and out of towns. Runoff also spills into these roads and freezes to coat the roads in ice.

Interestingly, the environmental hazard created from underground mining itself through, among many other concerns, acid mine runoff, seriously damages lakes and destroys fishing sites. Many miners choose to foreground the damages caused by strip mining and ignore the environmental repercussions of underground mining. This is perhaps less indicative of an ignorance of the multiple causes of pollution in these areas as much as the desire for coal miners to identify themselves in a particular way. By shielding low wall mining from an association with negative stories about pollution, miners are able to champion it as not only noble and difficult work but also as a more "natural" and harmonious mode of producing energy and profit. Taking the ill effects of underground work onto their own bodies through stories of disability, they displace the damage underground mining does to the landscape-as-body.

"It Takes a Long Time to Learn the Mountains"

Palmer told me that to be in tune with the mountains means "it's experience," having at least the dual meaning of this being an extraordinary occurrence in his life and that only by

experience can he learn the nature, contours, and anatomy of this mines-body. Steve Austin similarly told me that "it takes a long time to learn the mountains." *Learning* is an embodied process—thinking, feeling, seeing, smelling, touching, and listening to this place as it communicates with these miners. They described the mines in highly affectively charged terms, describing their sensory perceptions when I prompted them with questions of "what is it like down there?" and "how was mining different than above ground work?" As Palmer followed-up, "it gets into your blood"—coal symbolically and metaphorically enters miners' bodies to materially change their blood into something different: miners' blood. That coal miners share a symbolic blood-relationship with one another links them as a family, a concept discussed later in terms of how they respond productively to the ever present dangers of this place. Palmer, whose response was representative of so many of the miners I interviewed, said that he wouldn't trade the experience of mining for a healthy body again: "I'd go back today if I could."

Steve described the process of learning the mountains. Steve turned over his consent form and began to draw this place out for me—I, unprepared, hadn't anticipated the need to provide drawing supplies, and I felt slightly embarrassed that I didn't have anything to give him when he looked to me and asked for paper. More than making a comment about how I as an ethnographer should have been better prepared for the unexpected, this moment revealed the power of story performance to transform situations, given parameters, and clearly delineated roles of teller and listener.

Learning the mountains began in his childhood through the family stories he heard from his parents and grandparents. These family stories are our first culture, as Elizabeth Stone says, and it is through these stories that we interpret the events of our daily lives. They provide a narrative framework by which we may shape our consciousness and interpret, order, and deal with the events of our lives. Experience is negotiated through family stories—memory is selective and family members choose what to record and reiterate through the generations, and what to leave behind (or not emphasize). Often what is forgotten is as important as what is remembered. Steve described coal mining in the context of his father and grandfather's experiences:

Steve: Well if I could uh, do you have a piece of paper?
Could I draw on this? (*he reaches for his consent form*)

Hannah: Sure, yeah.

S: Now see back when my grandfather / worked
they would start in—like this would be,
they would come in through here. (*he draws a bar for the mountainside and a line passing through it*)
And this right here wouldn't be but maybe
four or five feet wide. (*he points to the line representing the mines tunnel*)

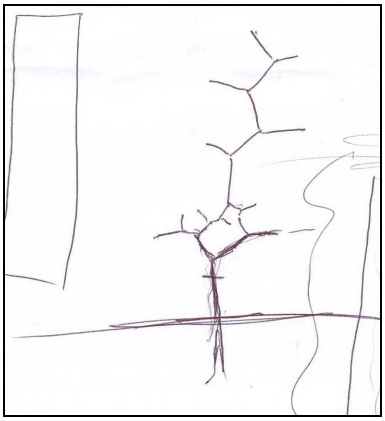

Figure 12 Steve's initial drawing of his grandfather's method of mining.

H: Mmm hmm.

S: This little place.

H: Hmm

S: Well this man, / he would go in here so far. (*he draws the tunnel line further*)
And then they would go like this. (*he forks the tunnel line in half*)
Alright, there'd be a man go up this way / and a man go up this way.

H: Uh huh

S: Ok? / Then after they got that one up there so far
they would do it again. (*he draws more forking paths, like a honeycomb*)
And they'd put a man in here and a man in here.
And this one, would do the same thing.
And then it would just keep / keep "Y-ing off," they called it.

H: Spiderweb out?

S: Yeah, like a "Y."
And I don't see how in the world they kept from getting lost in this…
And, the ponies / they would bring the ponies in and if ye was over here
well they'd bring ye some cars over there…

Well / when you got your cars loaded, then
the pony could come back and take em out and bring ye some more / into em.
And the ponies / whenever you came outside like this would be (*he thickens the line representing the mountainside*)
they call it a high wall, I guess uh / the side of a mountain…
(*pause*)
But *now*, / the coal mines

H: Mm hmm.

S: they, / it just sorta looks like little squares. (*he draws a row of squares*)

H: Mm hmm.

S: And this is coal (*He draws a thick line at the top of the grid*)
And these are like little / these are 20 feet wide. (*the spaces between the squares that represent tunnels*)
Basically, these little deals here.
And you'll have / uh / a bunch of em. (*he draws more squares to make a wide grid*)

H: Mm hmm.

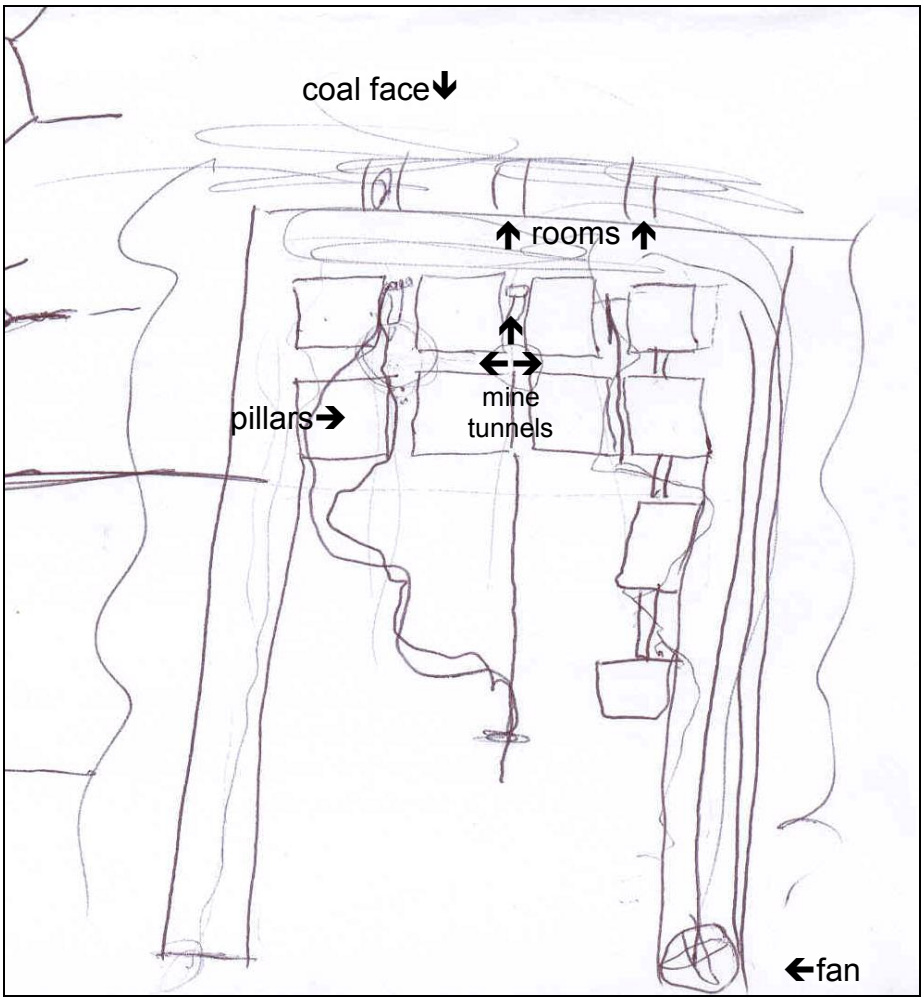

Figure 13 Steve's continued drawings, this time of current mining operations where he worked. This is a close-up of a portion of his drawings that day—the image of his grandfather's mines are visible in the left margin.

S: And / you can either call it a room or / or whatever.
But say this up here / is a solid block a coal. (*he draws a heavy line at the top of the grid*)
And / all these are / pillars (*the rows of squares*)…
Well I always uh these are rooms this is what ye call the rooms cause / you're
you would travel, these [tunnels] would be like 20 feet wide. (*he points to the spaces between the squares*)

H: Yeah.

S: And these (*he points to the width of the entire grid*) are like 75 / 60 or
you could make em as big as ye wanted to.

H: Mm hmm.

S: But, like the miner / the continuous miner he'd be over here.

(*he points to one section along the face*)

H: Mm hmm.

S: And / uh / the pinner roof bolter, he would be over in this place.
(*he points to the next section over*)

H: Mm hmm.

S: And for, most a the time the belt / came out the center one.
(*he draws a long line down the center and out of the mines*)

S: And naturally, I mean you'd have (*he draws squiggly lines surrounding 3 sides of the picture*) / your solid coal over here, / and over here.

H: Yeah.

S: Well, all the way outside— / just imagine that this is / still rooms up through here—

H: Yeah.

S: well they would set em a fan, on the outside / over here a great big fan
(*he draws a circle on the bottom right with a line of air coming from it*)…
Well / this fan, they would build,
in between these (*between two pillars above the fan*), over here so they'd be like a little wall, / a braddish, / we called it a braddish.
And that's all that done was to help the air

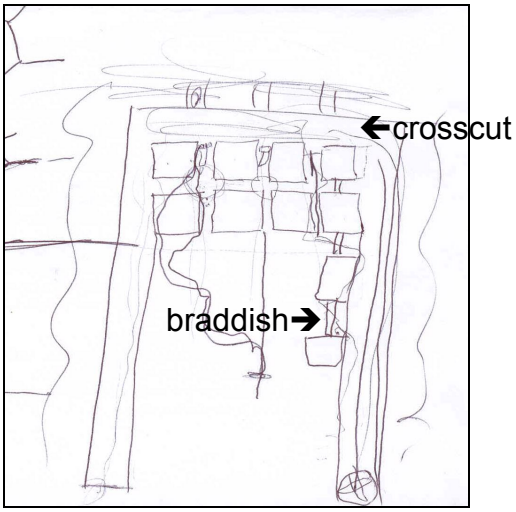

Figure 14 Steve's image with crosscuts and braddishes labeled.

H: Yeah.

S: come all the way up through here. (*he draws air flow lines from the fan towards the face*)
Because, you know if you didn't have it
if you didn't have these I mean the air will short circuit they call it a short circuit? That was trying to get your air all the way up here. (*to the face of the mines*)
But then when you got up there you wouldn't have no,

H: right, / it won't flow and then,

S: right. / You would hang a curtain across this pillar if you wasn't usin it.

H: Hmm.

S: You would hang ye a curtain
and, to get ye air up here to the last open crosscut, that's what they called that.
This is the last open, these are cross cuts, the ones that go across this way (*tunnels going right and left*)…

Steve seemed compelled to draw it out—shaping this place through story alone was insufficient. His drawing grew and swelled—there always seemed to be more to this place, more than the page or language or gesture could contain. In the end, all the elements of this performance failed him—he and other miners found their denouement at "it's just indescribable" and "you just have to go there." It was *ineffable* in the Oxford Dictionary's every meaning of that word: both "unutterable; too great for description in word" and "that which must not be uttered" (Abate 302). Both too much and too taboo, this complex space pressed on Steve's words and drawings, flattening them with its weight.

In this "failed" performance he told me more than words could ever express about the complexity, messiness, and other-worldness of the mines. Kelly Oliver stresses that we should witness to what is "beyond recognition," beyond what can be fully comprehended or wrapped neatly in a blanket of clear understanding under previously defined knowledges. Steve was telling me, in his performance of gesture and facial expressions, that this place was radically different—that he made his body vulnerable to a place, and indeed another body, that was unpredictable, all-consuming, all-encompassing of his entire being. It was only by **not** understanding—by giving way to the humble and anti-colonial realization that I was not going to "get it" in the sense of capturing or attaining a complete souvenir picture of this place, and by recognizing that no matter how many drawings or stories he made or told this place was *more* and *beyond* and *full*—that I was made able to comprehend part of the power and meaning of the mines to Steve. His performance said to me, "Your picture of this place must be multiple, nonlinear, unquantifiable, multitextured…"

In Steve's storytelling performance, he draws thick lines again and again on the page. Each stroke of the pen makes the coal line thicker, harder, darker—as he performed, he went

over these lines again and again in ink. Tattooed into his memory, Steve nearly bored through the page with the need to make it dark, make it clear, and make it last. In literal and metaphoric ways, coal mining culture is embedded into his skin and ingested into the body: he absorbs family stories about coal mining; and he literally inhales coal dust in the mines and peels plastic wrapping off of sandwiches to eat with coal-coated fingers. His body is marked physically through disability and coal stains deeply embedded into the skin. Storytelling performance opened up an excessive, productive, and unpredictable and space where Steve could locate mining identity through and between multiple mediums.

Drawing for Steve was a way of making the story stick—to the page, to me, to himself—in time and space, just as experience had embedded itself into his skin and the fibers of his identity as a coal miner. Making visible on the page what is unseen in oral story, Steve seemed overcome with the mission to bring me to this place by any means necessary. The desire to show and tell erupted onto the back of his consent form to make visible that which is ordinarily not seen, both because this place is underground and because it is "dirty," in Mary Douglass's sense of dirt being matter out of place in urban spaces such as the neat and book-lined office we sat in while he told his story to me. Steve not only ruptured the divide between researcher and informant, he became the teacher and scribe, assuming agency over the interview space and over his own experience.

Through the room and pillar system, Steve described a method of creating mining space. Steve and other miners describe creating a 'city' by carving out negative space, tunneling through the mountain to create a grid of tunnel-streets and leaving pillars of coal that another miner (Ichabod) likened to "city blocks." They describe their relationship with this city-place in contrast to those who project the coal seams with instruments above ground—they illustrate in flesh and bone that "the map is not the territory," pointing out how only miners who follow the coal seam into the mountain know that seam will dip down and affect the shape of this underground city carved out of negative space (Korzybski qtd. in Wood 86).

Steve also stressed that mining was a technology—the juxtaposition of these two stories of how his grandfather and he each mined highlights the systematic nature of coal mining today. In describing the advances of coal mining as a technology, Steve is not only explaining a technical process to me but crafting a counternarrative to common notions of

what it means to be Appalachian and a coal miner. One Fox news interviewer asked a Sago miner in January 2006, "What is coal mining today? Because we all think of you as just digging in the dirt with picks." Contrary to the "simple and stupid" or "dirty and dangerous" stereotypes, Steve constructs a progress model between these two stories that links a respect and love for tradition and family with an embrasure of present technologies. Bill Buchanan gave a similar but more politically pointed narrative about mining technology:

Bill: But, they, they advance so much you know.
Uh / you've got all this computerized equipment and things like at. And people don't realize that. I know I was somewhere and they was talking about
about coal miners and you know just their
general, deal you know? Like they
thought like we were just, ignorant people. And I said, "Let me tell you something.
We had million dollar remote controlled coal miners before you ever started playin with your little / uh, remote controlled cars and stuff. (*Hannah laughs*)
You know the mine technology phased through that before you all, before the games ever come along.

Hannah: Yep.

B: You know. / And uh, so we're a little more advanced than what you all are."

Both Steve and Bill's narratives use a progress model to one-up urban neighbors. In a de Certeauian tactic, Bill uses the master's tricks against the master in this story by turning seemingly more progressive and civilized urbanites into children playing with remote controlled cars. Steve's counternarrative really begins in the prelude to his two stories of "the way it was" and "the way it is now," in which he likens coal mining experience to Ph.D. status:

Steve: A lot a people say that Ralph Stanley

Hannah: Yeah.

S: is a doctor. / Is he a doctor? A lot a people around the house call him "Dr. Ralph Stanley."
Why? Is he a doctor? / Is he a doctor? Because / he, he's a doctor of music?

H: People call him that.

S: Well, coal miners should be "doctors" then shouldn't they? Cause they're, / right?
If you do something so long, does that make you a doctor? (*laughs*)

H: It makes you a professional. (*both laughs, Steve thinks*)

S: Well, everbody got to callin him "Dr. Ralph Stanley."
I don't have anything against Ralph Stanley. (*Hannah laughs*)

> I just don't understand how he got the "Doctor" bill.
> So I said, "Well, I guess I'm a doctor at coal minin."

H: Yeah!

S: But, / it takes a long time to learn, uh, the mountains.

Steve claims the power and authority of embodied experience, every bit as prestigious as a graduate degree. In this, Steve provides yet another example of, as Conquergood so eloquently puts it, "how nonelite people recognize the opacity of the text and critique its dense occlusions and implications in historical processes of political economic privilege and systematic exclusion" (Conquergood "Interventions" 147). Conquergood gives the example of the African Garifuna people for whom "class stratification, related to differential knowledges, is articulated in terms of access to literacy" (148). Intellectual elites and business class people are "gapencillitin" or "people with pencil," in contrast with "mapencillitin" or "people without pencil" (148). While Steve is very literate, his claim to doctoral status rests on what Soyini Madison calls "theories of the flesh[49]," those subjugated knowledges that are beyond the text and articulated through what Patricia Hill Collins calls "specialized knowledge" (Madison "That Was" 319). "Learning the mountains" requires radical vulnerability, enfleshed engagement, embodied listening, focused attention, temporal dedication, and self-reflexive analysis. Through his testimony, Steve created and performed what Rachel Hastings[50] calls the "theater of assault" waged against a tidal wave of media-driven images and symbolic representations that continue to reduce, dehumanize, and degrade him. These representations are neatly packaged in Mary Pickford smiles and contemporary sitcom jokes. The act of story performance empowers Bill to transform stereotype-touting urbanites into babies and Steve to climb his own ivory tower to meet his audience (myself and others at Chapel Hill to whom I will tell his story) at eye level.

Temperatures and Textures

Steve's low wall story shows the multitextured environment in the mines. Miners cohabit with the mines-body, inside which "it's like a whole other world down there." Under

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[49] Theories of the flesh mean that "the cultural, geopolitical, and economic circumstances of our lives engender particular experiences and epistemologies that provide philosophies or 'theories' about reality different from those available to other groups" (Madison "That Was" 319).

[50] Hastings performed her original works of poetry at the 2005 National Communication Association, in which she called for a "theatre of assault" in performance studies, the use of performance as radical activism.

the surface of the water table, low-wall miners often find themselves in "constant wet." Mining culture is defined through a common understanding of how seasonal changes impact bodies—theirs and the mines-body. Steve used his and my own embodied experience as metaphors for the mines-body, asking me to compare my own body as it changes through the seasons with the body of the mines:

Steve: Wintertime everthing dries up.
Uh, you can imagine your skin
like out here, wintertime you have to use more lotion don't ye?

Hannah: Yeah.

S: Well, I mean even / uh / conditioner in ye hair, you have to use more of it.
Well in the mines it's the same thing.

H: Yeah.

S: You have, uh, moisture in there
and in the summertime you can see it, hangin everwhere it's like little beads.

H: Hmm, like dew only inside.

S: It'd be / be really pretty
sometimes, uh how it's hangin there.
And we would always get tickled,
I get tickled at people. / And I've done it myself now, just to aggravate people.
(*Steve smiles, and Hannah laughs over his excitement with this story*)
But, this / this rain / it would just be hangin there.
The, like, the whole ceiling was covered up with little rain drops.

H: (*mesmerized*) Huh.

S: Well, somebody'll walk over there, and somebody'll take a hammer (*Hannah laughs*)
and *slap,* you know?

H: Just like you do a tree / and you shake it?

S: Yeah, *slap* that— / and all that rain come down there.
Well you'd see a lot a that rain in the summertime.
When it's hot outside, you get a lot a moisture.
The fan / if it's hot out here
then the fan brings, the hot air through here.

H: Yeah.

S: And see as it, goes through there it cools off, loses its moisture the moisture stays in there.
(*he draws another thick line on his drawing*)
That's when ye getcher water, most a the time.

H: Aaah.

S: And in the wintertime / all this, hot air or uh / moisture, that's in here—

this is cold air now / comin through in the wintertime.
And it comes through and it dries all this stuff up it gathers up that moisture and takes it back out.

H: Mm hmm.

S: And / your rocks, / now, people might not think but a rock will get bigger

H: It expands.

S: when it gets warm.
And when it gets cold, when it starts getting cold, when it *first* starts getting cold now,
this rock, you may have a, this might be your roof, (*he points to his drawing*) and this rock right here
might be a layin up in there like that, and this might be a 40 ton rock I'm talking about.
Well / when it gets cold / this rock / is gonna turn loose because it shrinks.

H: Mm hmm.

S: And it's gonna fall outa there.

Earl also talked about wintertime in the mines:

Earl: And in the winter time / the temperature in the mines
the temperature in the mines, once that you get down underground
the temperature doesn't change.

Hannah: Constant, / mm hmm.

E: That's one thing about it. But once that you get in there and go to work
and ye, work shift's over and you head out.

H: Mm hmm?

E: Now, now in the winter time mine has done it, I couldn't tell you how many times
and it's not just mine, but ever man that worked on a section
together, you'd come out and that air would / start hittin.
And honest, ye come out and ye pants / or ye jacket, it was froze.

H: Goodness.

E: It was, it really was.
And then, when you stepped out of that, in the opening / it, you think for a while,
"Lord, I'm gonna freeze to *death*."

"We Work With Our Backs"

Mining culture is shaped and constituted over terms and specific practices no one else knows about: over a shared colloquial language that names specific places, people, and concepts below ground (such as rocks called "killerbottoms"); and over specific shared practices and behaviors, those various ways of 'bending the rules' in order to survive both

mentally and physically**.** This includes learning and becoming bodily attuned to the complex language of the mines: learning the sounds and smells and what they mean; and learning how to 'read' the mountain above and feeling for the cracks in the ceiling above by drilling several feet above their heads to secure the ceiling with "roof bolts" that tie the mountain together.

Miners' relationship to place is in part determined by the various roles they play in mining operations: pinner man , scoop, drill, face man, and others. Miners interacted with the space in different ways. Each miner is a member of a seven- to ten-person section each with a specific task. Steve referred back to his drawing to describe how these different members of the crew worked "in a circle": the miner cut out a room, the motormen drove cars taking coal from the miner to the belt, the pinner men bolted the roof with bolts ranging from 12 to 100+ inches in length, and the boss or foreman kept the crew on center.

Most miners seemed to have the same understanding of the mines-body language, but the "roof bolter" or "pinner man" (who bolted the roof together) could feel the mountain and translate the above structure into a mental map—they could "see" what others could not, reading and listening to the cracks in the ceiling through the jumps of the drill, learning the surface of its body with their hands. Earl, Harley, and Steve were all pinner men:

> Steve: So if you drill up there / 13 feet
> and you hit a crack at 13 feet, well you got to drill on drill on drill on,
> and until you try to / try to feel / what's up there.

Steve's words have poetic force. Drilling becomes a rhythm in his story, a patterned mode of speech that creates momentum, propulsion, and a sense of inevitability linking history and future. Steve's story echoed and doubled a process that achieves a ritual quality in coal mining culture, forming selves and identities out of actions that seemingly will never end (*on* and *on* and *on*). Mining identity is located in the performative repetition of drilling and feeling—caressing the contours of the inside of the roof—for cracks "up there" above his section's heads. This process is etched into his identity, marked so deeply in his skin that his story flows out like blood pulsing on, on, on.

Drilling through different types of stone, the pinner man listens to the different sounds that different types of rock above make as they drill through these layers. Steve drew the different strata of rock above to illustrate: coal that they extracted, hard sandstone that

spit fire and sparks when you drilled into it, soft-spoken slate, and a layer of rock he called "rashy."

Figure 15 Steve's sketch of the different layers of coal in the mountain above miners as they work: Rashy, Slate, Sand Stone, and Coal.

Hearing and feeling worked in tandem in drilling roof bolts. Drilling through these different layers, cracks and air pockets made the drill bit jump or bump:

Steve: Yeah you could feel it, sometimes it would uh / jar the whole place…
Most a the time if you had solid sandstone top
boy when it bumped, I mean it would really bump hard.
And, it would just
it would break—you, you could, just sound like you could hear it for a mile up in that mountain.
It would sound like it was breakin.
And / but, now your slate / it didn't, carry on like, sandstone it didn't make a lot a noise.

Steve quickly stutters over his reaction to the bump somewhat indignantly, as if the mine has spoken out of turn or offensively, "carrying on" loquaciously in comparison to softer slate. Miners called it "bastard sandstone." Harley learned that "it was a bastard" over time:

Steve: And a lot a, a lot a times when I first started runnin the pinner
those guys would say, "Hey man did you hit a crack?" And I said, / "I don't know."

(*Hannah laughs*)
They said, "What do you mean you don't know!" I said, "Well I don't know I, you know I didn't have the feel for it."

Hannah: Yeah.

S: Well as, and as I got older / I learnt, you know.

H: Learned how to feel it?

S: Yeah.
And it's not / not even touchin it.
You could sit there and, and
you're, your levers on your machine are over here and your steel's out here in front of ye
and you're settin over here (*he mimes pushing levers, holding bolts, and looking down—Hannah laughs*) / and you're, you're runnin this thing and you're watchin that.
Well you might be talking to your buddy or (*Hannah laughs*)
or, you know your boss may walk up and you'd be talking to him you say, "Hey I just hit a crack."
You say, "Well, how did you know that? / You wasn't lookin."
After years, you learned that!

The pinner man translates the cracks in the ceiling into a mental map of the roof cover above, like translating brail into script. Some miners use a "scope," a long, thin rod with a video recording device on its tip which will show a digital image of the top above, similar to the scopes used in medical examinations[51]. Most, however, learn the feel of this body with

---

[51] Steve said:

Steve: And now they've got a scope they call it.
That they can take and then, and put up in that hole after ye drill it and see.
Hannah: Really?
S: And I've looked at em.
H: Hmm.
S: And, and if you're lucky enough to be in the mines when they
they're actually doin that,
H: Wow.
S: they call it scopin the mines or scopin the top.
Well, federal inspectors, some of the companies have it I guess
some a those things.
H: It's like surgery almost, like.
S: Right.
H: It's like what they would use in surgery.
S: Yeah.
And it's a little camera.
And they'll run that sucker up in there
and they let you look at what you've been
what you're actually workin under…
I saw it one time I mean it fascinated me but
H: Yeah.
S: I said, "Awe, man, look at all these little bitty cracks up here!"

their hands. Scopes distance body-to-body interaction and objectify the mines-body comparable to the ways the female body is objectified in the scopic plane of the medical exam—Steve's description of the mining scope reminded me of the speculum in a gynecology exam[52]. He focused on the importance and implications of feeling, sensing, and thinking through his hands:

> Steve: Now *everbody depended on everbody*…
> If I didn't do my job there, then my buddy over here that I've known for 15 years might come over here and get killed…
> So, if you don't do your part, each man don't do his part across through there…
> somebody's gonna get hurt along the line.

Harley described in detail the language that the mines-body speaks to him. Walking through the mines, working in your section, riding the man trips in and out, miners must be aware of language of smells, sounds, and air flows:

> Hannah (H): What are some of the sounds that you listen out for?
>
> Harley Colley (C): Well, just like when you're drivin up
> you hardly ever hear any sounds. But, if you heared something
> that, sandstone, right here's what it sounds like: (*he rips the paper in two slowly—we're silent as he does this*)
> It's pulling apart.
> And when you hear that, it's a cutting up that rib.
> See, they—say they's run this place. (*he draws an imaginary mine tunnel on the table with his finger*)
> And this is the way back and that's the way forward. (*he points towards the face and the exit of the imaginary tunnel he has drawn on the table*)
> Well it'll cut, you'd hear that same tear
> right up through there, and it's a cutting away from that pillar. (*he motions towards the ceiling of the mine*)
>
> H: Mmm!
>
> C: And that's where "FUM-FUM!" (*he moves his hands out and in to show the suction the roof fall creates in the mines*) it all comes down.
>
> H: Mmm.
>
> C: That's what you really have to worry about, is that sound there on driving up.
> And then in, when you're a pillarin if you hear a "FUMP!" (*he hits his hand on the table, but he scrunches up his face as if displeased at the sound*)

> H: Oh my gosh.
> S: And you can't even feel em
> when you're drillin.

[52] I rely on Pollock's Telling Bodies, Performing Birth and Terri Kapsalis's Public Privates: Performing Gynecology From Both Ends of the Speculum for my understanding of the medicalized female body.

Like more of a drum not "FUMP!" like "MMM!" like,
just different types of sounds with what you're doin.
But that tearin is always what'd get me scared.

H: Oh my gosh.

C: Cause it'd tear / mainly, it was just really—
cause there's always so much noise.
You more or less you watch for signs, for what you call dribbling, it's
little rocks / will fall right down through there.

H: Would it fall along the edge?

C: Mm hmm.

H: Or in the middle?

C: Well, most time it's in that crack, wherever it's cracked and breakin
is where that little piece a rock comes out.

H: Hmm.

C: Like, when a whole place is gonna fall in?
It'll be doin that right down through there.
Say this is, uh, what ye call a / horse back or something like that, / kettlebottom.
It's where it comes out a that rock.
That's the awefulest spot of all.
If you pay attention, you've got time.

His narrative pops with percussive explosions, echoing the drama of the cracks and falls of the mines. He says that you will be safe only if you listen to this place—paying attention is akin to listening closely for your life. He tells me that you have to pay attention to a place so that it becomes like a part of you.

Many miners juxtaposed their roles as miners with the boss or foreman. Harley stressed that a good foreman is invisible—they stay out of the way of miners who know their jobs and do them. Earl echoed this sentiment in his narrative as well.

Earl: I've always told the foreman,
I've said it this way:
that you can take a good group of coal miners / and they didn't need a foreman.
They know what they're doin.
They know what they're supposed to do.
And they're better off if you just keep your mouth shut, because
it takes an experienced person
and, like I said, a good group a men. But they watch out for each other.
They try to work safe.
They try to be productive.
And uh, / as the old sayin go: hey look,
I don't need you behind me a burnin my back up with that light!

Hannah: Yeah.

E: I mean the boss standin' there a lookin at ye or something?
I've heard it said, and I've said it myself—sometimes got a little upset—
and I say, "Hey now, you'd better get away, you'd better go on right now."
And uh, I said, "I don't need you around here," or something.

H: Hmm.

E: Well, "I's just a gonna do this and that," and I said, "Now did you hear me?" (*Hannah laughs*)

Earl compared his job as a pinner man to that of a foreman to highlight the disparity between a foreman's understanding of the mines-body and the miners' intimate relationship with the mines.

Earl: Because / when I was at Westmorland the vast majority of my time
that uh, after the first year / I was a roof bolter, / supported the top.
And, it got down
it got down there at the last, I considered—
and I'm not braggin there—myself, a good roof bolter.
Because not only was my life at stake
but all my coworkers, ye see.
And that was the way I looked at it.
And that's one thing that I could say about foreman now they, they didn't like that idea when you say, "Hey,
you'd better take it easy," or, "We'd better check this a little more," or something.
They didn't like to hear that word a lot.

Hannah: Mm hmm.

E: "Earl, how long's it gonna take?" or something.

H: Yeah.

E: At, uh / I'd say, "Hey / that, uh, whenever it's safe / whenever it's safe," and I said, "Now just don't start. / Get outta here!"
And that's one thing that uh most a the time
they wouldn't try to push you [or say], "Well let's try this now…".
They knowed right then if they was a roof fall / or someone got hurt

H: Mm hmm.

E: that you'll say, "I told him before hand," / and he was in trouble
not just with his job but with the federal government.

Earl positions himself against the foreman, who often was "just too sorry to work" so management "pinned a possum light on em." Earl's story gives the rules of insiders and outsiders in coal mining culture—those who work on the section are in, those who are

foremen (the mediators between those aboveground who survey the land and those miners who interact body-to-body with it) are out. A good foreman is "invisible," literally he is not seen in mining spaces. Earl was asked to become a foreman when he worked at Westmoreland, but he refused because he knew that it meant losing the respect of his coworkers, the friendship and camaraderie with those miners he knew then, in addition to losing the job that he loved:

> Earl: He [the superintendent for the mine] said that you would make a wonderful foreman.
>
> Hannah: Hmm.
>
> E: And he said that, I said, "Don't insult me."
>
> H: Mmm.
>
> E: And I said, why I say that
> I said, "The relationship that I have with these men here at this mine,
> if I've got any relationship—which ya'll say I do—with you all,"
> I said, "it'll all start to deteriorate after a short period of time.
> Because," I said, "I'm not a 'yes man' and everthing that you / that you want…"
>
> H: It seems like it would change your whole relationship,
> just like you said, with the men you work with.
> I mean, that bond wouldn't be there.
>
> E: It wouldn't.
> Common sense, I mean, / "Hey, he was with us, now he's gone over here with the company."
>
> H: Mm hmm.
>
> E: That uh, I said, that's how these men look at ye.

Earl said he would rather keep his job as a roof bolter who his fellow workers trusted. Trust comes from an enfleshed relationship with the mines-body and daily interaction with section workers, putting his body on the line with them in dark spaces.

Pulling Pillars

Steve described tunneling through the earth to create an underground city, leaving pillars of coal to support the roof-sky. He and other miners described the second part of mining, pulling back out. The pillars of coal that support the mine roof are also full of valuable resources, and once the coal seam "runs out," miners retreat out of the mines by boring through these pillars and extracting the coal from them. As they collapse these pillars, the mountain will "sit down" on itself as miners continue to retreat backwards out of the

mines pulling one wave of pillars after another. As Steve and others described this process to me, I imagined thrusting my fingers into sand and then pulling them back out again—pushing into the earth and then pulling back, letting the sand cave back in on the little tunnels my fingers created in the ground.

Steve continued:

Steve: Well on the way back out / you had these pillars.
Well / you're pullin these pillars
and this is what, is holdin the mountain up.

Hannah: Mm hmm.

S: Ok.
And how we done it, / and / I'm sure it's done all over here in the states like this,
we would take the miner / in here, / and we would, like cut a
cut a chunk out right there. (*he begins to draw rectangular cuts in the square pillars*)

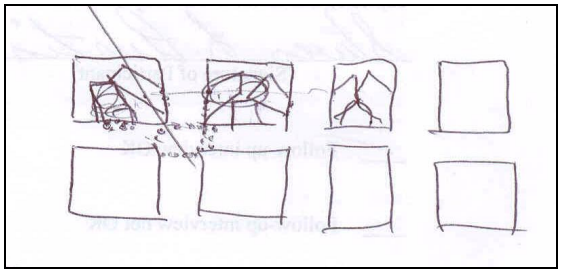

Figure 16 Steve's sketch of the process of "pulling pillars." The notches drawn into the squares represent the process of extracting coal from three sides of the pillars. Timbers are placed along these sides of the pillars to support the roof while the pillars are pulled down. The dotted line connecting four points of these squares represents the most dangerous part of the mines, where there is the least support for the roof. Steve said roof falls occur most often in these junctions.

H: Mm hmm.

S: Ok, we called that a "lift."

H: Mm hmm.

S: Well we'd take that cut, and then we would have like eight
wooden timbers, posts or / whatever.
We'd set eight right there.
Well we'd come up through here—well actually
I'm showin you backwards because, that would be out of / uh
you have a certain sequence that the law lets you do them,
you have to get the one at the end by first, say if we come up here and got this one first?

H: Mmm kay.

S: Ok we'd set / set eight right here.
Ok, then we'd go over here and we'd

then we'd set eight timbers here.
Ok, on the way out / you would get this one over here. (*he points to one of the pillars*)

H: Aah.

S: And you would try / to get just as much a that [coal out] as you could get.
Because if you didn't get as much of it as you could get / the mountain would fall in.
So you, you wanted it to fall in

H: Hmm. / Really?

S: Yeah, / because see / if you didn't get these up here

H: Yeah.

S: I mean these, this row up here you have a whole row.
And you'll work your way across through here. (*he draws cuts into the pillar—see Fig 16*)

H: Mm hmm.

S: You would get that cut, and then this cut.
And all the time you're settin / timbers, trying to keep / tryin to guard yourself,

H: so it will hold the weight,

S: until you can get out a there.
Ok, and then so you have / uh, another row of / pillars back here.

H: Mm hmm.

S: Well, you just keep settin these timbers, keep settin em.

H: Yep, / Yep.

S: You have a crew, most a the time it's your pinner crew, / roof bolters
they will be sometimes, uh, / four, sometimes two of em.

H: Mm hmm.

S: And uh, the scoop man he would bring timbers up there. And the saw, and you'd / you know you would measure em and saw em and
and you I believe you'd put eight here, and eight over here, (*he points to show the timbers surrounding the pillar on his diagram*) and then you came right here and put eight.
Well / that's, after you got all this,

H: Mm hmm.

S: well when you got all that—see the miner was over here, (*he points close to the face*)
he would start over here.

H: Yeah.

S: And he would take these, / and he would get this one,
now this one right here we called it the trigger (*he points to where the crew would cut into the third side of the pillar he has drawn*)
trigger cut, because you was pullin the trigger.

H: Hmm.

S: Because see you already had two

H: yeah,

S: out a this.
And when you cut this one in here most a the times you would cut right into that one. (*he points to the cut into the opposite side of the pillar*)

H: Hmm.

S: And into this one, and there's a whole lot a top there

H: Yeah.

S: that doesn't have any / support.

H: Yeah.

S: And see that's what you wanted that to do. You wanted these [pillars, and then the mountain above these pillars] to fall in
because if you didn't—if these in here didn't fall in
you would get it on a ride it was, that's what we call it getting it on a ride a *squeeze* or whatever.

H: Hmm.

S: The mountain / instead a havin / weight, / instead a this fallin the way it's supposed to?

H: Mm hmm.

S: All ye weight would shift back here behind ye.

H: Oh gosh!

S: And it would start mashin these / pillars a coal out, squeezing em out.

H: Hmm!

S: Then the floor would, sometimes start movin up.

H: Have you seen that when it's not been / done well?

S: Oh yeah! / Yeah, we—
and you could get it on a ride real easy / if the miner men

H: huh,

S: didn't take enough coal out to get this to fall up here.
If he didn't—and some people / would set up there and laugh and just watch that stuff fall.
And it would be

H: Oh my gosh!

S: and I've seen it, back through there
as far as your light could shine / just ready to fall, like a belly.
And no coal at all [no pillars supporting the roof].
These guys were good.

H: Wow. / Wow.

S: (*laughs*) I mean that, / I mean that was,
you could shine your light back through there and you could hear this
poppin and crackin and bumpin and sometimes it would / sometimes it would bump?
And they called it, uh / called you havin rabbit blood.

H: Uh huh, / getting rabbity.

S: Well, / naturally, / naturally, I mean uh, this up here you think's gonna fall, you're gonna run.

H: Yeah.

S: Well they said, "Hey, you got rabbit blood, don't ye?" I said, "Hey you're damn right I do!"
(*Hannah laughs*)
That is, I mean, / you know, you could look up there, and, and as far as your light could shine back through there / it hadn't fell yet.

H: Oh my gosh.

S: And knowin good and well that when it fell / it would, it would blow your hat off. And
and / it was unreal sometimes, these falls.

H: Oh my gosh.

S: And, I saw I seen it / that—
(*incredulous*) and these guys *laughed*! (*both laugh*)
I mean they was so used to it!

H: Yeah!

S: They just laughed, and, and
and I would stand there and watch that until I just couldn't take it anymore!
And I would run, / and I'd look back, and it'd still be standing back there, I'd say, "Hey man, come on! Come on!"
"Aaw, where you goin?" I'd say, "Well I'm goin a bit back down here."

H: Yeah!

S: They'd say, "Hey, that ain't gonna fall."
And, they wouldn't fall.

H: How did they know?

S: When it got ready to fall, they knew it.

H: Huh.

S: And that just, experience.
See, / and after / fifteen years
I was one a the guys standin up there sayin, "Hey, where're you goin?"
You know.

H: (*laughs*) And how did you know?

S: Well, just over the years certain sounds / uh, just the certain way / things happened.
The atmosphere, you could tell it / when that fell in,
(*he sits for a moment as if listening for the roof*)

(*long pause*)

you couldn't hear anything.
(*pause*)
And, it was like everthing was standin still, but everthing was still movin.

H: Mmm.

S: It was a really weird feeling.

H: Did it make a sound?

S: Well / right when it falls / uh / it actually, uh—
see all the air's comin this way (*motions from behind himself*)
And then when it falls it pushes, sort a

H: So you feel the air movin back?

S: Well, you don't really feel it, / it, it's sorta like a / a dead zone.

H: It stops then.

S: Everthing stops.

Donald explained to me that it was very important that the mountain does sit back down on itself—otherwise, as Steve said, you could "get it on a ride." Donald revealed the tensions between: (a) not wanting to take too much coal out, cause the mountain to sit down, and thus get the miner machine "hung" (itself an indication that the mines-body has agency to take the life of others and hang them and their machines); and (b) not wanting to take too little coal out and thus get the mountain on a ride.

Even when all the coal is taken out of the pillars, there is a danger of getting the mountain "on a ride." Donald told me about such an experience when he was pulling pillars. He began his story with a negation of his own ability—or anyone else's—to tell the story to me:

Donald: And uh / we could sit, uh
after we was drive our panels up, they call it pillarin? I guess you'd hear people talk about that.

Hannah: Mm hmm.

D: And that's an experience that / nobody could ever tell you about.

H: Oh my gosh.

D: It would *rumble* / and you could hear the top
sound like *thunder*, all the way *across* ye, you could hear it goin *by* ye.

H: Oh!

D: …you'd know basically where it's gonna fall at, but you didn't know how much override you's gonna have and

H: right

D: I never will forget,
I was in the mines, I'd probably been there a year or two, / and
we had, we was a pillarin. It was all kinda laid uphill where we had pulled out.
And all you could see as far as your eye could see was timbers, stood and
criss-crossed, bent, it was almost broke in two you know?

H: Oh my gosh.

D: And this *never did fall*. This went on like a *month*..

H: Huh

D: The more we pillared, the more we pillared I mean it was
I'd say, you're talking
several hundred football fields, back in there it was just nothing but just all the coal took out of it.

H: Oh my gosh.

D: And / we was down there one day, and I was on the drill, me and my buddy.

H: Uh huh?

D: All of a sudden we heared this *noise.*
Sound like a big old, *hurricane* or something, just winds and stuff.
And we could see that this, all this had broke loose and started fallin.

H: Mmm.

D: To tell ye the truth, / we broke out a there *runnin* just like the rest! If you didn't run you just still got out a there and I mean you'd leave—nobody had to tell you to get outa there.
(*Hannah laughs*)

H: Oh my gosh.

D: But, as we took outa there,
I can remember it so good, the drill cable, was laid, you know out behind ye, followed behind ye.
Well when I took off next thing I knew I tripped on the drill cable.

H: Oh no.

D: And all you could see was just white dust / go past ye, curtain / the bags
I mean just debris, it was just the awefulest wind, nobody could see nothing.

H: Oh gosh!

D: And this went on, and hit just—
we got man doors, what they call man doors in the mines, you go, in other words you'd have to have em like every three or four breaks

H: Mm hmm.

D: You'd have a *door* to where you could get through to the other side, you know, and escape routes and stuff like at—

H: Mm hmm.

D: but, when all that fell / it sent all that stuff by us / so hard, and the wind
we, we thought we was dead.

H: Oh my gosh!

D: And / it, that boy he, he hollered at me,
he said, "Can you believe that?"
But hit shook em doors just like somebody was sittin there doin this number. (*he mimes shaking the table and chair*) And they could hear em,
that boy said, "We could hear it up on the outside."

H: Oh my gosh.

D: Oh, they called in that quick you know and / boy, you finally got a fall, you know.
And I'll never forget it as long as I live.
It was the most terrifyin thing you could ever, a been in.

H: Oh my gosh.

D: And knowing that, you was covered up, I mean there wasn't no getting away from it.
And when all that was over you're stiting there goin,
"Whew! (*Hannah laughs*) / We've been waitin on that a long time!"

H: Oh gosh.

D: But uh,

H: Was anybody hurt when all that happened?

D: No, no.

H: Was it just settling in?

D: In other words, if all of it'd just fallen and it just pushin the air and everthing that way.

H: Oh my gosh.

D: I mean, you're talking break after break it'd just set down, you know the whole mountain set and you're talking
probably a hundred and some feet thick ye know just
"Pccoch, pccoch!!" (*he makes breathy noises, pushing his hands downward*) / fall down.

H: Oh gosh.

D: We worked that one mines, there,
and once we'd learned it—well you, you really didn't *learn* it, but you kindly got used to it.

Donald begins his story with a denial: "no one could tell" me about this experience—not him, and not anyone else. His experience is incommensurable with any other known reality—it is unspeakable, that which cannot be voiced even when you try to explain it. It seems that part of mining identity locates itself in an inability to express the experience—Donald *talks* with me about it with me but can't "tell" about it. Identity seems located in a particular way of telling or not telling the story, as something that only comes out in between two people who already share this experience and vocabulary.

As Donald told me this story, he began to visualize the mines surrounding him, giving focal points to the top above his/our head(s) and, in his performance, taking me into the imaginary space of the mines. Suspending my disbelief, I felt a cringe down my neck as he pointed and looked up to the ceiling of the back office room we were in and visualized the mines top, cinching in his neck and head slightly and hunching his shoulders under its close proximity and threatening sounds. He transformed the space around us through the story and the mines surrounded us—when "all this started fallin and broke loose" right over our heads we both jumped at the sight. Through story performance, Donald created the mines space around us so that I could feel its belly pressing against my prickled skin.

III. Summary

In this chapter I examined mining culture in terms of the "mines-body," the character that miners describe as a living, breathing body they work in and with while mining. I described the anatomy of this body as described through their stories, and I put this body in relation to the larger "body" of the North American landscape. How we view the place in which we live in relation to other places has a significant impact on how we justify Othering others. If a place is "nowhere" and "dirty," a "womb" to be covered up or tantalizingly

pinned up like the image of a kewpie, and that image contrasted with that of our own urban home, it is much easier to rationalize ourselves as modern, civil, separate, and better.

Miners describe their relationship with the mines-body through intimate, low-wall mining work. Many stressed that "it takes a long time to learn the mountains," learning as a process of interpreting the mines-body language and textures as miners "work with our backs" to the belly of the mines. Miners finely attune their bodies to mines-body language when they pull back out of the mines, pulling the pillars of coal that once supported the mines roof and hoping not to get it "on a ride." Through their stories of working with the mines-body, miners introduced me to this body one vertebrae at a time. They also introduced me to some of the dangers of mining work—what these dangers are, and how miners deal with them, is the question that drives the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5: THREATS, DANGERS, AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

An elderly man from Michigan, now living in a retirement community in Chapel Hill, told me of one mining superstition in Michigan that "if a woman goes into the mines, a man dies." These rumors, he said, came from superstitions carried over from Italy. While I never heard this superstition from anyone I interviewed (perhaps due to the difference in cultural backgrounds as well as my conversational partners' own self-conscious understandings of what might be expected out of them by the young, postmodern, female scholar), most men wove a thread of this story into their narratives on women in the mines. If women are a threat in the mines, what precisely do they threaten? How is this threat storied by men miners? How do some women perform against these sharply defined and gendered roles? How are masculinity and femininity constructed in and through performances of mining culture? Who subverts these norms, and how? Under what circumstances and with what consequences?

The ideological threat that women pose to male-owned normative practices in the mines—and the reciprocal physical threat men posed to women through sexual harassment—is coupled with the common dangers that all miners face, some of which the miners alluded to in the previous chapter. How do men and women miners cope with the dangers of their work? Within this labor culture, what is made between these folks that sustains them in some way? The act of doing this work sustains what they do—what is created in the *doing* of that work? Miners adapt to the dangerous environment of living in the mines through a complex network of sustaining structures. The second half of this chapter explicates several common dangers and some of the intricate performatives by which miners manage these threats.

I. No Place For a Woman

Many times in men miners' narratives, "fun"—through horseplay and other games discussed later in this chapter—was sharply contrasted between the untouchable presence of women. Earl told me of men's shared fear of sexual harassment charges and the ways

women "used" sexual harassment laws as a means to gain an "easy buck." Earl said some women would falsely accuse men of harassing them in order to sue the company and gain compensation:

> Earl**:** I've had to work around em.
> And when I say this, I / that to a certain degree / I say it / disrespectfully
> and try to be *respectfully* at the same time.
> But, / /that's no place for a woman.
> And I'm, I'm not prejudice *don't you ever think* that I'm against—but that is one place
> that uh—and a coal miner, I can, truthfully tell ye this,
> they're not at ease, they're not at ease / when, a woman is on the section.
> You've got uh / you've got to be very careful
> uh, what ye do. And you can say, "Now wait, you's supposed to be a Christian."
> I'm not sayin, Hannah—we've had some that I personally know this.
> They just wantin ye to open ye mouth or something come out a your mouth, and
> "Hey look, EEOC!" or whatever, "Hey!"
> And that's all they were there for!

Earl was not at ease working with a woman in the mine because he felt that he either should risk his own safety to take care of her, or he felt afraid of women who, in his interpretation, were out to accuse the first man they saw of sexual harassment and sue the entire company. Men were not at ease, making women a dis-ease or *disease* in this space, with all its associations of infection and contamination. For fear of an accusation of sexual harassment, Earl would not engage in horseplay with women, breaking down a major means by which he might offset the perceived dangers surrounding him. This added to the threat women posed in the mines, not as inherently wrong for wanting to work in the mines, but their gendered bodies created a space of impossibility for mining to happen.

He works "around" but not with them. He self-reflexively notes that what he says is disrespectful in the sense of the abilities of the "modern woman;" yet it also adheres to a respect commonly understood in conservative southern communities as *chivalry*, where a southern gentleman would protect ladies from danger. Earl said that the women who fit into the mining world—read: those who conformed their performance to strictly gendered codes of behavior—were neither women nor ladies:

> Earl: Not all of em, / but most of those, uh "ladies"—if ye call em a lady,
> that uh, they were pretty rough characters.
> And I mean…they was cause I mean *mouth* wise…

Women had to become not-women to then become miners—in Earl's interpretation of proper behavior in mining communities, a woman is to be protected and cared for and is not in-place in the mines. Transforming her speech to that of a masculine "rough character," women performatively morphed their bodies into something Earl can't define—"*mouth* wise" she is not a woman, her speech act transforms her mouth from identity as a "lady" to something else. Because he can't "call em a lady," these bodies fall out of common frames and constructs of what a lady and miner can be. Earl illustrates that identity—mining or otherwise—is located not in the given body but constructed through those narratives and performances we tell about and with the body.

Earl speaks with tenderness and certainty about other coal miners, contrasted with these discussions of working women who are "not ladies" but not quite "coal miners" either. Defined by difference, these women live in a liminal state which is neither here nor there. While there is danger in her position as not clearly classifiable—and consequences for these ambiguous performances such as the derisive/nervous laughter evoked in Earl's story about ladies—there is also power. Something different and not quite namable, these women gain agency in ambiguity—what he can't name, he can't *clearly* call down or call out.

Earl described one woman who walked around with a notebook and pen in the mines writing down what the men said (how much this parallels my seeming role as the ethnographer!). Earl interpreted this daily ritual action as an effort to "catch" men saying something and keep them under her control through (I am led to assume) blackmail or through the threat of having them called up to the supervisor's office where he would "chew your ear off" about an (imagined) act of harassment and potentially get fired. What are the complications and possibilities for this woman and her notebook? What is her power as recorder? What powers are laid on her by the "laws" that keep men in check in the mines? What is the status of women's bodies in the mines? What is her power as the woman who carries a pen, who writes, who stands in contraposition to the men who say they didn't do much "book learning" and don't know "them big words" and laugh as I tell them that I am writing a book about their lives and stories?

Earl said that the mines were "no place for a woman." When I asked miner Pam Turner about this phrase, she coupled her response with a story about sexual harassment in the mines:

Hannah: How do you respond to comments like that? (*laughs*)

Pam: Well, for one thing
that they, if you go in there as a woman and they see you're gonna do your job, and not lay
around expectin the man to [work for you] / most of em will respect ye.

H: Mm hmm.

P: And of course there's the sexual issue, you know.
Uh, you know, they're gonna try ye out see what, / how far they,

H: Are they really?

P: oh yeah!

H: What would they do?

P: Oh they'd just make little suggestions some of em. But
you put em in their place right fast.

H: What would you say?

P: Well, (*laughs, both laugh*)
I just told em that I was in there for one thing and one thing only that was to make a livin like they was, and
you know / that was it.

H: Yeah.

P: And they'd better just, / *whatever*.

H: Yeah.

P: And most of em backed off and they / respected ye.

H: Mm hmm.

P: I mean, you had one or two that'd try,
you know ever now and then'd say something, or
maybe reach out and grab ye or something and I turned around and hit one boy one night with my fist.

H: Good for you! (*laughs*)

P: And I did buddy! I (*laughs*)
I hit him on the shoulder, I started to hit him right through the face and I,
caught myself.
And I hit him on the shoulder twice.

H: You're a better woman than I am. (*both laugh*)

P: Well I figured I'd get fired if I hit him through the face.

H: Yeah.

P: And, you know, and uh.

H: Mmm!

P: But it was just flew all over and then it happened so fast I mean I hit him buddy I drawed back and I hit him on the shoulder and then I revved up again and I *hit him again!* (*both laugh*)

H: Good for you! (*both laugh*)

P: And then I come over there to my, buggy I's runnin the shuttle car that night and he said "Oh-oh-oh—" I said, "Let me tell you one thing," I said, "You ever, and I mean you *ever* do that again and I'll knock your God-dang teeth down your throat."

H: Good for you!

P: And then the next night he come over and apologized he said, "Oh, I thought you was one of my
men in front of me," you know, runnin his mouth like that and I said let me tell you something I said it'd better *never* and I mean *never*, *ever* happen again! And it, it didn't.

H: Well he'd figured out by that time he could get in trouble for it, so… *laughs*)

P: Yeah, and see the miner man / that had been the guy that run the miner?

H: Yeah?

P: Me and him was walkin out there, and he said, "Pam,"
he said, "it's a good thing you did, what you did to him said he'd just a got out a there and run his mouth if you'd let him by with it said he'd just been out here runnin his mouth about it."

H: Oh gosh. / Oh my gosh! / So then there's talk in the mines / about…

P: Oh yeah. / I mean, you know.
But, like I say, some of em you just got to put in their place, and most of em / respected ye.
When they seen you get in there and you was doin your job, and that they was doin their job,
they didn't have a problem with it.

H: Right.

P: And / if they, said anything and I went over there and I said, "Hey,
I'm in here, for one thing and one thing only,
and it'd better be at that."
And most of em, most of em I got along with real good, didn't have no problem with em. I worked right along beside of em.
I'd shovel it, they'd shovel it, we scattered rock dust till we just / whatever.

H: Mm hmm.

P: That's the way I liked it.

H: Yeah.

P: Where you work [and] / don't have to worry every minute bout somebody knockin somebody's head off for it, (*both laugh*)
tryin to get a hold of ye!

Pam brought up "the sexual issue," which was an apparent condition in mining culture. Men can "try out" women in the form of a ritualized audition—women entering mining space are on *try out* for the role of miner through scenarios in which men *try* them *on*. The "sexual issue" is one of many euphemisms Pam employs in this story, along with her vague report that they would make "suggestions" and that she told them to "just, whatever." Aided by laughter, her euphemisms revealed a gap in conversation between what can and cannot be said openly in McDonalds, or to a relative stranger, or to another woman or between women, about sexual harassment.

Where Earl would say that the mines are "no place for a woman," Pam "puts them in their place" through back-talk. She was there "to make a living just like they was"—Pam rejected the enforced performance of sexual relations underground and made it other to herself. Being "just like" them means performing the predefined role of coal miner as male-dominated mining culture had determined it. Many of the men who had "no problem" with women in the mines referred to their identity as "just like the men miners" or "just like regular miners." Mining culture is defined down to excrement practices, where women have the option to either "have no respect for themselves" or "hold up the whole process," a catch-22 where there is literally "no place" for her to go in the mines:

Bill: I don't feel like it's their place in the mines…
You know uh, they, they, you take, they've got toilets in the mines
little porta-potty like things they ain't but about yea high and they fold out you know and ye can use them.
Very seldom do people ever use that, / you know.
You just sorta like where you're at you know you might step over here and take a leak or just whatever you know…
Just dependin on where you, where you're at, ye know.
But, you know, it'd make a difference if a woman was there, if she didn't have no respect for herself.
Men'll have, some men'll have respect for her anyway and they won't do that, and that sometimes would make them do different from what they'd do you know …
She has to go over there maybe hold up the whole process and things like that you know.

So for the men, either mining space was totally disrupted by women, or mining space was left unadulterated by a hard worker whose work transformed her into a man who they *then* could wrestle with—

> Steve: But from some, [their being a woman] didn't matter.
> They was just like men, some of em.
>
> Hannah: Would they get in there and / wrestle with ye?
>
> S: Hey it, / it didn't matter.
> (*pause*)
> Yeah, / it was just like / another of the men standing there.

Any change in the rules, such as leaving her section to go to the bathroom, becomes "holding up the whole process" to Earl. For the most part, women miners are jettisoned out of feminine enactments of gender and narrated by male miners as asexual, usually not married, as bodies who in essence must *become men* in order to join this community of male miners.

Pam says she wanted to hit him "right through the face"—literally, to punch through and put a hole in the instrument that would tell rumors and jokes about her. In her narrative, she tells what she did not do, and in that telling she creates a reality in which she can take this man, turn him inside out, and push through him. Pam's story allows her to rehearse and reinsert what could have happened, creating alternate realities in which she may "travel[] among possible selves" (Pollock Telling 111). Slipping between the "woman who punched him through the face" and "the woman who hit him again on the shoulder," Pam's narrative allows her to imagine a world in which this man with his "oh-oh-oh"s lacks a head from which to speak.

Pam describes her retaliation very fast and together, mirroring the intensity and pace of the moment—" But it was just flew all over and then it happened so fast I mean I hit him buddy I drawed back and I hit him on the shoulder and then I revved up again and I *hit him again!"* Pam is a very dramatic narrator—her tone goes deeper into her register as she said "hit him again," as if she is making her voice more like a man, deeper, more intense, more powerful. Invoking a more masculine in vocal performance, she "becomes" a man for a moment in this dip downward in intonation and matches the molester's male force with her own brute strength. Having thought twice, she now hits twice. In comparison to the man's befuddled "oh-oh-oh," Pam is an articulate and collected individual. Pam's re-membered

narrative allows her multiple power positions as one who could both "fl[y] all over" with rage and simultaneously funnel that anger into clearly constructed sentences. Pam continued her story:

Hannah: Did a lot of that [harassment], end
after those first few weeks / or after you punched that guy, or did it…?

Pam: No I mean the people, most of em
like I say most of em, really only had maybe one or two incidents, and I guess they've got the word around that, "Hey,

H: Yeah.

P: she's not in here for that stuff, and you'd better just / back off." Cause

H: Yeah.

P: you can loose your job for that.

H: Yeah.

P: And see one of em told a real nasty joke up there one morning.

H: Mmm.

P: And it got back to the superintendent, cause this man had told a real nasty joke.

H: Mmm.

P: The superintendent called a meetin.
And he said, "Let me tell you all something."
He said, "I don't appreciate no nasty jokes bein told like at," he said, "We have, women workin in here / *too."*

H: Mmm.

P: (*her voice begins to crescendo*)
And he said, "*I* don't appreciate it," and he said, "I'm sure *women* don't appreciate it," and he said, "I'd better hear of *none* of it happen again."
(*pause*)
So.
That put a stop to that. (*both laugh*)

H: Well good! (*both laugh*)

P: You know.

H: So you felt, kind of taken care of by management? / With that superintendent?

P: Yeah.
Yeah that superintendent we had workin up there was real good.

H: Good.

P: And he wouldn't allow no—
if I'd a went and told him what that guy had done he'd probably had him in there and give him a scuddin and a half if I'd told him, because I knew the man for quite a while anyway.

The superintendent in Pam's story serves to reinforce her moral position. He is a seat of power and authority as well as an extension of Pam's agency in mining spaces, as he speaks for her. Needing his body to leverage power in this situation, Pam extends her voice into and out of the megaphone of the superintendent. Pam had a way of lilting her voice and stressing words to build an ictus and rising urgency in her sentences: "*I* don't appreciate it and he said I'm sure *women* don't appreciate it and he said I'd better hear of *none* of it happen again." This crescendo peaks comically at "So. That put a stop to that," as if firmly stomping her foot at the top of a mountain after a long and difficult climb.

Jimmy's story of his mother Cat Counts, who was one of the first female coal miners in the state of Virginia and the first woman to be killed in a mines in that state, ruptures the narrative of sharply defined gender roles in coal mining communities. Jimmy's attitude is that of love and pride in his mother as a fellow worker. Cat was a single mother who started mining when she was 50 years old, just about the same time that Jimmy turned 18 and began his mining work as well. Social Security payments ended when Jimmy reached that age, and she chose the best paying work in Nora, sometimes called Tigertown for its rowdy reputation. Jimmy said Cat was an independent woman who became respected for her hard work, feisty nature, and refusal of gendered norms.

Figure 17 Cat Counts Outside the Mines, 1950's. Right: Cat Counts in Mining Attire, early 1980's. Photos courtesy of Jimmy Castle.

Jimmy showed me a scrapbook containing several photographs of Cat, including one of her above-ground in which she bears a striking resemblance to Marilyn Monroe, He showed me another photo of Cat in full mining gear, just coming out of the mines and covered in coal dust. Here, she is an ambiguously gendered body who holds her hand on her hip, hip sticking out as if to proclaim a sort of feminine power exuding from that body part, poking out of the masculine gear and dirt-film coating her body, traditionally associated with male miners.

Russo notes how the female body is culturally known as monstrous and lacking, held to an ideal feminine which she will never attain. Judith Butler calls gender "a strategy of survival…a performance with clearly punitive consequences" (qtd. in Spizak 2). The body is a contested site, a site of cultural struggle and performed identity, and in particular the bodies of women are policed such that (as Bartky says) women internalize the male other, "perpetually before his gaze and under his judgment" (qtd. in Spizak 2). Who regulates women's bodies? For what purposes? How has the "natural" body been shaped through

consumerism and privatization-made-public through the spectacle of female bodies? How are male bodies naturalized in mining spaces?

Carole Spizak's discussion of Marilyn Monroe contributes to my understanding of Cat, the naturalized role of male miners, and the enfreaked bodies of women miners. Spizak notes the obsession with which women police and monitor their bodies under a male gaze: "Tending to the body through unceasing self-inspection, taming its wildness through constant cleansing and guardedness, is evidenced through a construction of difference that is thought to 'improve' the body's appearance and a young woman's character[53]" (Spizak 7). Anorexia's moment is here, in the desire for mastery over the body through self-control and self-examination—as the "real real" (in Fjellman's terms, following Baudrillard's simulacrum) is made spectacle. Hence the theme song for Margaret Richard's Body Electric television program proclaims: "I celebrate the me that's to come." It is the *appearance* of control over the body to look stronger that matters—"I" am the self in a constant act of deferral to the "me" (the body) that is in a forthcoming but ever-withheld state. "I" am not here until the "me" body comes, which is never in the present. Never here, always there, "sing[ing] the Body Electric" short-circuits the self in the present, making it an invisible ghost of the future body.

Spizak advocates Foucault's desire to know the body separate from cultural representations. This is the self recognizing the self: a self-knowledge achieved by the removal of "blockages" and turning the body inside-out, a "performance of confession" that signals a "refusal to perform" (Spizak 16). For Cat, the "refusal to perform" takes the form of multiple hybrid performances, much like the 300 self-portraits of the Countess Shawn Michelle Smith cites in American Archives. The multiplicity of images and representations performs identity to such excess such that the Countess reclaims agency within the unpredictable space of performance—there is simply too much of her to fix her identity in one image. Cat takes on Mary Russo's call to put on femininity "with a vengeance"—she is hyper-feminine, at once sex kitten (Marilyn's hair and smile and heavy, half-batted eyelids)

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[53]Spizak notes how the anorexic body both "epitomizes and undermines" capitalistic consumption (11). She notes that "the spectacle of individuality and freedom is made possible and compromised through a commodifiication of personal identity" (14). The spectacle of modern capitalism is made powerful and stabilized through encouragement to see oneself as a commodity, to invoke the desire of and need for mass consumerism, which, as Marcus points out, dramatizes freedom but in fact is a "project of social control" (qtd. in Spizak 15) where, as Betty Friedan shows, the bodies of housewives are "seduced and then sedated by consumption" (Spizak 15).

and demure child (her neatly folded hands and high buttoned shirt) (Russo). Yet she is also an ambiguously gendered body—a coal miner who holds her hand on her hip, sticking it out as if to proclaim a sort of feminine power exuding from that body part, poking out of the masculine gear and dirt-film coating her body, traditionally associated with male miners. Cat responds to Smith's question, "Who authors and owns representations of Woman?" in these photos. In the repetition and confusion of so many different images of Cat, she disallows any sense of fixed representation and claims the right to mark herself visually and gains "back" identity thru multiple poses.

"Women's place" in Jimmy's family was multiple and shifting. In Jimmy's story, women claimed traditional roles in the home, penetrated normative gendered boundaries, and created something wholly new out of the woman/miner role. Compared with other women in the 1950's and 60's who were "considered homebodies, you know…she had a place and and the place was, you know, you waited on [the husband] hand and foot," Cat was a self-willed pariah. Jimmy described Cat as "her own person," claiming agency over her body and subject position. Cat had two husbands—one killed in the mines, and one (Jimmy's father) killed in a bar fight when Jimmy was one year old. Of these men,

> Jimmy: Like most of her, her husbands that she went through,
> they all understood, that she was strong willed, you know. They understood that
> they knowed that, that uh
> they really didn't have no control over her. She, she did what she wanted to do and said what she wanted to say. (*Hannah laughs*)…
> She was just outspoken, you know.
> And really and that, I believe that was what everbody liked about her…
> I thought that she was probably, uh
> she was like a mother and a father to me which, she was, you know.
> And uh, / I didn't think they was any man that, that she probably couldn't a whipped.
> Cause that was my impression of her, I thought she was that tough.

Jimmy's inherited trait of "respect for women" is tied to the stories that his mother told about his father's attitude. Stone writes that the "myth of the blood" is shaped through family stories that reinforce the shared belief that family members have certain traits in common. It is the *belief* that these traits are blood-based and the performative power of stories reinforcing this belief that form the foundation of the myth of the blood. For Jimmy's family, men respect women:

Jimmy: But she was
she was my mentor.

Hannah: Yeah.

J: Uh, all the way around, I mean mother and father, I didn't need a father, uh
she was both to me.

H: Yeah.
And was your father killed in the 60's? The 1960's?

J: Yeah, yeah he was shot.
Which he was / from what I heard, I didn't know him, I was only one year old.

H: Oh gosh.

J: But from the stories I heard of him, uh / he was / mean, he liked to drink and fight.
Which, he was good to her, him and her / him and her they had a good relationship.

H: Yeah.

J: And uh / I might get it from him, but uh,
you know I've always had a lot a respect for women myself. And that might have been a lot to do with my mother raisin me. But uh,

H: Yeah.

J: but uh,
he, she said—my mom had told me—that he had a lot a respect for women himself.

H: Mmm.

J: And uh / you know, I kinda felt like maybe that's / where I got it, from him.

Jimmy knows his father through his mother's stories—his father's blood comes through vis-à-vis the stories that link these two men who loved and respected Cat. Jimmy said that he was a "pretty good kid / compared to some" but stressed that his mother "kept a hand" on him. Raising two boys and two girls, she taught them "what's right and what's wrong" and showed that "she was still in control" despite her smaller size and delicately feminine appearance.

Jimmy: And she, she, she knew what it took, you know, to control us.
And I had seen, seen her / I'd seen her knock my brother out.

Hannah: Really?

J: Yeah, I've seen her knock him out you know, I mean, cause he was, he was like three years older than I was. He was a big boy and everthing.

H: Yeah.

J: And uh…
And he was getting into drugs and stuff like at, and she was trying to put a stop to it, you know.

H: Yeah.

J: And uh…he come in / one night.
And uh, she'd put her foot down.
And he turned on her, and / not to hurt her or nothing but he just bucked up, you know. And and she was tryin to set him straight.
And I think they was a pot or a pan or something settin there.

H: Uh huh?

J: And uh, / he'd said something to her, and she picked that up and just—
she didn't hit him hard enough to *hurt* him,

H: Uh huh?

J: but she cracked him upside the head there. (*laughs, both laugh)*
And she put him in the corner.
And he, he was / well, you know, / it, it addled him somewhat, you know.

H: Yeah.

J: He was out for just a few minutes. But
we got him up and set him back up on bed. And then he realized, you know that uh
she was still in control.

H: She means business! (*both laugh*)

J: You see, she was raised up, she had five brothers. She was the only girl…
And they was, they grew up rough.

Cat used "rough" tactics with her boys, *and* she performed feminine roles of domestic cook and mother with flair and prowess. Jimmy spoke with pride about how his mother raised him to respect women and to do "women's work" himself. Cat taught Jimmy how to cook with the motto "if you're hungry, you know, fix it. / And eat it. You know, don't depend on anybody else to do it." Jimmy said his wife "always enjoyed the cookin, I mean / my wife she said she'd rather eat my cookin as / as her own." Cat raised the family on soup beans (pinto beans), fried potatoes, cornbread, meatloaf, and a delicacy: fried oysters.

Jimmy: But uh, first time she ever brought any in?
And I looked at em I said, "Theeeem don't look good." (*Hannah laughs*)
But she would take em, she'd fry em and she'd roll em in flaur [flour],

Hannah: Ooh.

J: and, and meal, and then salt and pepper em, and / and fry em.

H: Hmm.

J: And that was the best thing that, I mean, I thought it was.

Jimmy explained how women were treated and how they were expected to behave in the mines:

Jimmy: Uh / they was probably, my, my mother was one of the first [women] / to go in.
And / they wasn't but about three or four at that time…
There was very few could, that would, that could take it.
A lot of em couldn't handle / the pressure of the men…
If you didn't / like, go along with the men?
If you, if you bucked up against the system?
What they called "the system," you know how men think, everthing's supposed to be.
So, if you uh / didn't go along?
Then / they would find some way to get rid of ye.

"The system" of men guarding and setting the rules for mining performance exerts force and pressure—on women, and on other miners—to keep mining identity in line and in check. An invisible ideology, Jimmy gives tangible dimensions to the hegemonic strength of the system as something that women had to "take" and "handle." It is a load with weight, something you have to carry and "go along" with. His story also conjures a labyrinth with solid walls that show you how to "go along" and dead ends that you can fruitlessly "buck[] up against."

Hannah: Yeah, what sort of stuff would they try on her?

Jimmy: Uh (*sighs*), well some things, uh, probly
you couldn't say but you know
I mean, cause men can get pretty dirty you know about some of the stuff, uh.

H: Yeah.

J: You know, a lot a people come in there, uh
well, you, you went to school and you know
what a lot a ball players will do, you know. I mean uh

H: Mm hmm.

J: uh, initiation you know, and some of that stuff you know. And, and
they try to do men the same way in there.

H: Hmm.

J: But uh / that didn't work with her either, I mean, you know, they, they couldn't
they couldn't get her. Because you know she'd tell em, you know, "Well, you think you can do it," you know, "come on!" you know.
And uh, / and none of em, you know, they was all scared. Cause they knowed
you know, they'd probably get in trouble anyway.

H: Mm hmm.

J: But uh, they's a lot a stuff that men would do to uh
initiate ye into the mines.
And uh
but she could, she could turn everything, she could turn it around on them, you know.

H: Mm hmm.

J: And that's what they liked about her.
Anything they said to her, / you know, never got to her, you know.

H: Yeah.

J: Cause she, she would just uh / she'd come back with something else you know.

H: Yeah.

J: And uh / she'd make a joke about it or / or she would uh / say something
you know like uh, / uh, / something about their wife, you know. Uh / maybe uh
uh, maybe they wasn't takin care of their / duties at home or something like that you know, or

H: Yeah.

J: you know, their manly duties or whatever you know, stuff like at.
And that's what, they liked about her because, you know (*Hannah laughs*)
she was, outspoken.

H: Yeah.

J: You know she, you couldn't say nothing to her that'd get anything on her.

Systems of opposition, inclusion and exclusion are how modernity shapes sense systems and orders the world[54], a "structuralist economy of exchange within which, as Levi-Strauss described it, women circulate as signs but are not theorized as sign producers"[55] (Russo 66). The tense struggle between the sign and its supplement offer hopeful

[54] As Peggy Phelan and Laura Mulvey would remind us, this order is set through a male gaze. Phelan writes in her discussion of race and identity that "the focus on skin as the visible marker of race is itself a form of feminizing those races which are not white. Reading the body as the sign of identity is the way men regulate the bodies of women" (Phelan 10).

[55] Derrida upends Levi-Strauss's model to show the sign and supplement/trace in a tense power struggle, pressing against one another (a model in which Peggy Phelan finds hopeful possibilities, where "in the supplement one can see ways to intervene in its meaning" (Phelan 27).

possibilities, as Phelan points out. The sticky trace glues to its sign, like those sticky names that would mark Cat's body as a sexualized, feminized object in the mines. Cat flips men's games of initiation on their head, "she could turn it around on them" to gain control and power in situations where she was the butt of a sexist joke. As with Pam's narrative, Cat's story shows that male miners performatively create normative mining identity against—among other things—the role of being a sexual object. If mining identity is supplemented by those women who should be at home pleasing their husbands, then Cat flips the supplement to the primary position by threatening male miners' "manly duties at home." Cat identifies them as not only sexual objects but *lacking* objects. Through poetic arts of resistance, Cat transforms her body from a sexual object to a slick surface so that they couldn't "get anything on her." Her tactic was like the taunting childhood rhyme, "I'm rubber and you're glue, and whatever you say bounces off of me and sticks to you."

So who was Cat? This hyper-feminine body, Marilyn Monroe, refusing the gendered norms of male-owned mining space and creating her own form of horseplay out of men's sexual harassment and unwanted advances—she lived in a liminal zone between being both father and mother, miner and woman, dancing back and forth over this border. An excessive, slippery body, "normal" names and codes would not stick. Cat and Pam constructed mining identities through negotiated performances of resistance and compliance to make a place for their women's bodies in the mines.

II. Common Dangers

In addition to the threat of sexual harassment which Pam said "usually only happened once or twice" to women, men and women share in many common dangers. Earl, Donald, Palmer and Albert, Steve, and Harley all touch on some of the various dangers coal miners encounter when entering the mines: roof falls, rib rolls, horse's backs and killerbottoms. All of the miners I interviewed had either witnessed or been involved in a roof fall. Palmer described some of the dangers the mines-body brought:

> Palmer: I was up boltin, top you know up at the near the face?
> And and, this chunk a rock I guess it was two foot by four foot fell out.
> It, it just pushed me right down into the ground.
>
> Hannah: Oh my gosh.
>
> P: And uh / well, you had a helper back then you know.
> And he saw me go down and when he did he come in, and took the rock off of me. But it

didn't hurt me.
Uh, it bruised me up, but / it didn't break any bones.

H: Wow.

P: That, and / I've had rock to, er, the coal to pop out and cut me you know. I've got
I had 20 some stitches right there where, coal had popped out and hit me.

H: Just pop out of the side?

P: Yeah, where ye get pressure, / you know, where the mines, that the, rock's sittin down on the coal?
And it just pushes it out. It's / to release pressure.

H: Mmm!

Mining space is liquid in Palmer's narrative: it oozes and squeezes out, pressure popping hard nuggets of coal out into the artery they have cut through.

Bill Buchanan loaned me a series of mining safety training videos, and among these company- and government-sponsored videos was an interview with Donzil Cutlip, a miner who was trapped for 14 hours underneath a roof fall. Donzil said "the mountain came down on me" and "squeezed the blood out." Rescue teams made two successive attempts to get him out—the first prompted another roof fall, during which they covered the half-buried Donzil back over with boards and let the roof cave in again. The second rescue they were able to pull him out by his belt and pass him down a narrow escape tunnel and carry him out on a stretcher. Donzil had multiple broken ribs and internal injuries. There were no cuts on him, but his clothing was saturated in blood from the pressure of so much rock against his body. His arms had been trapped beneath him and rotted out from under him, "so they amputated a little bit at a time," until "I've got about 6 inches on each side" of his arms.

Donzil tells his story hopefully—with prosthetic limbs he says, "I hunt if I want to hunt, I fish if I want to." He says to his wife and to the interviewer Larry Clevenger, "I still can't do buttons." Donzil says that he has gotten out and moved on with his life despite the injuries. His story ends with warnings to other families and miners that "you can't be too careful" and you have to "keep one eye on the top at all times. You turn your head and it can be all over."

Harley described another danger: breaking into old works, or the remains of old family and pirate mines that were unmapped. Harley had earlier signed the consent form and put his copy in the breast pocket of his shirt—he was careful to hand the pen back to me.

In this story, he grabs the pen and turns to the back of his form without sacrificing a pause in his story, so great is his urgency to help me visualize what old works look like:

Harley Colley (C): Let me see if I can explain it to ya.
Ok, the coal mines, is laid out *(he grabs the pen and takes out the back of the form I have just given him and begins to draw*)
here, I'll draw it
I'll just draw it *(pause as he draws, I tell him about water and coffee but he just continues focus on his drawing*)
Ok this is just / a slight diagram, but you leave these / these is what ye call your pillars
(*he draws squares*)
like that.
(*he continues to draw*)
And, you know the belt would be in here (*drawing*), in there I guess.
And, and then they have like braddishes here.

Hannah (H): Braddishes?

C: Yeah, that's / that's what makes / ye air
you're gonna have a fan down here, and it's gonna blow air in
and take it across here, and then back down this side.
That's what keeps the smoke and dust out.

H: Ventilation.

C: Yeah. / But—

H: And that picture there, would that be where the air would be come in on?

C: That's where it come in, sucks it in, it's not sucking it in there but / some of em push
and some pull, so it's just / according to what kind a circumstances ye got.
Like if you're around the old mines?
They have that air pushed, / see?
Say, behind that wall there is what they call / old works
that's done been mined out, it's got black damp in it—
that's poisonous air.

H: Mmm.

C: Cause if you suck it [the air], / then you cut a hole in there,
it'll suck it right in to ye and kill ye / fore you can get out.

H: Mmm!

C: And you'd be dead / in 15 minutes. And that's a long time.

Old works can also fill with water, making them a drowning hazard in addition to the toxic methane gasses they may contain. Harley calls this poisonous gas "black damp." Bill Buchanan described black damp as a vacuum: old works are host to tiny subterranean organisms who feed on the oxygen in these empty tombs, sucking all the oxygen out of these

spaces. Bill said that a body needs 19.5% breathable oxygen to run, and that you can survive on 14% oxygen only for a short time—microbes eat away at *all* the oxygen in these areas, making "black damp" a literal void, a gravitational black hole for breath. When miners break in on old works with black damp inside, "it's like the air is sucked out of your lungs," leaving nothing to inhale but oxygen-deprived air. Lungs deflated, pulled taut and even inside-out by the suction effect, the very act of breathing in takes Herculean effort.

As rescue teams continued to search for the Sago miners in the recent accident in West Virginia, I kept turning this phrase over an over again, wondering if the mysterious presence of carbon monoxide with no evidence of an explosion could somehow be "black damp" and what that would feel and smell like: *black* damp, not dark damp; "it's black, pitch black, there's not a darkness made / that's any darker" than being in the mines without power; without air, and a "*damp*," cold, gray, wet feeling. Talking with the other miners, forming a barricade to keep noxious fumes out, black damp seeping under the curtains and watching others feel the effects—as Harley said, "you'd be dead / in 15 minutes, and that's a long time."

A long time to die. Even longer is the creeping, breath-by-breath constriction of black lung, which inevitably overtakes these miners. Earl witnessed black lung's effects on his father—

Earl: I had watched his life, I'd watched / his, health and, by the way, my dad died four days before he was 49 year old.

Hannah: Oh, I'm so sorry. / What did he die of?

E: Coal workers, that, I ain't gonna say that word, I can't, "pue-oh"—it was black lung.

H: Black lung.

E: Dad, dad couldn't go from here—at that age, Hannah—
from here back to / the front part of the building, I mean he was so short winded and everthing.
And it was so sad.
And / at that age there, you come back / you come back and I can say, see where my dad's a comin from more so every day.
At dad's age / at dad's age he had 30 years, his whole life what you'd say, in the coal mines.

H: Wow. / That was his life.

E: It was.
Thirty years and him 48 years old, four days before his 49th birthday / he had a massive heart attack.

"Coal workers" is synonymous with "black lung" in this story, such that working in coal inevitably linked miners with this disease. Earl and other miners told me how difficult it is to prove they have black lung because "the doctors are in bed with the companies." (This is discussed at length in Chapter Seven.) Short-winded and unable to walk, black lung and "rock dust" disease (the white powder miners spread and spray on mine walls to keep the methane gas and coal dust from igniting—when inhaled it feels like glass in your lungs) wear on the heart. Miners run out of pulmonary power one audible breath at a time.

Many said that it was wrong to paint the mines as a "death trap," even though in the same 10 minutes they would narrate about witnessing a rock fall or an injury, if not death, in the mines. Surprisingly, some miners have college degrees and choose to go underground. One miner said that an accountant from Kingsport (the nearest 'large' town) went down into the coal mines because the pay was so much higher. Most miners also admitted, either overtly or implicitly, that they knew that they would be hurt or injured when they went into the mines, but "you was just so hard headed" that they went into the mines anyway. Miners became complicit in the denial of the dangers of this place and were supported in this denial through carefully constructed networks of play and naming with other miners in the mines. A persistent theme threading through all of their stories was that each had witnessed either an injury or a death of others in the mines, often including their own disabling injuries.

III. Into Your Blood

Given the many apparent dangers of the mines and the fact that many of these men and women, as third generation miners, have watched their fathers and grandfathers die of black lung and other crippling disabilities, I wondered why they became miners and kept going back into the mines. Many of them answered that coal mining "gets into your blood." This phrase had many meanings for miners: desire; the genetic material of their relatives coursing through their veins (and thickened into the myth of the blood through family stories); and the literal coal dust that settles in their lungs and embeds into their skin.

Many miners claim "mining blood" because they are members of families and extended families who also have worked in the coal mines. Many of the people I interviewed were second and third generation miners, some having worked with or at the same time/in the same mine as their parents. Coal threads through generational family narratives in intricate

patterns. How do the bodies of families and the stories of family members weigh on the bodies of young men in this community? How did the stories of their fathers lay on their shoulders as a burden to carry around, as a shield of protection in the mines, and as an introduction to a future partner and lover (i.e., the mines-body)?

Steve believed that coal miners were bred—his mining pedigree influenced his career choice against other desires:

> Steve: I lived in Dante all my life.
> My dad was a coal miner, / my grandfather, I mean it just—
> lawyers believe that, you know, they breed lawyers. Coal miners, (*Hannah laughs*)
> so their kids is gonna be coal miners. And, and that's uh,
> but I had a chance ta, ta be a professional ball player and I turned that down.
>
> Hannah: Oh really?
>
> S: Because I always wanted to be / a coal miner. And / it just
> I don't know, when I first went in there it was real exciting you know.

His story is filled with references to *all*: he spent *all* his life in Dante; he *always* wanted to be a coal miner. Steve's "always" trumped the past and present enjoyment he cultivated for ball playing—the desire for what he had not yet experienced but nevertheless already *was* (i.e., a coal miner) overshadowed his own lived experiences to that point. "Always" is a time that stretches to pre-birth, something known in the womb and through the blood. In this narrative, the "first" time in the mines followed the "always wanted" that he *already was* through breeding. Family stories about his father and grandfather, coupled with the traditional family myths of sons carrying on the jobs of their fathers, provided a sense of inevitability that propelled him toward the mines. Steve's family stories provided a beginning (breeding and birth) and happy ending (becoming a miner) between which he would shape his life narrative's middle adventures. These stories were not only bookends for his life but a comfortable and well beaten path to guide him. This is not to deny Steve's agency in his life decisions but merely to point out that these stories of family and heritage provided him with his first story, his first identity, through which the family's powerful influence often has lasting effects. Pollock says about her daughter's birth story:

> Isabel's self is centered in a past she knows only because we tell her. We perform her. We make and remake her foundational sense of identity and being in the world

> in the reiteration of stories of her origin, in stories whose originality is renewed in each (re)telling. (Pollock Telling 68)

Birth stories for Steve are wrapped up in stories of lineage and breed—his birth is not a singular story but one other births, other lives, and other generations whose bodies press on his own to determine unquestionably what "kids is gonna be" and indeed what they "always" already were[56].

This place gets into your blood, and blood becomes the desire to work in the mines. Palmer said that coal blood *is* desire—a feeling distilled and materialized into the veins. He turns to his brother to help him explain what he finds difficult to put into words:

> Palmer: But, you know, it gets in ye blood though.
> Now it does it, it's uh.
>
> Hannah: Tell me about that.
>
> P: It's something that you *want* to do, you know like uh (*he turns to his brother Albert with a pleading look on his face*)
> Uh, how do I describe this?
> You look forward to goin to work just like
> people'd say, "No I wouldn't work in there," but
> but we didn't think no more of it than, and them goin to a
> factory you know and goin to work.
> But, and you you just get / wrapped up in it and
>
> H: Yeah.
>
> P: you just enjoy it. But you don't realize
> the damage it's doin to ye health, you know, uh over the years. But
> but, normally you, you, / I enjoyed it, I still miss it.
>
> H: What do you love about it? / Or what did you love about it?
>
> P: Just, goin to work and bein able to, be with my friends you know. And
> enjoyed the / when you run a good day's, run a coal?
> It makes you feel good, you, you'd have a
> a good, a you know good feelin causes you you've done
>
> H: Yeah.
>
> P: *good* and, you know ye have. And / it's just the enjoyment that's, / but uh, I enjoyed it.

---

[56] How do these family bodies and stories weigh on women? What are the possibilities and impossibilities constructed out of these stories as an immeasurable piling-up of codes which women must either walk around, scramble over, or turn their backs on? What are the consequences of turning one's back on these codes? What are the lived effects of stepping over these lines? For many women, crossing the threshold of the mines often constitutes a gender-crossing—women "become men" and thus are constructed into "good miners."

Mining blood is something you can *feel*—it feels *good*. Like a warm blanket, you get "wrapped up" in the experience. The mines are a sticky and tangled web that cocoons these fellows. Like a sticky web, Palmer couldn't completely brush off the strands of desire that had wrapped around him—despite the "damage" he sustained from black lung, good memories of enjoyment clung to him in the present so that "I still miss it."

Beyond the invisible metaphor of memories stuck to the flesh, coal gets "into your blood" in tangible ways—coal literally marks itself on the flesh. Donald told me about the stains under his skin:

> Donald: Believe it or not / the main thing for a coal miner to bathe in / was Dawn,
> Joy or Dawn / dish, dishwashing detergent.
> Because you could take a bar of soap and wash all night and not get that off of ye.
>
> Hannah: Really?
>
> D: Cause it was just oil and dust and all / it's stick to ye.
> And they wasn't nothing else to bring it off.
> And that, that's what you used.

Oil, dust, dirt, can coal grind like sandpaper into his skin. Donald told me that he tore his back flesh on a roof bolt as he ran to escape the mountain "on a ride." Coal markings like these on miners' bodies make them an object of curiosity for outsiders.

> Donald: And I'd went to the beach one time and this woman asked me she said, buddy, she said, I've gotta asked you a question, she said what in the world has happened to your back?
>
> Hannah: Oh my gosh.
>
> D: And I said, "Lady, I, I work in low coal."
> And I could sit there and explain to her, and you could look there, and she'd think, *"That ain't a place to be!"* (*Hannah laughs, both laugh*)

The brute force of driving coal into the skin, and the effects of mining on the body through sliced skin and black lung, are one more way of mining getting "into your blood."

IV. Like a Family

There is a fascinating camaraderie between male coal miners, as evidenced and created through the practices of naming and horseplay and through the intense bonds that they say stem from feeling like a community of 'outsiders.' Many coal miners said that they felt misunderstood by "abovegrounders," including family members who were not miners.

Coal miners cohabit this space through common experiences that I liken to those of soldiers during war. Coal miners share in the mundane phenomena of warming soup for lunch on top of a multi-thousand-volt power grid and of eating with their heads sideways, drinking coffee from a straw as they crouch in low places. They also share in the daily phenomena of rock falls, rib rolls, and the threat of gas and coal dust explosions and other deadly dangers

Like a family, they receive a new name or nickname when they enter the mines. Many miners coped with the danger by forming a family out of fellow miners. Miners were initiated into this new family of miners through systems of naming. Earl described these nicknames as "something that just sticks," like coal dust sticks to their knees, so does the nickname to a 60 year old man. Earl said that these names are earned pretty early on in coal mining and that "once that it's sewn on ye / that's it." Sewn onto their identities, names mark coal miners as entering into another family. His descriptions reminded me of the way that secular individuals join a convent, gaining a new name "in Christ." In the coal mines, miners are ritually taken into the order through their new name in this family of coal.

As new sons and daughters in coal, young miners or "red hats" are mentored into mining work by older coal miners. Earl said that older miners took him under his wing:

Earl: And I know the first times that / that I's around, and
if I hadn't been with older men I don't know what I would a done.

Hannah: Did they kind of take you under your / under their wing?

E: They did. / They was, they was some that weren't jokin, they were serious.
And that's why I said I'm so thankful
that once that I went to work in the coal mines
they didn't put me with people my age / or younger people.
I said, "Good Lord must a watched over me," he had to even then.

H: Mmm.

E: And uh, a lot a times, did you
you mean, you'd like to work with them old—? Yes sireee.
Because I learned.
And I learnt, and they would, they
they'd joke with ye sometimes and rib ye. But
when it come down to tryin to tell you what was right,
you could bank on that.

Family was more than a network of kinship—it was a strategy for survival. Earl banked on the knowledge of older miners not with money but with his very life. What he

learned from these father-figures he put into practice in his daily activities. For Palmer, learning the mines language was integrally linked to family watching out for one another.

Hannah: You were startin to tell me about, that connection
with the earth and with listenin to it and what it sounded like?

Palmer: Uh yeah it's, it's you know its
well you don't know this when you first start, but as time goes on?
You learn, the poppin and a crackin the, you, you watch the timbers you see how the timbers are.

H: Uh huh.

P: Now sometimes, you still
it, it'll, you know, like break but while you're even not nobody around?

H: Yeah.

P: And then
you'll go in there and then, "Oh!" where it's just let loose.

H: Oh my gosh.

P: But you know, most a the time, if you're workin that section ever day?

H: Mm hmm.

P: You know, uh, you know about what the timb—uh, what the roof's gonna do every day.
If it's gonna be / either, good or bad you know. And uh,
but that, that's mostly what you gotta learn when you go in a coal mines.
Is how the roof control is, you know, how the
sound of the top.
Cause, you know they's / uh / sand rock, they's blue slate.
And both of em makes, different / noises you, you know, to separate the two you know.

H: Mm hmm.

P: When you're in / this, situation.

H: And how do you learn that?

P: By payin attention mostly. And, and, and / listen to ye fellow workers.
That, you know everbody looks out for—
you come as one when you go down in there, just like / marriage I'd say.
Cause, really you spend more people uh more time with them than you do with your
your family really.

Albert: Right.

P: You get close together, and, and / you watch over one another. I mean it's just

H: Yeah.

P: it's just natural to, take care a one another you know, keep em out a danger.

H: Gosh.

P: That's mostly you know how you / you know you stay alive all these years.

H: Yeah.

P: A lot a people didn't make it.

H: Mmm.

P: But a lot, you know, that's how you / only stay alive, just / just stick together and be close.

With new names come new bodies. Coal miners' bodies take on a different form and shape—one body expands into another as, like marriage, "you come as one" when you go down into the mines. Staying close together in what otherwise might be suspect as homosexual play, male miners link bodies and "stick together" in this wet, musty place. Palmer, who was known as "Maggie" in the mines (he didn't know why), summed up his impressions of friendships with the men on his section by saying, "You just get, uh, close fam, *family* is all I can say on it."

Who is allowed into this family, and who is not? What are the rules of inclusion and exclusion? The normative coal miner's body is masculine—and the whole system of gender and sexuality, parameters of physical touch and body boundaries (and legal punitive damages that are or are not at risk in male-to-male touching) is stabilized *against* the trace supplement of women's bodies. Feminine bodies challenge and threaten the normative category of *miner* (so closely linked is it through family stories and gendered performative enactments as masculine)—the presence of the feminine in the mine is the abject which both secures the miner-as-male and serves as an inextricable other which threatens the easy and stable fusion of miner-as-masculine (and heteronormative, etc.). Her presence is an ambiguous threat that—by this logic—sometimes justifies male-on-female violence (sexual harassment, rape, sexist gossip) in an effort to re-stabilize miner identity as clearly masculine (and masculinity as a normative category itself).

Women fight back through various means: through physical violence (as Pam did); by "turning" sexist comments back on male miners (in a de Certeauian tactic of the weak to subvert male dominance and abuse by turning the master's tricks back on himself); through silent tactics (the woman who kept a notebook and pen with her, supposedly writing down

the acts of the men, keeping them and potential sexual harassment at bay through her writing as a "magical art," what men call "blackmail" and what for her served practically as a border of protection —in particular in a region and culture of miners who define themselves against highly literate cultures--to expand her own body borders in this tight space and gain personal space); and in many other ways. Women perform masculinity to in effect "become" the masculine ideal that then provides them passageway into the community of male miners—with difference (monstrous femininity) eliminated (or at least unseen), women may enter the mines "as men" and hence "as miners." Women's presence in the mines, the gaze of the woman, could transform the possibilities of this play into homoerotic acts of men touching other men—her gaze inverts the already topsy-turvy structure of this space as transformed from dangerous to fun into…a space of homosexual play? In the predominantly Judeo-Christian communities from which these men come, homosexuality is aligned with danger itself, throwing this space *ambivalently* (and this is key) back into danger—hence, violence done to women in this space (sexual harassment, derogatory gossip) could seem justified under this logic.

Many male miners justify the desire for all-male mining company as the need for physical strength—with which women, they say, are not as well endowed as men—to both do the work and to be able to pull coal off of trapped bodies in case of a rock fall or rib roll. As Susan Wendell says, the desire to eliminate "differences that are feared, poorly understood, and widely considered to be marks of inferiority, easily masquerades as the compassionate desire to prevent or stop suffering" (qtd. in Shildrick 74). Hence, sexual discrimination masquerades as not wanting to endanger women from hurting themselves, or caring for other miners by hiring men who are strong enough protect one another. Suffice it to say, I would trust Pam's ability to haul coal and lift a timber off of me any day.

V. Horseplay

In the filmed interview of Donzil Cutlip's Roof Fall Entrapment Survivor's Account, editing, interview techniques, and low-noted mournful music shade Donzil's story as a lesson to miners to be more careful about horseplay and to do their job according to the rules. A power point presentation at the beginning and conclusion of the video clearly outlines what was done wrong and what could have been done to prevent Donzil's accident. The rational,

enlightenment argument behind the video is that if only miners had followed company safety regulations this never would have happened.

Bill Buchanan spoke back to this video in his characteristic shoot-from-the-hip manner:

Bill: You know miners cut up and carry on and horseplay is one a the main things
they say that, uh, "You don't horseplay," you know.
And a lot a times you, you don't want to horseplay because it will throw you in danger.
But the reason they's so much / a that goes on: / that helps you / cope
with the, severity of the danger that you're always in.
Somebody makin a joke or somebody aggravatin ye a little bit that was just like that.
On that one video there / where, the two got trapped?

Hannah: Mm hmm.

B: You know.

H: Donzil?

B: You know they's talk, / yeah, and they was talking about that?...
But that, young boys where they's throwin them rocks at him?
See they was playin with him to get him used to not bein afraid, / you know.
They didn't have a, they didn't have a clue that that much rock was gonna fall or they wouldn't a done that.
And what they was getting him used to was don't be afraid when this happens to you.
You know pay attention, but don' t be afraid.

H: Yeah.

B: And then, you know, they had no idea that this massive rock was gonna fall because
you know there they were,
uh, best I remember they were probably pullin pillars and taking this, port out and hit fell way above the bolt,
you know.

H: And he, I believe he got his head and then part of his shoulder under the carriage of the miner,
and that was what saved him.

B: Yeah.
See that rock hit him and he got / wedged right up in there
and that's, that's a good place to be…
You know uh, coal miners's told me: if you're up there close, something like at happens? Get to that machinery, cause it'll hold that rock off of ye.

One of the more vital points of Bill's story, to me, is the chaos of coal mining and the audacity of the company's assumption that chaos can be predictably controlled and prevented through miners' actions. Bill reinforces Donzil's message—be aware, but don't be afraid.

Steve stressed that horseplay served an instructional function in the mines, teaching miners, as Bill said, to be careful but not fearful.

> Steve: I was workin evening shift, and we was pullin pillars. This is, the dangerous time when you pull pillars that's the most dangerous, / well one a the most dangerous.
> And I was runnin a shuttle car.
> And uh, the, the miner men there was two of em up there.
> And they'd, had a lot of experience.
> They just, you know, went on, a bunch of older / aggravated you all the time.
>
> Hannah: Mm hmm.
>
> S: Pickin at ye.
>
> H: Mm hmm.
>
> S: You'd come up there, and they'd hit ye with a rock or
> or whatever, and didn't pay no, didn't pay us any mind up here.
> This dangerous stuff they didn't pay it any mind cause they knew,
>
> H: Huh.
>
> S: they knew when it was gonna fall.
> So they didn't care, they just played and went on and / and kept cutting this coal.

Older miners created a playspace out of safer times when they knew the roof would not fall—this play enabled younger miners to interpret and cope with what they know is "the most dangerous" time as a multilayered and nuanced process. Within this time of perceived danger, more experienced miners "just played and went on" because "they knew when it was gonna fall." Just knowing comes from years of learning the language and feel of the mines-body so that they can discern when the roof is about to fall and when it is safe to play. Playtime reinforces to younger miners that there is a balance between "paying living attention" to place, in Tessa Brennan's terms, and "getting rabbity" and nervous out of fear. In these games, older miners taught younger ones that fear comes from a lack of experience and understanding of the language of the mines. Learning this language and interpreting it, "respecting the danger" by listening to the mines-body, miners are able to interpret their environment and discern times of danger from times of relative safety. By encouraging play in apparent danger—a seemingly ludicrous and irresponsible act on the face of it—older miners inculcated the young into systems of handling mining work through understanding and interpreting another language.

Horseplay and laughter are subversive tactics for dealing with the daily dangers of this place. Horseplay is a body-to-body trickster-like form of play enacted daily in the mines. As Bill says, it serves as a coping mechanism for dealing with the constant threat of death and danger of bodily injury in the mines. As trickster play, horseplay transforms the mines as a space of danger into a space of near-carnival (borrowing from Bakhtin's interpretation). Horseplay is *productive* for miners who transform danger into something to be *laughed* at with *belly-laughs*. Horseplay creates a laughter-filled, carnivalesque and "topsy-turvy" world, as Erasmus writes of Medieval folk humor in In Praise of Folly (Erasmus 5). Bakhtin investigates Rabelais's descriptions of carnivalesque folk humor that upturn structured norms. Carnival is not spectacle seen but lived in, a "universal spirit" (reminiscent of Turnerian 'flow' and communitas) (Bakhtin 7). Folk humor both denies and revives—contrary to sarcastic humor (which separates people—I laugh at you) it is shared laughter directed at everyone and is ambivalent, within which lies its libratory power. Rabelais features a fleshy world of exaggerated forms—the body is deeply positive here (not Cartesian), it "degrades and materializes" (Russo 20). Incomplete, ambivalent, anti-Vetruvian bodies emphasize apertures, openings, orifices, and protrusions, the unending, developing, becoming body/self. The use of the body to transform structures through *belly-laughter* informs my understanding of how laughter and the body function in mining humor and play: laughter joins bodies together; and body-to-body contact extends personal space in cramped quarters.

Jimmy Castle said that horseplay is useful and necessary in dealing with the dangers of mining. Trickster play offered a diversion not only from the monotony of daily work but a distraction from thoughts of death and danger: Jimmy said pranks were "just part of it" and "it took ye mind off anything else." Steve stressed that through all this wrestling and greasing and tackling and teaming up against each other, "When it come down to it / They was your family." Horseplay fostered friendships and a sense of family between men in the mines, like infighting between brothers and sisters. Palmer and Albert came alive in discussion about horseplay—the steadier and calmer of the two brothers, Palmer perked up with excitement as he and his brother volleyed one story after another back and forth to each other. Within blood-kin families and "into your blood" coal-families, horseplay and stories

about these pranks played on one another cemented bonds and nurtured relationships between men:

Hannah: Would there be horseplay?

Palmer: Oh yeah, yeah.

H: What would ya'll do?

P: Oh we'd pull some pranks on em. (*he smiles, he and Albert laugh, then I join in contagious laughter*)

H: Like what?

P: Grease em, and—

H: Now I heard somebody else talk about greasing—tell me what that is.

P: Well you just get grease and / put it all over em. (*all laugh*)

Albert: (*laughing*) I remember one time
I, I gotta tell this'n—I ain't buttin in on ye? (*he asks Palmer*)

P: Go ahead there.

A: But uh, up there they had what they call a bathhouse
up above Glenbrook, you know where the office was?

P: Yeah.

A: They had a bathhouse up there.
And them guys would go—now it's *wintertime* now! (*Hannah laughs*)
They'd go out there in the creek / and uh, they had a / stall, trash stall.

H: Uh huh.

A: And uh, overhead here was / you know was open around through here.

H: Mm hmm.

A: Ok, they'd go out there and get a big bucket a water out a the creek,
bring it in there and, "SHHHHEW!" / Pour it! / Ohhhhgosh! (*all laugh*)
You talk about hollarin!

P: But yeah you just done
a lot a people, couldn't take a joke you you just stayed away from them.

H: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

P: Now a they'd like a lot a people liked to go along with it until
you know something comes on them and then they'd

H: Yeah.

P: they'd get mad at ye.

H: They'd dish it out but they can't take it.

P: Yeah, right. But / you know, you's all the time pullin pranks on em, you know.
Like one guy / I worked with, always bummed tobacco.
He never would buy nothing, he'd always bum it.
And uh, me and a buddy a mine / you know, when we'd throw our tobacco in the lockers?
You know of a night, what we had left we'd just throw it up in the lockers.
But hit'd been there, some of it, for two or three months you know.
And uh, I told him, I said, "We'll just put it all in one bag and give it to him and that way he'll quit buggin me."
And uh / he come up that night and he said uh,
he said, "I, I I've never had this much baccer in a bag," we give it to him?

H: Yeah.

P: And uh, / some of it had to be moldy cause it'd been in there for a long, long time.

H: Oh gosh!

P: But he chewed it just the same (*all laugh*)

A: Still bummed!

P: He still bummed!

H: Oh my gosh!

P: Yeah he never would buy no baccer.
He always bummed his bacc, tobacco. (*Albert laughs*)
But just uh, / a buddy a mine, a doctor put him on antibiotics.
And, this one boy he come up there and he said,
"What're you takin, Robert?" He, hey, he said, "I'm takin some / uh / whatde call em uh / pain pills."
And he said, "Well I'd like to have some a these."
Robert said, "I don't have enough to do me to," said "tomorrow I'll bring ye some."
So, on the way to work me and him stopped down there and we got, uh, ExLax. (*Hannah laughs*)
And we'd go up there, "Robert you bring my pill?" "*Yeah*, I brought ye pills," and he give him two of em.
And uh, later on about dinnertime he come up, he said, "Man," he said, "them didn't help me a bit." He said, "You got anymore?" And we said, "Yeah," <*laughs, all laugh*>
and we give him two more! (*all laugh*)
He come in that next time, / he said, "Man," he said, / "them pills didn't do nothing," but the second two we give him—he was runnin the car that night,
and he come by just a singin just as happy as he could be—but boy the *next* day he said, "Man I've been—" he said, "Gahhh now!" (*all laugh*)
But you know just (*all laugh*) / and stuff's been pulled on me that that, you know.

H: What'd they pull on you?

P: Oh you know they just,

I can't remember a lot of it.

H: Yeah.

A: I remember one time, down there at Calvin
you know they'd always gang up there at the, commissary before they always went to work on the evening shift?

H: Mm hmm.

A: And uh / this old guy's standin there.
And he had a, he had on ragged britches.
And the hole, had a big old hole in the seat of em, you know, it was just
threads was all hang, hangin' down and everthign?
This guy snuck up behind (*laughs*) him with a / with a cigarette lighter.
And hit it, and / like at?
Caught them britches on fire! (*both brothers laugh*) / Oh gosh!
You talk about beatin that out he went to thumpin! (*all laugh*)
And we we finally we got it out we helped him get it out.
Lord, yeah, they didn't care they just wanted to pull pranks on people like that.

For male coal miners, horseplay became a problem-solving tool and a productive way to face the constant threat of death in their daily work environment. Understanding this performance as a psychological tool gives context to understand what at first look appears as blatant sexual discrimination, erupting in phrases such as "the mines are no place for a woman." For fear of sexual harassment charges, many of which were justified according to female respondents, male members of coal mining culture stopped horseplay and physical contact with women and men in their sections, abruptly shutting off the major practice that sustained them throughout the work day. While this understanding does not make their actions any less sexist, it does provide a more nuanced means of understanding at least one of the reasons *why* men did not want women in the mines—in addition to cultural norms of what defined men and women, women's/men's roles, and sexuality.

The gaze of women on these male-on-male scenes of body-to-body horseplay might also threaten a clear sense of sexuality and sex-determined performances of gender. The "woman with the pen" in Earl's story could interpret horseplay as homosexual erotics, a clear taboo in these mostly conservative protestant communities. Rules of looking-seeing-watching-gazing govern horseplay—a woman's gaze on these all-male games and the male-to-male body-touching involved in noisy workspace throws being "just one of the guys" into question. Pam retaliates against sexual harassment not only by denying sex to other miners

but by identifying herself as "not sex in the mines" and "just one of the guys." Her masculine performance shields her from harassment but in effect leaves her separated from any identification with sexual pleasure of her own—as "not sex" (meaning, she didn't want to have sex in the mines, and she was ambiguously sexed as "not a lady" but not quite a male miner either) she has little room to identify herself in relationship to other men or women as a sexual being. Masculine and asexualized, her gaze and presence are perhaps not as threatening to men in the mines, and she is able to join in on horseplay as "just one of the men."

Pam said she enjoyed horseplay with Harley:

Pam: Now old Harley, he's a good boy.

Hannah: He is so great.

P: Yeah, Harley's all right
Yeah, he's a good guy to work with.
And uh / you's talking bout horseplay and stuff we used to get, like on
when I worked the second shift up there at Moss 4 and stuff we'd get in them water fights, in the summertime. (*laughs*)

H: Water fights?

P: Yeah on Friday nights?
You know we'd throw / gather up jugs of water?

H: Yeah.

P: And uh, on the main entrance,

H: Down in the mines?

P: yeah,

H: Oh my gosh!

P: we'd get them little bottles a water?
And uh / on Friday nights we'd have a big water fight comin out! (*both laugh*)
We'd drown it!
I'd get around there to the bathhouse I couldn't hardly get my clothes off I was (*both laugh*)
I'd be so wet!
But we'd have good times.

The feeling was mutual: Harley said that

Harley**:** If I got a choice to take a lady or a man, I'd pick the lady ever time.
You know what I mean.

> That woman [Pam] worked harder than them men.
> She can carry her—she was kinda like me…
> She was tough.
> Yes she was.
> Hey it didn't bother her, mud and water.

Harley would "pick a lady" who was just like him (a man, a miner) and *more* ("that woman worked harder than them men"). Tough, not bothered, and out-doing men at performing masculinity, she performed masculinity *with a vengeance* (to turn Mary Russo's phrase) to spin herself out of gendered classifications. Pam's identification as "not sex" allows her to participate in water fights without the threat of the game becoming a wet t-shirt contest for her.

Her tactic provides her pleasure and a place within horseplay, but it comes at the price of her claim on traditional "womanhood." Naturalized notions of womanhood have cultural capital in coal mining communities: whatever else it means to Earl to treat a woman "like a lady," it does mean respect. While Pam's achievement of ambiguity allows her to dance between the naturalized parameters separating men and women's work, she loses any claim to the pure, white, virginal construction of "womanhood"—and its accompanying respect—that her contemporaries may claim.

VI. Archaeology

Figure 18 Fossil of fern leaves from the coal mines. Fossil courtesy of Donald Mullins, private collection. Photo by the author.

Many coal miners view themselves as archaeologists and explorers, witnessing and recovering fossils from the carboniferous period, 354-290 million years old. Donald said he

had about 30 of these fossils just "laid up" in his home, like hoarded treasure. He would carry them out of the mines in his dinner bucket. The care and tenderness he took with these objects was remarkable—he had lacquered many of them to prevent oxidation and had taken them to an anthropologist at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, TN to have them identified and dated. One was identified as a Ginko leaf, which according to all known records was a tree growing, if at all, only in China during that period.

Figure 19 Fossilized remains of Ginko leaf found by Donald Mullins in a southern Appalachian coal mine. Fossil courtesy of Donald Mullins, private collection. Photo by the author.

Donald: I mean you're just like explorin all the time, you know…
And I'd been in the mines for, uh
oh, say 5 or 6 years and never seed a, trace maybe just a
hard fossil on the top like a fern?

Hannah: Yeah.

D: And, that'd be all you'd ever see.

H: Yeah.

D: And this was on Guess River in Norton…
And uh / they was, uh / it was just
I mean it was something to see.
The ones that you couldn't get out,
you know, you *couldn't* get out.

H: Yeah.

D: I mean, they / to imagine, this whole wall right here on top bein nothing but a covered in fossils of ever type that you could see.

H: Oh my gosh!

D: But they was so hard in the top.
And, I mean they'd be so beautiful.

H: Yeah.

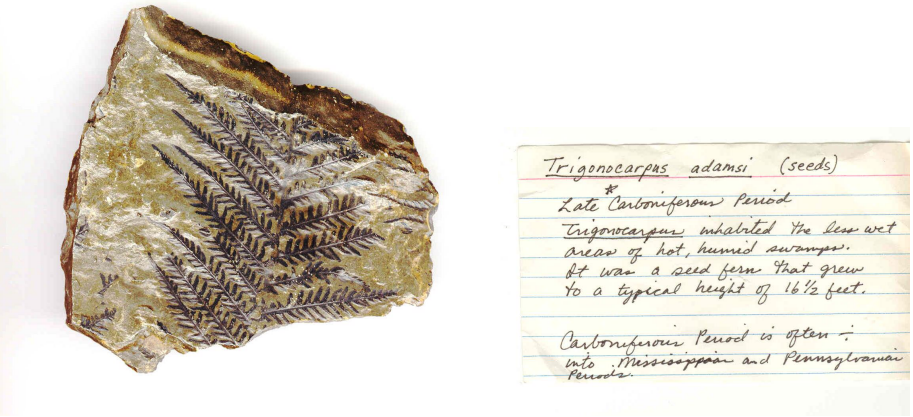
D: I mean but they was just like you'd painted em on there, I mean.
And a lot of em, / I know uh
one or two of them fossils in there I have drilled up in the top—say I'd
take my drill and drill up and it'd just drill a / inch or two around it?

H: Yeah.

D: Take me something and knock it out and bring it on home, you see?

H: Oh my gosh.

D: And uh / but uh, that's how I come about a lot of em. And I / a lot of em, uh
you didn't really have to work hard to get em out. I mean they was a layin there ready to fall
at ye, ye know what I mean.



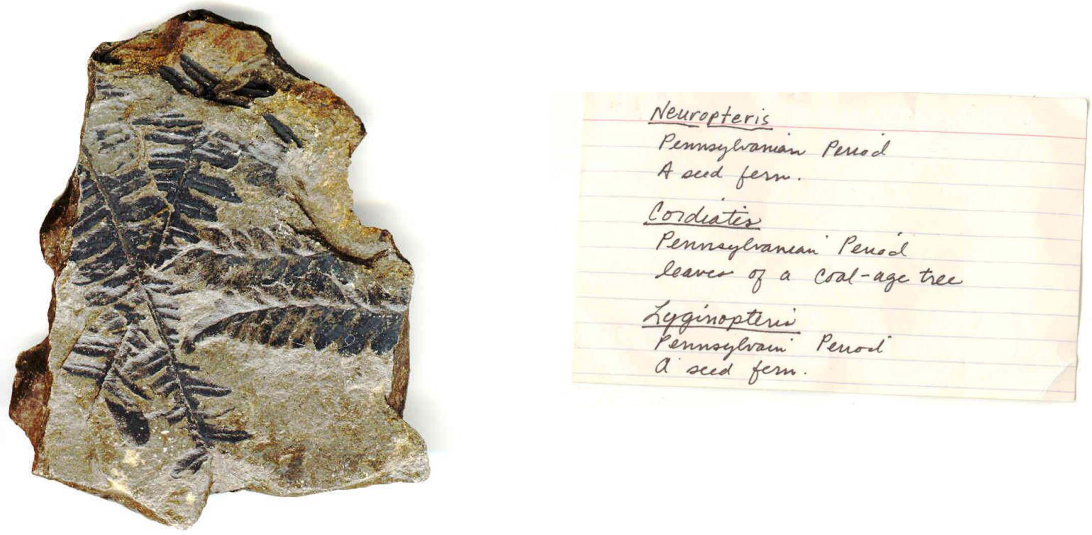


Figure 20 Assorted fossils collected by Donald Mullins with accompanying identification cards written by an unnamed professor at East Tennessee State University. Fossils courtesy of Donald Mullins, private collection. Photos by the author.

Fossils are also usually found in areas where there is "bad top," or more dangerous roof coverage, making stories of seeing these fossils and recovery of the fossils themselves a badge of pride for coal miners.

Donald: But now / when you get into this you, you was in, poor top, I mean.

Hannah: Mmm.

D: And, lot a times once you found these you'd be in / uh, low cover.

H: Mm hmm.

D: You might not have, a / hundred or hundred and fifty-foot cover on top of ye,
on top of the mountain.

H: Wow, ok.

D: And / seems like, uh, the less cover you got, the more chances you had to find fossils.

H: Really?

D: But you'd never find fossils somewhere that was good top.

H: Huh.

D: It was always about a rough a top that you could possibly get into…
…we'd be a pillarin when I'd get these, usually you'd be
the baddest top you could be in.

H: Yeah.

D: I mean it'd be water runnin in on ye and uh / just old rotten stuff…

In a place full of "old rotten stuff," Donald found treasures. Other miners confirmed that when they had seen or found fossils they were usually under "bad top." Donald becomes the triumphant hero of his own narrative. Like Earl, he recovers boon through the trials and struggles of "water runnin in on ye" and the dangers of working in "low cover," where roof falls are more common. The incentive of being an explorer—seeing and recovering fossils like an archaeologist—makes working in a "rotten" place more worthwhile and elevates the honor and prestige of their work. Trumping scientists at their own game, Donald claims a knowledge beyond the boundaries of academic journals or anthropological textbooks. If space is enacted place, as de Certeau says, Donald's work transforms an otherwise "rotten" place into scientific space to which he and *not* the university researcher is educated, qualified, and privileged enough to gain access.

Sometimes miners' roles resembled that of Indiana Jones in Raiders of the Lost Ark, the maverick scientist/lover/adventurer who walked, as Palmer said, in "places that nobody else would have been," pulled out the golden statue from the cave, and ran like the blazes as it "f[ell] in," after him:

Palmer: Well / to me, and and
I've been somewhere where nobody else has been / you know.

Hannah: Yeah.

P: When you take the coal out / they's never been a person walked on that ground.

H: Mm hmm.

P: And and / that's fascinatin to me.
It really was, I mean it.
I've been somewhere where nobody else has been.
I mean you, you, they walk on top of it, / but they never walked
in the middle, where where I was at.

H: Would you see, like, fossils down there?

P: Yeah, yeah and but I never did, think to keep none you know I, I did. I
you could see pictures, uh, looked like leaves? / Trees?
Snakes I've seen what looked like snakes you know what I mean…
But that, that's really what / you know fascinated me.
That I've been in places that nobody else would have been.

And when it falls in nobody else'll be back to see it.

"Fascinate" carries a triple meaning: capturing the interest of; irresistibly attracting; and paralyzing with fear (as with the victim of a snake) (Abate 208). Captured by, attracted to, and paralyzed under the powerful presence of this place and the fossils he found there, Palmer describes an irresistible pleasure found in bad top. Like "pictures" to Palmer, "like you'd just painted them on there" to Donald, fossils transform mining work into a tour of an art gallery that "nobody else'll be back to see."

VII. "That's What Funds and Fuel *Is* Up There"

In addition to the vital roles that blood, family, horseplay, and archaeology play in helping miners psychologically cope with lived dangers, the practical economics of life in mining towns like St. Charles and Nora name mining as the highest paying jobs around. Intertwined with Bill's story about his father introducing him to mining is the overriding reason that kept him going back: money.

Hannah: And did your father influence you later?

Bill: Why sure, that and the money
Situation, you know what I mean.
You know and and uh
you know it was something that was, there was, gonna be there. If there ain't no coal there, ain't no nothing over there.
That's what funds and fuel *is* up there.
And it just, it worked out good for me. I got outa school, a big coal boom's on.
Makin real money, and like I say you know
actually I was makin a hundred and 20 dollars a day you know, just / you know uh.

H: Wow.

B: I got outa school and uh
you know here in '75 went, went right to work on a strip job makin good money?

H: Mm hmm.

B: You know, and uh
then decided to go underground. They's a little lax period a time there, and then went down there and made a hundred and 20 bucks a day. And I was a little uh
19 year old!

H: Yeah.

B: You know what I mean, that's
they's people that, has worked all their life ain't made that kind a money.

According to a recent NPR broadcast following the Sago tragedy, miners currently can make upwards of $75,000 a year. In these miners' stories, money is almost always framed in terms of what it can do for miners' families—as Earl said, "You can say, 'I wouldn't a done it.' / Yes, when you've got a family, if you'd loved em…" Miners become complicit in the denial of the dangers of this place in face of hungry mouths at home and college bills to pay for their children's education.

When I talked with Earl after the Sago accident in January, 2006, he said that the mine should *never* have been allowed to stay open with over 200 violations, no matter how minor many of them may have been. *However*, he followed, every miner knows and accepts the dangers of explosions, roof falls, rib rolls, and the like when they begin work. He says, "it's just part of it." There is a certain fatalism in the way they describe these dangers, a sense of inevitability when miners die from black lung and rock falls. The sense of duty to take care of their families—in addition to the genuine pride many of them take in doing humanitarian work that brings electricity and energy to a nation that needs it—overpowers the felt sense of danger and transforms danger stories into adventure tales that are "just part of" mining and mining identity.

VIII. Summary

This chapter closely examined some of the dangers present in the mines and the complex ways that miners cope with these threats. The performative creation of normative "women's place" took many forms in and out of the mines: stories, jokes, looks, rites of initiation, sexual harassment and bodily avoidance. Women used these same performative acts to subvert male-dominated norms, including: physical retaliation (Pam's punch), stories (Pam's storied punch "through the face"), and jokes (Cat's questioning their "manly duties" at home). Women creatively "made do" with common objects transformed into powerful weapons, such as the paper and pen for the woman in Earl's story.

Men and women miners faced common threats of roof falls, black lung, and old works. Miners cope with these dangers through a shared understanding that mining is "in their blood," and that they even share a blood-connection with other miners who are "like a family" to them in the mines. Horseplay provides a means of releasing tension, bonding, and defining who is in and who is out of the mining family. Miners find 300 million year old fossils in the worst of mining conditions, making dangerous work akin to the sexy, scientific

adventures of Indiana Jones. Underlying all of these coping mechanisms is an abiding sense of devotion to their marital families and to the very notion of conservative family definitions and values. Miners prove this devotion by taking the "best paying job around" for the sake of physically, and ideologically, supporting these families.

CHAPTER 6: ETHNOGRAPHY DOWN IN A HOLE

On December 29, 2004, Donald arranged for me to go into a coal mine. His friends, Buckwheat and Ichabod, were my guides. Buckwheat is Donald's mining and hunting buddy, and Ichabod is the foreman in Deep Mine 36 in Norton, VA, where Buckwheat currently works. Donald was friends with the head, Mike, and Mike graciously allowed me to visit the mines. Although my visit was legal, as I signed the legal visitation forms and went through an hour of training in mining operations and safety with Ichabod, I have changed the names of some participants to protect their privacy.

Deep Mine 36 is a drift mine with seven-foot tall ribs on average. This mine was not a low wall experience; while I'm not claustrophobic, to be honest I was a little glad that I did not experience low wall mining. Perhaps with the camaraderie and coping mechanisms that other coal miners had described to me I would have a less fearful and "rabbity" attitude. My visit happened at the peak of my research, after I had been in conversation with 15 men and women coal miners for several months.

As a small child I stumbled over this term for "black lung" on a spelling test: pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanokoniosis. As a grown woman I embodied the material reality of that word through the ultimate test of putting my body in the location it signified. While I thought I understood the process of mining from miners' stories, going to the mines radically altered my embodied knowledge of mining culture. Emplacing my body in the mines deepened and broadened the questions I had asked up until this point. This chapter is an expanded journal entry from my experiences in the mines. It traces my trip into the mines through transcribed conversations, journaled descriptions, photos that I took and photos that Donald, Buckwheat, Ichabod, and Mike gave to me, and reflections after my trip into the dark.

I. Into the Dark

I drive up to Norton, VA. The wide six and four lane roads that lead out of Kingsport narrow into two, thin, tortuous lanes as I cross the Tennessee border

into Virginia. After 45 minutes zipping up and around two mountains and tooling behind exhaust-huffing coal trucks and low-riding flatbeds hauling freshly cut logs, I reach the Norton Wal-Mart. It is 8:00 a.m. I arrive on time, but it takes a few minutes to find Donald's blue Ford truck among the other trucks in the parking lot. Donald has brought his friend Buckwheat, who works at the mine where we are going—Buckwheat is giving up part of his vacation to take me into the mines this morning, after which he and Donald plan to get in some good fishing time.

Donald had arranged a few weeks ago for me to meet with a friend of his who is the head of a mine nearby, where Buckwheat worked. I pack up my tape recorder, small pad, pen, and disposable cameras, leave my car at the Wal-Mart, and get into the truck with Donald and Buckwheat. It takes us another 20 minutes over paved and then steep, graveled roads to reach Deep Mine 36. Donald stops at a radio box perched on a metal pole along a wide yet single-lane gravel road carved into the red dirt mountainside. He asks the voice on the other end if the road is clear—the electronically-mediated voice sounds like it's talking through a kazoo but sputteringly assures us that there are no coal trucks coming down from the mines that would block our drive. We drive up, and the gravel road dead ends in a wide cul-de-sac with three trailers of varying sizes. We park in front of the one with a wooden deck built into it—Mike, the head of the mine, meets me on the porch and introduces me to Ichabod, the mine foreman.

Ichabod takes me into the second slate-grey trailer for my mining training—Mike said my training was "required by law" and the same as what visiting CEO's and red hat or beginner miners would have. Training begins when Ichabod takes me around the long wooden table running almost the entire length of the trailer to a large map tacked to a cork board on the far wall.

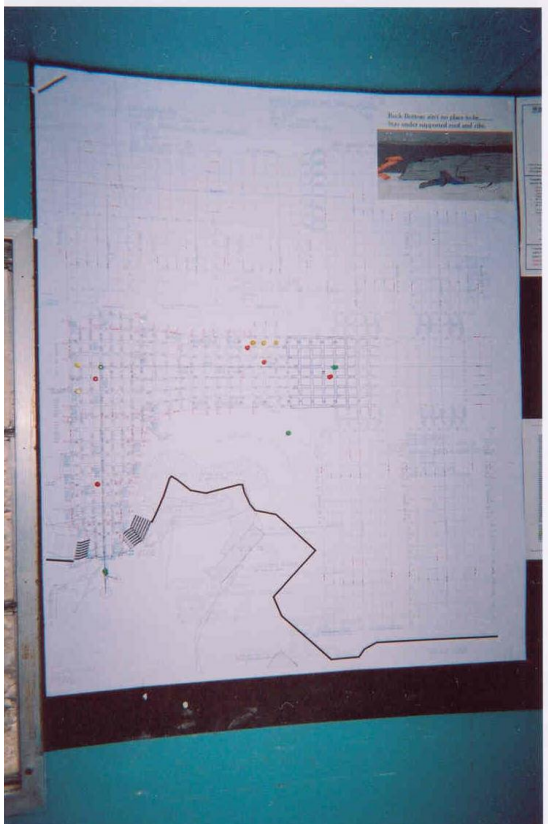


Figure 21 Current map of mining operations in Deep Mine 36. Mining technicians draw daily updates to mark in pencil how far miners have cut into the mountain or pulled back. The updates are filed on computer, and reprinted as new maps that are replaced in the training trailer replaced weekly. The cartoon tacked over the map is of a man crushed under a piece of rock. The caption reads: "Rock bottom ain't no place to be—work under supported roof and ribs." Photo by the author.

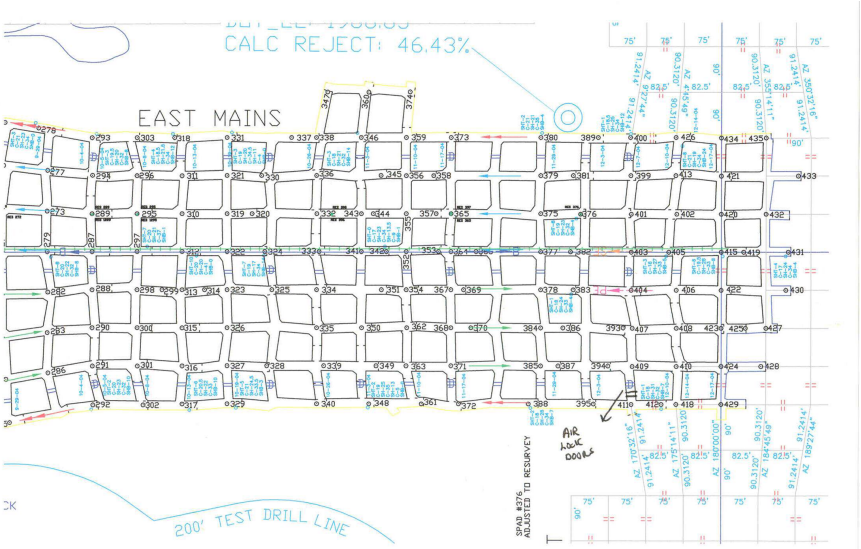


Figure 22 Close-up of the grid on the map to the right—this is from an slightly older version of the map. Copy courtesy of Mike.

The map is like a city street—it looks like the grid of New York City, with some markings in black, with green and pink lines outlining escape routes, entrances, and where they are advancing now. Ichabod explains how they are moving into the face at the right of the map—"by law" he's required to tell me how to escape in case of a roof fall or explosion:

Ichabod: This is the fan entry? This is the primary escapeway in case that
you run into danger we cut into some old mines or you have a mine fire or something?
That's ye travel your intake side this is—by law I've got to tell you this.
And this will be ye intake
come this way, and that's how you'll have to get outside if something happens.

Hannah: That's the escape route?

I: Right, your escapeway, primary escapeway secondary's your beltline cause it's a neutral entry, and then you got returns on both sides…
I'll explain these when you get up there.
And then all these is just power stations and pumps we got pumpin water out a the mines. It's kinda muddy and nasty up there at the face where we're at right now.
But I'll keep ye in the dry pretty much in the middle.

H: Ok. / I want to see what you all see.

I: Aaight, well you'll see it.

He seems both irritated and proud that "by law" he is required to tell me everything he does. These mining laws were, in many miners' words, "written in blood." Ichabod's performance is a proud tribute to the work and deaths of miners who sacrificed their bodies for the safety measures he talks about.

The performance is also put upon him by laws that run contrary to mining experience—he is required to tell me that ear plugs are important, even though he, Buckwheat and so many other miners know that they can hear danger more clearly and quickly without them.

He shows me a video next—this is a training video, but the introduction greets me as a visitor. "Underground Training Video"—Ichabod tells me this will teach me what "flags" mean. He says he's been doing this (training and mining) about 25 years. He points to the other videos he uses to teach "our red hats": Roof and Rib, Dust Hazards, Reminders for Safety Talk, and some older videos he calls "obsolete" are marked by hand. He says watching movies breaks the monotony in teaching—I think of my own classroom and agree… As action-packed music begins, Ichabod says "it's the company made this and then they made some more videos, the company did theirself. Makes it, better you know where the company did it." The video quality is good—it's been edited so that quick-paced shots jump from one mining job to the next, underscored by a synthesized soundtrack that sounds like it belongs in the movie "Rocky." The video is of other mines, but "we've got the same equipment. That's Deep Mine 38" he says. He says they're very strict with red hats now, you can't send them into certain places, especially at the face. "Welcome to Paramont Coal Company!" the voice says. His authoritative voice tells me that "federal law requires you to receive hazard training at each location you will visit. However, you only need to watch this video once, and site specific hazards may need to be addressed at other sites to ensure your safety and the safety of our employees." It's a confident voice. Ichabod says, "See that's laws" throughout this video, and he narrates alongside and against this video, saying "it's not really as dark as you'd think," brighter than it shows up in the video. He tells me his name again: Jeff Cantrell, but everybody's got nicknames in the mines: Head, Ichabod, Buckwheat.

As we have this conversation about his real name (the nickname) that he got when he played high school football, the video voice drones on that we should "observe all traffic patterns, provide wide way for moving trucks…obey speed limit signs" when driving and "use the posted CB channel" to alert others of you're arrival. We talk about where I'm from—I gain clout as a native because I'm from nearby Kingsport—as the video talks about "reporting all fires." Again, the burden of the law on him to teach me about this: really, this is bullshit—if there was a fire, everyone would know about it because it would come roaring past multiple people.

The video says that I may need to step over cables attached to a piece of equipment, and to "watch the top for loose rock, and remain clear of them"—quite a contrast from the bad top that we went under at the end, and Ichabod pulled at these loose rocks to get at a fossil. The announcer tells us that ribs may roll and crush you. The confident voice, the modern rational voice. This reminds me of the video explaining Donzil Cutlip's narrative—his video moved

from the surreal experience of his narrating the fall, the 14 hours under flesh- and bone-crushing rock…then the authoritative voice of modern rationality, explaining how horseplay was the cause of the accident, that Donzil wasn't paying attention to what was going on. "It's all so easy to explain" says the man's modern voice—but it isn't! Donzil's wife breaks down into silence, incoherence, tears take over—she cannot respond because the loss is so great, the incomprehensibility of her husband's body. In marriage the two become one, and her body now (as his) is lacerated, chopped up, crushed and amputated. These voices crowd into my ears as I watch my training video: the masculine, rational explaining voice; the feminine, tear-choked voice of incommensurability in the wife's silence.

I'm taken next door to another building, where they loan me "Josh's boots," which fit snugly under my 4 pairs of socks. Buckwheat loans me a pair of his coveralls with reflective tape on them—orange stripes and reflective tape mark my arms and down the sides of my pants. I pull them on, stand up, and the too-huge pants fall to the floor. Ichabod laughs as he makes me a belt of black electrical tape. Donald has brought me a belt with his social security number and name on it, and I use his hat, covered over with stickers and his name. The shirt has the name "Buckwheat"—he later tells other people that I'm Little Buckwheat.

I finally have a nickname.

I feel somehow closer to this community already. Buckwheat and Ichabod tell me that they usually just wear long johns underneath their pants—I have worn blue jeans, and they are tight around my ankles. I want to put them overtop the knee-high boots, but Buckwheat pushes them down into the boot tops: "trouble of it is, you put your clothes over top of it and then you step in a big water hole, you know…" These water holes can be up to your shoulders at times, as Buckwheat later said he has experienced in low coal. Today we were only up to mid-calf in the mud or water, but we saw some places where the water had flooded up to the face, dripping down from the roof in drips, trickles, and streams coming out of the roof bolts. This probably would run up to my waist.

They give me my borrowed cloth belt to put on over my electrical tape one, with the rescuer attached—one hour's worth of oxygen strapped to my hip. They drape the cord and my lamp over my neck, almost like a stethoscope. I say "I feel ready," and I do—the suiting-up makes me feel more prepared. We dress for the occasion, and the dress changes me—I am heavy around the waist, more rooted to the ground. I am a wider load. I have a thicker skin with this equipment and clothing on, and movement is stiffer. My feet are like hooves, steel-toed, and they move with one force—ankles barely bending, solid thumps sound out the ground where I step. My hands are bare, and

they feel naked peeking out from this protective suit. Miners who work at the face have gloves that they will wear as they operate the machinery.

Later in the mines, we saw the shards of glass-like rock that have fallen down or threaten to fall from the ceiling—they are shaped like flint-carved arrow heads, smooth and slick, shiny translucent gray, with clean edges as sharp as a razor. When these fall, Ichabod said later, they can cut off your finger or slice your hand. I know that hunters will build stands in the trees, waiting hours for game to pass underneath and take aim for the perfect shot. I wonder if these hunters—and many miners are hunters—ever feel like the mines themselves, waiting patiently, the thuds of footfalls calling attention to the people below, throwing loose rocks down like bullets to sever bone and flesh, pierce skin.

Figure 23 Changing rooms. Photo by the author.

We go into the head's office and sign forms—I list my social security number, full name, and check that I have received training from Ichabod, and "sign my life away." The Head asks me if I've seen Spongebob and says that they call Ichabod "Patrick," and tells Patrick to take good care of me in there. Ichabod says that he'll take care of me like I was his own—and he did.

As we walk closer to the drift mouth, Ichabod tells me about the belt. It extends out of the mine entrance hole like an arching backbone, stretching upward 3 stories over our heads as we walk beneath it.

Figure 24 Outside Deep Mine 36. The beltline stretches up to the tipple, which spews coal into trucks (off frame to the right). Photo by the author.

In continuous motion, the belt carries coal from the interior of the mine and shoots it out over the edge behind us, emptying tons of chunks of coal into the coal trucks below.

Ichabod: Course there's no smoking in the mines, you know that.

Buckwheat: No, not a cigarette lighter or nothing.

Hannah: Yeah.

I: And I didn't get you no earplugs but
you don't, you don't want no earplugs you want to hear everthing don't ye? (*laughs, all laugh*)

H: Exactly! (*laughs*)

B: I don't wear em, I can't stand em…

I: They're good to wear if you get used to it but I can't hear. / I can't I, I don't' like em.
We'll be riding the track in,

this is like I say this is the fan over there—the neutral and secondary escapeway,
that's ye beltline.
Ye coal comes out and goes into this rock separator, separates the rocks, see the big rock over

there, middle rock…
Right there's ye left return I was telling ye about?
That's the right return, I'll take ye over here and show ye the fan.

It's a huge blue metal covered structure: a rectangular tunnel connected to an offset half-silo that curves to the right. The silo holds the unexposed fan.

Figure 25 Ventilation fan and large duct connecting fan to the interior of the mines. Photo courtesy of Mike.

We pass underneath the loud belt. Ichabod says lots of people get their hands caught in the belt. He talks as he takes me over to the battery powered man trip.

Ichabod: That's the explosion house, weak wall explosion house in case ye mine blows up?
It blows that out, but ye fan's sittin here out a the way (*he points to the silo on the right*)
That way you can come back and…get the air back to the mines, that's why the fan is offset over here…
This is where we drive it from—get in there and set ye down hunker down up there.
Go ahead and sit down on ye knees or wherever. (*we sit in the man trip machine*)
We've got cushions and stuff sat on but, we just rough it,
don't we Buck? (*Buckwheat and Ichabod laugh*)

H: About how many men do you fit on here?

I: Aah, about six on thisn and then we've got diesel big ens right there see right there?
Them's diesel man trips they've got diesel motors in em.

H: Oh gosh…

I: And then right straight behind ye [are the] flat cars. See that's what we haul supplies in on…

H: I've heard about diesel fumes, with the blue smoke?

I and B: Yeah, I hate that.

I: These batteries, they don't smoke none.

We get on the man trip and begin to head into the mines. You can hear the sound of the metal wheels going over the metal track. Ichabod asks me to put on my glasses.

Hannah: About how low does it get in here?

Ichabod: Aah, it's pretty high. / Seven foot.

Buckwheat: 10 foot.

I: Now we have worked in like this right here haven't we Buckwheat? / You crawl around.

B: I worked 30 inches.

I: And right there's phones, where we communicate with outside and stuff, blue light and stuff when they holler at ye? These are air-lock doors, to keep ye air from comin out?

Buckwheat jumps out of the car and closes the large metal doors—there are 2 sets of them, like a formal entryway on a grand old house. I look up and saw white-covered walls and ceiling, and in the ceiling what look like round metal washers with bolts—I hadn't expected the bolts to have washers on them, and certainly not the thin saucer-shaped metal pieces that were suspended above our heads.

Figure 26 Inside Deep Mine 36. Rails for the man trip run along the center of this photo. The belt is to the right, conveying towards the viewer. The ceiling is coated in white rock dust, and some "pie pans" or "pizza pans" hang down, attached to the roof bolts which support the roof. Photo courtesy of Mike.

Ichabod: Right there's your roof bolts that's what hold ye top up?
When you bolt it they talk about…
Your miner comes in and cuts, 20 foot, and then your roof bolter comes in there and bolts all of this.

Hannah: Now all of that, white stuff is that rock dust?

I: Rock dust.
And then uh / like I say they bolted them five-foot bolts with a 12 foot uh cable bolts, up there them big bolts on cable right there?
That's another 12 foot cable bolt, I'll show it to ye when you get up there.

My glasses have begun to fog up—every time I try to put them on they do this. I decide I'm better off without them and "promise to be careful." Ichabod agrees that "they sure do fog up when the temperature changes." I hear grinding, pounding noises as the car wheels go up and down over the rolling track. We pass a first aid station, with a red cross hanging from a printed sign. We pass signs, some printed and some hand-painted.

Buckwheat: You come in like this and you'll spread out.

Ichabod: You start in from outside with just four [sections]?
And then you get in outside and it opens up.
Opens up to eight entries or whatever. You'll put six, / seven.
That's your cross-cuts and stuff, that's how you mine over lots a coal
you know what I mean?
This is called pillar blocks—this is what holds your mountain up, it's
still, till you leave?
Then you mine up this way.
Then you mine across.
You mine across and you've got headings all the way across there and then you connect these "breaks" up, as we call em.

We hear grinding metal noises, pounding of the belt beside us.

Ichabod: And then then we'll, and then we'll start blockin the coal what you're seein?
What holds your mountain up. (*Buckwheat laughs*)

Buckwheat: Just like city blocks.
yeah it goes all the way, like a city block.

We turn my light on. Buckwheat laughs at talk of the mountain falling down—laughing in the face of danger and impossibility.

Ichabod: That right there is additional support we put in to hold the roof up.

Hannah: Is that cribbing?

I: Yeah that's cribbing! / You're right.
That's timbering right here (*this is the single wooden beam on the right of the picture below*)
that's called cribbing. (*these are the stacked beams in the picture that stretch to the left*)

Figure 27 Cribs supporting the mine roof. A lone timber stands to the right. Photo courtesy of Mike.

His voice picks up as if he's surprised—my little knowledge of miners' language leads to other terms:

Ichabod: Then we got they've got this new stuff out now:
beams and jacks—they calls them Heisman beams and jacks—
see what I'm sayin, it holds ye roof up when you got bad roof.
See that jack a bendin right there a little bit?

Hannah: Yeah. (*pause*)

I: See that mountain sets down / a little bit, and that jack's bending.

The jack at the top acts as if it's sticking its hip out, buckling out.

Ichabod: Then we've got them on the other side.
Then these right here they call them uh
pizza pan jacks is what we call em they call em, Heisman Jacks.

Hannah: What do they call em?

I: Pizza pan, we call em pizza pan, where they got that big pan on top of em? (*laughs*)
See it right there? (*he backs the car up so we can look more closely*)
See it's got that big round pan on it?
We call them pizza pans too. / That's a pizza pan jack.
But really that's called it's called roof caps and that's called a
Heinsman Jacks (*all laugh*)
I mean you know the proper word.
Coal miners got slang, ain't they Buck? (*Hannah laughs*)

B: Yeah.

I: Somebody'd say, "Go over there and get me a seven-foot
pizza pan jack," you know, you know what they're sayin.
You'd say, "A Heinsman," I don't know what you're talking about…

H: Is there coal on the belts, are they workin it now?

I: Yeah they're workin it, they may be movin the miner.
See they got to move the miner from place to place.
Like you'd be, you could be cutting right here (*he points to one shaft)* and you'd have to back up and move ye miner and
go through there (*points to another shaft*) and you go up over there and cut it and then you'd have to back up, / go on over.

He says they're allowed to cut 20 foot wide and 20 foot deep. The power box is over there, that's what turns these drives and stuff.

Ichabod: This is called ye belt drive this / this is when ye turn, you know you can't
you can't bow these belts around so you got to stop and make 90 degree turns
and set another belt drive that pulls that belt and then it dumps on that belt.

We get out and trudge across to the belt—it's curved inward like a V. Stepping on the ground, it feels like ash. Behind where I stand, one of the ribs has rolled. As we walk closer to where an inactive belt is, we see a drill machine called a "walk-through." The drone of the belt fades in the background, and I sit in an unidentified mining machine.

Ichabod: That'll give you an idea of what kind of equipment that they've set in and worked and
and how, tight quarters it is.

Hannah: Gosh it is, and with this,
wide thing you're carrying around on your hips. (*I look at my rescue pack*)

I: Right. / What do you think about me 2 hundred and 60 pounds? (*Hannah laughs*)

Buckwheat: You get up in a place and they ain't
and they ain't got no air. / You can't breathe.
And then you can't see for sweat.

Figure 28 Photo of Hannah in mining gear sitting inside mining machine. Photo by Ichabod and Buckwheat.

We walk back to the beltline. Ichabod says people can get lost if they get away from the track or the belt. He says you can get turned around in the big mines, but he's never gotten lost.

Ichabod: Anyway this is rock dust right here this is what rock dust is.
(*he points to large, rectangular, brown paper-covered bushels stacked to the left of the man-trip track—he also points to the ceiling, which is apparently covered in the white chalk-like dust)…*
Yeah we've got machines that spray it and rock dust machines and them in the face they'll throw it by hand.
Well, you'll see.

Hannah: I'm sorry I just realized I'm shining that light straight in your face, I'm sorry

I: That's alright, everybody does that (*laughs*)…
I'm used to that, I've been training them red hats.

We get back on the cart and travel on. We pass by a dusting machine.

Ichabod: See them ribs right there?
Some a that dump out on you, / you're history.

Buckwheat: You're mashed.

I: See that's, that's broke already?

See we got them timbers and stuff against it but / you still got to watch it.

B: This here's like takin a big old piece of cake and you know you slice it and it just slabs over.

H: Yeah.

B: And it falls out.

Figure 29 This photo was given to me by the mine head—it shows a rib roll that happened earlier in a different part of Deep Mine 36. The thick chunks of coal and rock peeled off the mine wall to the right and tumbled to the ground, like a slice of cake plopping down when it's cut. The plastic sheet to the left is a curtain, used to control air flow in the mines. The strata of rock and coal are apparent in the mine wall. Photo courtesy of Mike.

He says the concrete blocks stacked up are for braddishes. He points the neutral blocked off with braddishes and the intake off to our right. You can escape in the intake tunnel," that's where you run to" or through this neutral if the belt's not on fire. I look at the ribs that have rolled—a large jagged wall of coal and rock broken away from the pillar and leaning against wooden cribs. These ribs look like they're about to fall down on us. We talk about the mountain "taking weight," as evidenced by the jacks buckling under and "feeling" the weight on them. I also ask about waiting for the mountain to sit down.

Ichabod: Now that's pillar falls,
when you ride the panel up?
They call this, you know minin and then secondary mining is when you pillar back.
Uh, you'll you'll ride up to your boundaries of where your property line's at.
And then you'll come back out and then you'll pull these blocks out that's, left,
and they call that pillarin.
And then you see when you pull these blocks out, they ain't nothing holdin your mountain,
and then your mountain'll fall.
And they call that pillarin. (*I suddenly realize that this tunnel won't be here in another few months—they will remove the pillars to my right and left and let the mountain sit down on the very spot in which we now sit.*)
And now you got plans, you do that and certain ways to do that to make it fall right.
Sometimes it don't work like you want it! (*he laughs*)
Does it Buck?

Buckwheat: No. (*he's smiling but not laughing*)

I: You get miners caught and, stuff like at.

They're "driving" now, but they'll pull back and cut in later. The long sound of the belt passing by us as we go further in. He points out the end of the belt and its "tailpiece." He asks if I've been to Dollywood, and then takes the car faster, we dip downward and it's like a roller coaster ride. The wind blows quickly in my face—it's moist and cool. The coal seam dipped down and then came up, and they followed the coal when they mined.

Ichabod: This is where the coal come down and dipped and turned back uphill on us.
Coal went down real fast and come up?

Hannah: And you all just followed it up?

I: Yeah we just follered it.

H: Now is that something that they can tell you from outside?

I: No. / Now, now they drill them core drills but they don't tell you everything.
Like I've hit stuff that they don't tell you, you know what I mean? (*laughs*)

H: Now what does that feel, I mean you all are the first people to see this.

I: Yeah.

H: What does that feel like?

I: I don't know. It kinda amazed me when I first started minin them fossils and stuff?

H: Yeah.

I: When I was little, you know young? 18 year old?
Cause you hear about it in school and everthing.
And / when you come here and see it you see fossils and leaves and stuff and you say, "Hey man, that's right!" you know
cause it's been pressed out, and I might be right up on top of it.
Seems like at home you get used to it.

H: Have you seen fossils up here?

I: Yeah I have, maybe I'll find one a them for you…
We've got some a them red hats that take them fossils out.
This is the end of the line, this is the end of the track.
We'll take her up to the belt, Buck, I guess.

I don't need the coat that I brought—it's very comfortable and cool. We wade through the pile of coal that leads up to the belt. The floor is busted up with holes imperceptibly cloaked by darkness and water.

Ichabod: There's people wonders why coal miners bodies are wore out and broke down, you know! (*we laugh*)

There are 400-600 volts running through the cables that connect to the belt line. He says he will treat me like he would a red hat. A dozer-like scoop comes by to shovel more coal over to the belt. There are many working parts: a large wheel of teeth grinds up coal into smaller bits,

Figure 30 Conveyer belt guiding the coal towards the wheel of grinding teeth. This camera angle points towards the mine opening. Photo courtesy of Mike.

spits the coal out the other end, and dumps it on the chain;

Figure 31 On the other side of the grinding wheel, the chopped coal lands onto the moving belt. This camera angle points towards the face of the mines (away from the mine entrance). Photo courtesy of Mike.

the chain takes the coal to the belt,

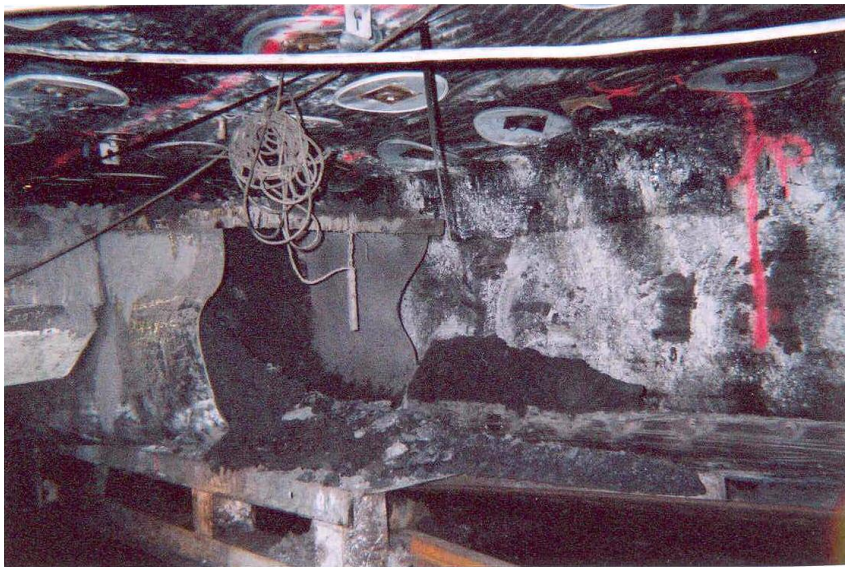


Figure 32 Taking a step back from the above photo, this photo shows the ground coal moving along the beltline. Photo courtesy of Mike.

and the belt takes the coal outside to the trestle; the trestle arches into the sky and dumps coal into the trucks, many of which I passed on narrow and winding two-lane roads as I drove to the mine this morning (Fig. 24).

Ichabod: You tell them a woman's in here and everbody runs on over.

Hannah: It's dustier here.

I: Yeah that's your intake.
Can you tell the difference in the air?

H: Oh my gosh you can feel it! (*I can feel a cold, fresh breeze at my back as we walk into the next tunnel*)

I: Feel that cool air didn't ye?
That's the roof drill boltin the top do you want to go look at it?

H: Yeah!

We go over to the face.

Ichabod: You're right at the face, there, you're where no man has ever been!

Figure 33 Looking into the face. The miner machine has just been pulled back from this area, and roof bolters have recently installed the roof bolts. The area has not yet been sprayed with white rock dust—notice the score marks from the miner machine's sharp teeth on the face and mine ceiling. Ichabod said that the night shift or hoot owl usually sprays rock dust each night.

We go to watch the miner cut the coal. As we approached the miner from behind, the cloud of coal and rock dust grew heavier. Cool, damp air around me, cold wind at my back. The air is thick with sulfur smell—like rotten eggs, only hotter and more acidic. I'm introduced to the man running the miner.

Ichabod: She's goin to college.
She's gonna show em where the roof is at way back in the coal fields.
She's gonna give us a big uplift name.

H: (*laughs*) Try to.

I: We may make it to the top one day! (*laughs*)

Miner man: No, we're gonna stay on the bottom.

I: I've been here for 25 year.
25 more ain't gonna kill me.

They try to get me to drive the remote miner, but I decline. There was an urge for them to let me try out the machines, to teach me in the same way as other miners such as Earl said he was taught, through a mentor and just being thrown into this space and expected to dive right into learning the machines.

The shuttle car comes in towards us, and we have to back up to watch him come and load it. We step back over the cable—it's thick and snake like. Ichabod gently puts his hands on my shoulders and back to guide me—he says he is not flirting with me but just wants to make sure I know where he needs me to go to be safe. His hands are reassuring, his touch a safety cord leading me on. I never felt anything inappropriate was happening—this physical contact was so reassuring.

We watch the miner cut into the face, and the coal comes down off a belt on the miner and into the shuttle car, which later backs out away from the miner. It's so dusty, I can barely see where the miner man is. There is a plate over the miner machine's spinning head, it serves as a barrier for the spitting coal. He points out the ribs, how they are ragged. You can just see where it has split off from the side and hear the grinding sounds of the miner cutting.

Figure 34 Commercial photo: miner working in low coal with remote-controlled miner machine. This is the only photo in this chapter which was not taken inside Deep Mine 36.

We go to where the pinner man is bolting. You can hear bolts clanking on the ground. The two men talk to one another. They are focused. The younger man has a beard. During the day they throw rock dust on the face by hand, and then the hoot owl shift sprays the walls with coal dust. Ichabod picks up a glue stick.

Ichabod: It's got glue in the end of it / right there.
They put that up in there and that busts it. It's like a hardner on one side?
And then that mixes spins and mixes it and that's what sets it up,
that's what sets on the end of ye bolt?
And then see like that one right there? (*we watch as the pinner man fits the glue bolt into the hole he has just drilled*)
He'll hold it till the glue can set up.

Figure 35 A pinner man drills a hole in the ceiling for a roof bolt. The flat orange "feet" press against the mine roof to support it while the pinner man stands in this newly-mined tunnel. Photo courtesy of Mike.

In the next section, up left the pinner men worked under a T-bar—they worked in tandem at one point, drilling at the same time, then inserting glue sticks—one side glue the other side a concrete-like thickener of some sort, two strips of gray and whiteish cream encased in a plastic tube. When the man puts the bolt up, the glue bolt and bolt itself seem to get sucked up into the top, and the machine drills it on in. There's the strong smell of metal here. The top here is not that bad. The older man drives the t-bar—the machine looks like a man on his back with feet frog-legged up in the air. One foot, then the other, sets up into the roof to support it. They drill in tandem, metal whirring and grinding noises emanating equally from both ends of the machine.

Ichabod: When it gets loud, you know they're in hard top.
When it's loud, it's sandstone, hear that drill how it makes that noise?
That's where it's sandstone top.
You can tell when it's hard.
Then when they break through that sandstone then and it gets soft.

At about this time the loud, screeching, grinding stops. The two men move more independently now, putting the bolts into the top: "You drill ye hole, put your bolt in…"

Ichabod: See he's got his'n drilled he's already done sawed his bolt.
But see Root put his [bolt] in now. (*I see "Root"'s name on his hat*)
You drill ye hole, put ye bolt in it, see you put the glue in it?
And then go.
See what he's doin? That that's what he was doin when we were talking to him, was putting his bolt up.
See he puts glue in the hole.
And he's got his wrench on now.
And now he's gonna push, push the load up.
And the glue's gonna bust.
And now he's gonna fan it—
mix it up. See: spin it and mixin that glue up.
And now he's putting pressure on it, and the glue dries
And it does, in seconds it does, dries in seconds.
(*pause—we watch Root drill the glue and bolt into the roof*)
There you go!

Figure 36 A pinner man runs a roof bolt into the ceiling. Notice the boxes of rosin glue sticks in the foreground and a new pizza pan washer in the bottom right corner. Photo courtesy of Mike.

We wait for a man to pass in a shuttle car. I get my bearings: a cable that powers the mine sits in a small pond of water. Back there's the dinner hole; it's cold down there. The man running the shuttle car can't see us from this

side, and we have to watch out for him. When I sat in the walk-through drill machine, it was impossible to see on the other side of that machine.

We walk back further in, to a section where a miner—a monster of a miner—is cutting through rock and not coal. There is a lug-lug-lug sound, where the miner cuts rock out of the bottom. Sparks come off of this machine.

Buckwheat: It looks like a big barrel of, fire sometimes…
Hey you got carbon in them bits.

Figure 37 Drill bit from the spinning head of the mining machine. Life-size image. Drill bit courtesy of Bill Buchanan. Photo taken by the author.

The curtains hung between the pillars keep ventilation going. I can feel a breeze, from behind me, and he tells me that there is a vent where the other miner is. Then the air splits with “split air” and comes to this side and the other side, and you’ve got 2 returns.

Buckwheat: And then they got that main intake you get in that in cold weather it, it—

Hannah: It's freezing.

B: It's miserable.

H: And then when you're wet—

B: It'll freeze your eye, it'll freeze ye nose holes together. We we've had people tape ye faces up with rags and all things like that.

I'm reminded of a man who was driving a shuttle car to the belt earlier. He had a turban of t-shirts bundled on his head and a camouflage piece of jersey over his nose and mouth. Buckwheat hollers up to someone up at the face to say he is going fishing today. We walk up to where the miner is.

Ichabod: Right, right here is your face area see that's where your coal, starts, that's as far as we've mined right here…
this whole mountain everthing ye see is coal this is what we're minin, makin these square blocks, see.
You see he's cutting up, up a heading up over there.
And then this heads up, and then cut this through. (*he points to the wall of coal to our left*)
And go in and cut into that place over yonder and you'll make a square block of coal…
That'll be your pillar blocks.

Buckwheat: We're drivin right now.

Hannah: It smells different here.

I: Well, water and sulfur.
See that's sulfur in that coal. You can smell sulfur real bad over at that miner didn't ye?
You picked that up real quick, how'd you know that?

H: (*laughs*) I've been talking to people! / I pay attention!

I: Well boy you sure do!

We walk through in a place where they have already mined out the coal but haven't cut through to create a pillar. There is a pile of coal at the face that hasn't been scooped yet. They point out a killerbottom.

Ichabod: See that where there's a little ring goin around right there?
See that's coal / that's growed up in there somehow or another.
And see how that's coal over here, see how thick it is?
That's what falls out, and hurt people.
We call em killerbottoms

He hands me a chip of the ceiling that has fallen down

Buckwheat: See how slick that is right there?

Ichabod: See that?
Slick as a baby's ass.
Pardon my (*laughs*) language there that's what I always say!

B: Slicker than a baby's tail.

I: It's like glass.
See and that rock don't stick to that where it's so slick,
that's where it'll fall…

H: And what is that [rock]?

I: That's just old slate rock…

The rock is so smooth, and sharp too—it'll cut your hand. Ichabod tells me miners at the face have metatarsal gloves to protect their hands and wrists.

We "boogie around" a little bit more and he points to the face: "That's virgin coal over there, where no one has ever been before." They expect to go back another mile. It's about 340 to 390 feet above us to the surface right here. He says he doesn't think about it anymore, just like "walkin in your house, to us" and to Buckwheat it's "safer than on the highway."

Ichabod: It's just, you do it for so many years you just
you know, you see it and you learn it, to respect it, I mean.
And you've, seen how it acts when it does fall. And mother nature I mean that's just
you know that's just the way it is.
See you pick something out?
You take something out, and this mountain wants to set down you weaken it. It wants to set down, you know, you've just gotta work with it, you know.

He says that the mountain "wants" to sit down—it <u>wants</u>. You work <u>with</u>—not just in—it. Buckwheat says it's safer in here than it is driving around in Kingsport. We walk through curtains to get to the next break.

Hannah: Now do you ever see the methane, bubbling up or anything?

Ichabod: Yeah over there at '26 I did.
It was real gassy.

Buckwheat: Deep Mine Seven. / Did you work at Seven?

I: Yeah hit'd bubble out just like,

B: Yeah you could hear it, "Ssssss…"

I: yeah you could hear it.
You could take a spotter and detect it.

A spotter detects methane with a digital reader, also reading oxygen, methane, carbon dioxide. A man comes over and shows a methane detector. Ichabod says that the mining machines also have a "sniffer" on them. We walk through over to a machine, and I pick up a smooth piece of the ceiling that has fallen down. I imagine it falling, splitting my skin. He asks me what else I want to see, and I say everything. We've seen the miner, drill

bolt/pinner man, and we look later for the scoop. I tell them that they must be so in tune with that place, and they say you have to pay attention: "A lot of times people get to thinking about family problems, divorce…but that's when they get hurt." This is a demanding space; it demands attention.

Ichabod: But most a the time it'll warn ye now, won't it Buck?
Like a place'll start bellyin down or hit'll start dribbling.

Hannah: And where would it start dribbling?

I: Well sometimes on the ribs, down the ribs.
And sometimes it'll belly in the middle, the top'll start comin down in the middle.

Buckwheat: Yeah if you're payin attention you can hear it or you'll see it. I mean
if it starts dribbling it'll start, look like it's supposed to snow or something.
Just have little fine stuff'll start fallin most a the time.

I: Sometimes it'll work in the middle, and sometimes these bolts'll break and sometimes you can hear em they'll go, "BONG, BING!" And sometimes they'll pop, fly out a the hole.

B: Yeah they'll break that whole plate off there.

I: It'll break in half and then see this all this'll shoot out, half ye bolt?

H: Oh my gosh!

I: Sometimes it does, sometimes it don't.
Different stuff you know.
Sometimes the ribs will start poppin, pretty bad then and that's where it's tryin to break off.

Ichabod says that in this place there have been two rib rolls. There were other injuries: one man was trying to get steel out of a hole and steel fell out and cut his finger, another hurt his leg stepping in a hole, and others had pulled muscles and bloodshot eyes. Getting mud in your eyes is serious—Buckwheat was putting up cable and got mud dripping in his eyes. I notice there is no running water supply to wash it out.

He turns on the miner and brings it forwards and backwards, swings what looks like a giant tail, which I think is its own belt to load the coal onto the shuttle car. It looks like a dragon. The whirr of the motor runs in the background.

Ichabod: Back, used to in the mines you'd have to sat on it, back years ago.

Hannah: And didn't they have a, canopy?

I: A canopy yeah, back years ago.
They've still got some in service, though, but
everbody's got remotes anymore.
Yeah that's what me and Poodle trained our teeth on, I'd say. Come over here Poodle!

Poodle: What's that? (*he walks over*)

I: She said I thought they'd have them canopies over em. (*all laugh*)
But we used to have them didn't we?

P: They was tough to set on.

I: Used to have to set on em and hit'd bounce and you up there with more dust and the noise, you know cause see now [with the remote controlled miner machines] you can back away from it if you're in bad top or whatever, you know.

H: Yeah, you're safer.

I: It's a lot safer to get away from the machine.

B: (*sardonically)* Boy I've missed this place. (*Poodle laughs*)

We go over to look at the water—our echoes are more cavernous here. The ceiling is high where the miner has been cutting. As we walk away from it, Ichabod turns around to holler at us, asking me if the mud is pulling on my boot. It is. My feet are difficult to move. We walk in the left return, where you "don't want to be" if there were a fire, because this is where the dust and gas would blow through. Our footsteps sound wet, liquid. My body lowers into the mush at my feet. I feel myself sinking into the ground, conjoining with this place.

Figure 38 Miners walking through watery coal ankle-high inside Deep Mine 36. Photo courtesy of Mike.

I look at “all those little puddles,” as Buckwheat says. It is so black in here, looking down into that tunnel, as if it goes on forever, or stops abruptly. I cannot tell. Space is amorphous here. Boundaries shift. I hear drops of water in the distance, like a faucet dripping slowly into a tub full of water. Still water. The sound gets louder, a stream, and Ichabod tells me to wade over further towards the noise. To get to where he leads me, we have to walk close to the ribs, and I can see the jagged wall has separated from the rest of the pillar to my left as I pass by it, nearly touching it. I keep my hands to my sides and look up at it—the rib is bigger than me, about a foot taller, and almost a foot thick. We follow the sound until our headlamps find a thick trickle of water pouring out from a bolt in the ceiling—the water falls eight feet and then crashes into the pool below.

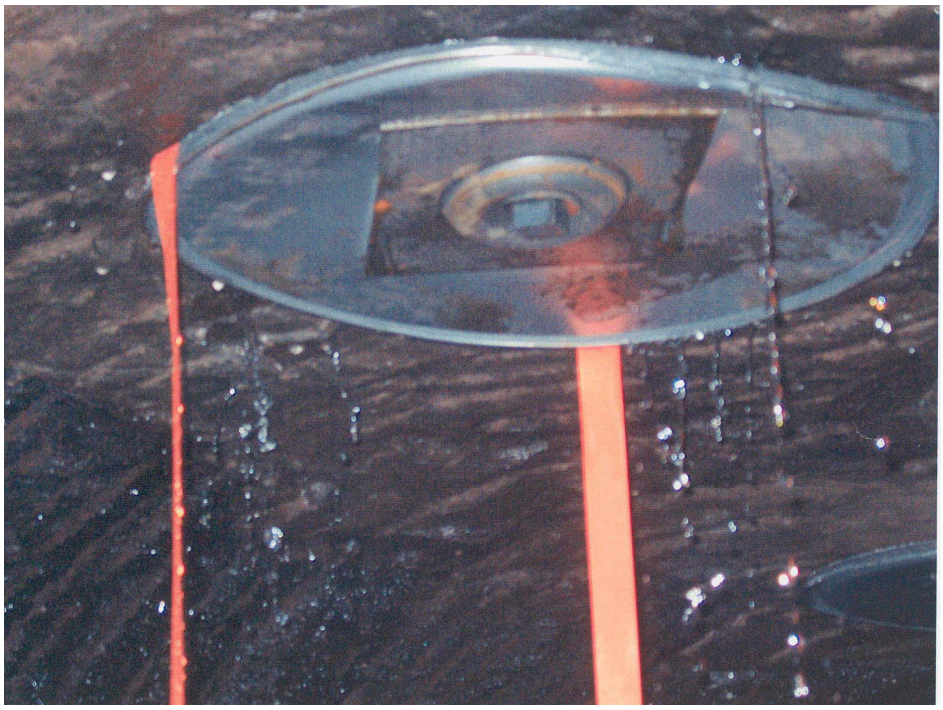


Figure 39 Water streaming from a newly-installed roof bolt. Photo courtesy of Mike.

We look out and down the tunnel to our left, and as far as our lights shine the water stretches in a deepening pool emanating out from this point. We hear the cumulative drip of thousands of drops of water coming down from the ceiling above. The light from our headlamps dances across the water’s surface, casting liquid shadows of light on the walls, echoing and undulating. Tiny water droplets catch the lamplight and sparkle in motion, falling from the sky…

The pools of water—black film of oil and grease floated on the gray water, small puddles, some deep. An entire section was flooded/floating with a watery bottom, as far back as our headlamps would reach. Dripping, just like water in a bathtub, only more of an echo against the roof and enclosed walls.

We move back towards the center of the mines.

Buckwheat: It's like one a these blocks, like goin in a circle.
Just like a bunch a blocks in a city.
One, two, three, four,
Fifth Street, Sixth Street, Seventh Street, Eighth Street, Ninth Street, Tenth Street.
See this here blocks and this throws ye air up to ye next line these blocks that's what they call a block right there.

Ichabod: See to get the air to ventilation to ye miners and stuff?
That's to keep the air from goin outside, cause you want it to go to the face first instead of goin outside.

They joke with me about starting work tomorrow. There are days they never see daylight, what they call "workin' from can't see to can't see." We head over closer to where the power center is. We pass by where rubber tire chained to the ceiling—the tire takes the tension off of a cable suspended from it, like a rubber band, keeping the cable off the ground. Making do.

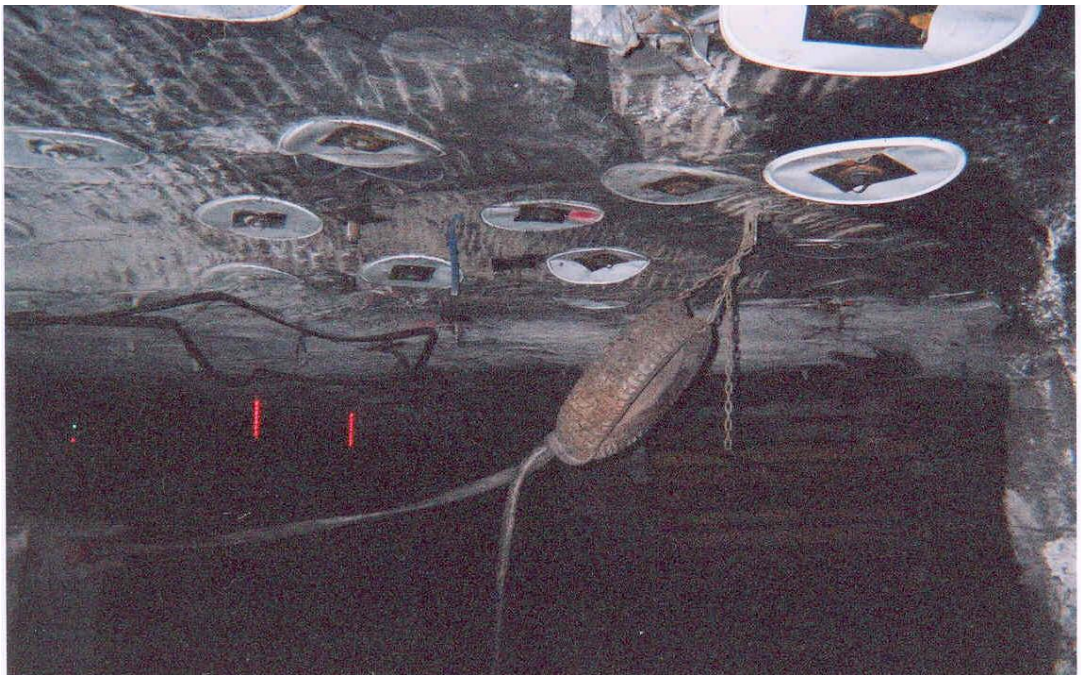


Figure 40 Tire suspended from the ceiling supporting an electric cable. The tire gives the elasticity needed for this task. Photo by the author.

We feel the dry air being blowing in from outside, and we walk up to where the power center is. There is a loud electric hum, and the wind stops. We

are at the power center. It is a long low rectangular box, and into each side are plugged several power cables, each connected to a machine. 600-1,000 volts flow through each cable.

Figure 41 Power grid inside the mines, with cables plugged into outlets on the side. Photo by the author.

We go through a curtain around this electric hub to where there is a green "lifeline" hangs chest-high with cones attached to it—this is for "if there is too much smoke to see your way out." You travel in the direction of the orange cones, which are marked with reflective tape. We go into a braddish, every 4 breaks there is a door in the braddish for people to escape from. Sometimes when there are pillar falls there is so much pressure that it will blow the doors off the braddishes. Often you can feel the pressure from miles away.

Buckwheat: Over in 21? (*this was a mine he worked at previously*)
I was on the beltline, and I could feel them pillar falls.
I could feel em way out back.

Ichabod: Yeah you could feel em way, you could feel em miles away.

B: It, it it'd pop ye ears.

I: The pressure'd just, "BOOMP!" You know and then you'd, "Oh gah my ears!"

B: And you'd know something'd happened and then you'd realize it had been a pillar fall.

I: But that's a planned pillar fall, you wanted that to happen.

B: Yeah you wanted it to fall.

We walk back to where the power center is, passing by a porta-potty, which they say "we don't use that much."

Buckwheat: That's where we heat our soup—
see that chicken noodle soup?…
Yeah, it's sittin on there.
Yeah you'd be down there all night and you'd sit it down there.

Ichabod: Cookin on the power center.
You can fix TV dinners and everthing on it..

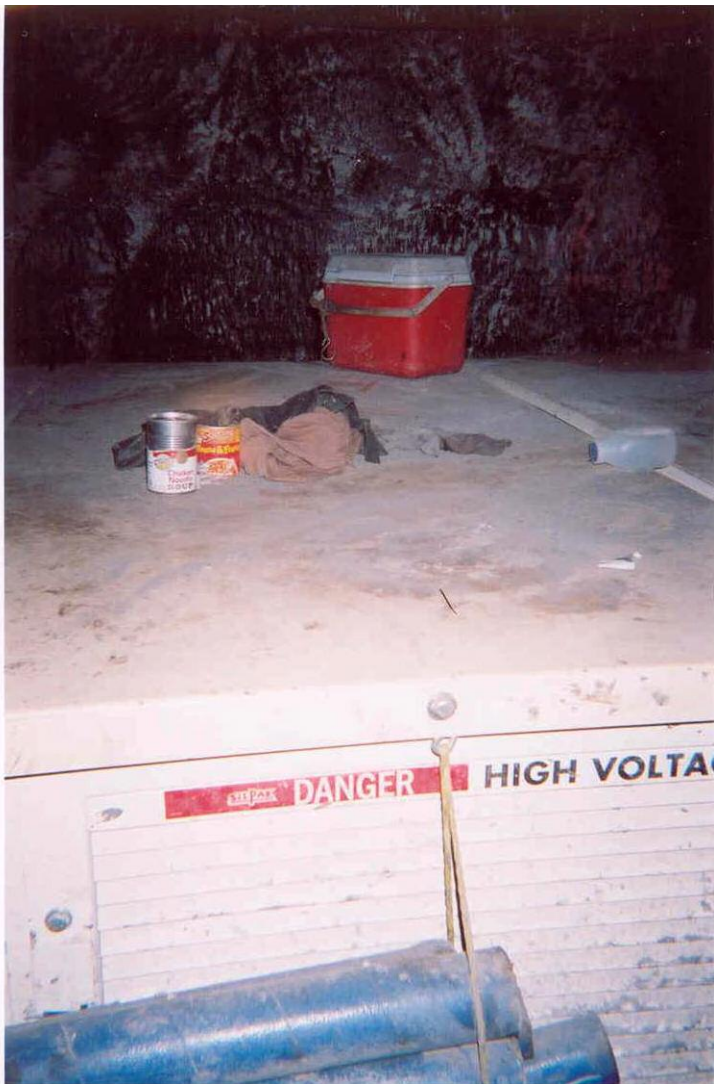


Figure 42 Two cans of Campbell's soup and baked beans warming on the power grid. Photo by the author.

The noise coming from the power grid is so loud—there's a harmony to it, like the sound of the obelisk in 2001: A Space Odyssey. The hum vibrates my flesh, resonating through bone and blood.

We walk on back toward the belt line to watch the scoop machine bring a load of coal onto the belt. I ask what the man on the scoop thinks of all this ,and he says "It's a mess!" and we all laugh. You can see the rock sandwiched in between the coal, with deep hash marks in it from where the miner has cut through it on its way inside. Ichabod says when he trains red hats, they start out shoveling coal onto the belt and learning how to build cribs; they later advance to running machines. When Ichabod started nobody showed him how to run machines but just "threw him in":

Ichabod: No when I started they threw me in the mines and said, "Go get it."
I'm telling ye!
It took me, when I started in I was 17 year old like I lied about my age I was about a month before I turned 18.
And I went in there, and they put me in there and said right there, "Here it is," and, "Do this right there," and, "Do it."

Hannah: Cause you wanted to?

I: I guess yeah, I guess I was stupid, my dad said .

H: No!

I: He tried to talk me out of it.
I didn't know how to do nothing else. / Quit school.

H: So your dad / wasn't a miner?

I: Yeah.

H: He was?

I: Yeah, my whole family, yeah. (*laughs*)

H: And they tried to keep you from doin it?

I: Yeah dad told me I ort a get me an education and stay out a the mines.

H: Yeah.

I: But you know how boys are in school all they want to do is run around and party.

H: Now do you have kids?

I: Yeah. / Yeah I've got a boy he's, 17 he says he wants to go in the mines when he gets 18 on red hat crew.

H: What have you said about it?

I: I told him / not really, he ort a get something else but he still wants to.

Aah, whatever he wants to do, I'll help him if I can you know, but
it's just a rough way to make a livin.

H: Yeah.

I: You know the conditions, dust and cold, water. / Yeah.
You can you can use ye head or you can use ye back.
We're usin our backs.
Some kids use their heads, / you know.
But that's just the way the world is.
I mean you'll be, somebody's gotta do it.
If you don't these poor old people won't have no electricity! (*all laugh*)
To run them computers to use their head wouldn't they! (*all laugh*)
That's the way I look at it.
So really our job's pretty important.

H: It's very important

I: How ye doin buddy?
Strugglin? (*he leans over to talk to somebody else*)

There's a young man who comes along with a scoop who tries to turn a curve with his machine. He makes several points on his turn and even bumps the crib before he makes it. You can feel the tension in the section as other miners stop to watch him. Blended in this tension is nervous laughter, and I think back to Steve's words to me earlier:

Steve: Yeah. / I've worked in it, uh
be standin in it up to my waist, and, and then it'd beatin
a stream that big, (*he motions to demonstrate a wide stream*)
be beatin down on my head and me tryin to drill a (*laughs*) hole in the,

Hannah: Oh my gosh!

S: And / standin there a laughin and a singin and—stupid! / You know?

H: But that's how you get through it.

S: Yeah. / It was either that or cry, yeah.

Ichabod says he doesn't know if he'll make it or not—he tells me to step back in case the machine slides over. Ichabod thinks it will probably get stuck.

Ichabod: Hey that's the difference between 25 years in the mine and 10 years. (*Hannah and Ichabod laugh*)

We watch the boy, and he finally makes the curve. I'm introduced as "Little Buckwheat" for the day. We leave back over the pile of coal and return to the cart. They explain the different hierarchies of mining jobs: Ichabod is a temporary mine foreman, and Mike is the superintendent and in charge of the whole mine and operation, trucking. Ichabod is over the mine, and Mike is his boss (Head) and coordinates with the trucks and loading out. The section

boss is under him, in charge of one section at the face. He goes all over the mines. Ichabod says he works just like the rest of em, if they need help, make sure they don't block entries, make sure no roof has fallen on the belt line. Then the guys in the face are operators and utility men, mechanics. Ichabod seems to have hurdled the gap in community between foreman and section workers. Perhaps this is because of his "temporary" status, supported by his dual performances as a section worker while serving as foreman.

Loud noises from the belt clang on our left. I get into the cart. I feel something come loose near my chest and watch in what seems like slow motion as all my audiotapes from the trip spill one by one from my breast pocket—only by the grace of God did the tapes not fall into the mud just below us on the ground and instead fell into the cart. I feel acutely aware of the contrast between my own feeble instruments and the miners' in this place.

Depending on hollers and rivers above you, sometimes it's muddy and wet. We pass back by the first power center we passed before.

Hannah: Now how long did it take you all to get comfortable being down here?

Buckwheat and Ichabod: Well I—

B: I was always raised around it.

I: Well I was too I really. I went in when I was a little boy.
Uh, I, telling you maybe a day or two to really get
relaxed with it, you know what I'm sayin. I guess maybe
you know bein there all the time you know
when I was a kid you used to go in em, like old abandoned mines they didn't cover em up you know we'd go back in a little ways you know?
And come back out you know and stuff.
I guess you did that same thing as I did! (*laughing with Buckwheat*)

B: Yeah, but me and my dad we'd go shoot house coal, and that's how we'd heat our house.

I: Yeah, lot a people used to go get the coal out like that.

B: When I was a little boy we would, go shoot that house coal and haul it home.

H: Oh my gosh.

B: But uh / went in em all the time.
See we used to go steal their dynamite. (*Hannah laughs*)
We got caught doin that one time when we was just little boys.

We stop where there is some bad top. He tells me to come on under this top: "I want to show ye something…"

Figure 43 A crib to the right and timbers support the buckling "bad top" mine roof. The ceiling here "bellies down" and sags in the middle under the weight of the mountain. Photo by the author.

Ichabod: See that's kinda tryin to, buckle down a little bit?

Hannah: Yeah.

I: And then over here's real bad.
See right here where it's bustin down now that's gonna fall right there?
It's bustin on over there, all the way across, see we built these cribs in here, and makin cribs all over there. It's a little worse over yonder.

Buckwheat: Where it's cutting down that rib, you can see where it's cutting down that rib yonder.

I: Yeah see where it's cutting down this rib here?

H: Yeah.

I: You can see where these ribs rolled off and, right there.

H: It's just, buckled.

I: Sometimes it'd, break on the rib and sometimes it'll just start tryin to fold in the middle.

Above our heads, instead of the neat rows of roof bolts set in a 4-foot radius grid, there is a mis-mash of bolt on bolt. It seems desperate. There are so many bolts, covered over by a scrim of white dust. This is "bad top"—the ceiling sags in, buckling toward the middle as if we are on the underside of a

mattress where someone had just sat down on the bed above, springs slowly recoiling and the middle surface pressing closer in to the floor below. We stand in this sandwiched space. The ceiling has cracked, jagged corners like the edge of a knife, and some surfaces smooth as glass. The ceiling is coated in white dust, but several slices of the ceiling have cracked away, peeled off, fallen to the ground as we walk over what was once above our heads. Further in, where the pieces of top have fallen off, there are holes where there is no white rock dust, creating a mottled look all over the ceiling and floor, like sickened skin. These fallen shards crunch beneath our steps. It is like walking over bones in a graveyard—I can feel the ceiling cracking underneath our footsteps. The smell here is musty, staler than where we have been before where the other men were working.

We shine our headlamps down the tunnel, and all you can see are cribs on either side, some buckling under the weight. Ichabod says he goes through this tunnel every day or so to check how the top is holding, and he points up above our heads to where the ceiling has cracked and a long fissure runs above our heads and extends outwards into the tunnel—flat flaky layers of shale (I think) point obliquely downward along the run of this line, the ceiling points toward us like the roof of a house turned upside down. Ichabod says that it wasn't this buckled two days ago, that the roof has sagged another couple of inches at least in the past two days from the pressure above, and from the bad top.

He leads us through to try to find some fossils—I tell them what Donald had told me, that fossils were usually in the places with the worst top, and they say that is probably true. As we walked into this crumbling tunnel, Ichabod points to where the shale was separating out, just falling down. He reaches his hand up and begins to loosen and tear out some of the flat and jagged-edged pieces of rock that poke out from underneath the bolts. He grabs one piece of rock and begins to wiggle it free from underneath the pizza pan (the large washer) of the bolt. What is he doing??!! I watch on in disbelief as he begins to take both hands and brush off at the ceiling right above his head. I feel beside me that Buckwheat, who has been very friendly but somewhat resolute throughout the whole experience, begins to take small nervous steps backwards toward where we came from, back toward the man trip. Ichabod searches for fossils in the top—brushing off the tender and crumbling pieces of the thin membrane separating the three of us from over 300 feet of mountain above our heads.

We walk further in, down this tunnel, and I think about those pieces of rock that Ichabod had crumbled to the ground behind us, and how that corridor separates us from the way out, and how we are walking further and further under that same or worse cover. I feel my body turning inward as we walk further down this tunnel, my neck contracting, my arms pulling imperceptibly closer around me. This place reaches out to us from above, pushing down on

our space of safety carved out in rock and story. My muscles tighten, and my body stiffens. Is it the awareness of the top itself, or miners' warnings and the weight of so many stories the miners had told me about rock falls, that makes me feel so heavy here? Memories hang heavy here, doubled in this space of perceived danger. My eyes widen, and breath shortens.

Ichabod begins to wiggle at other pieces of rock above our heads and finds a small starburst flower fossil. We all three look up at it, staring at its perfectly defined edges, hard and dark against the gray coal. It is so beautiful. It seems to smile sweetly down at us, as if we were looking up at a flower growing from the ceiling and poking its head down to greet us. Ichabod begins to tear at the rock around it, and Buckwheat gets out his pocketknife and hands it to Ichabod, who slides the thick single blade under the hard flat rock pieces wedged immovably behind and around the tiny flower.

Figure 44 Flower fossil retrieved by Ichabod from Deep Mine 36. Actual size.

Ichabod: Right there is a fossil.

Hannah: Is it?

I: See this bustin up through here?
See this is breakin right here through the middle, all the way through here,
see this is getting worse all the time.
I have to, see these cribs right here? I'll have to put some in the center now.
Cause, it's getting a little worse.

Buckwheat: That's the reason I don't wear ear plugs.

H: So you can hear?

B: Yeah. / Yeah.
Or I wouldn't be here today.

H: What does it sound like?

B: It'll pop and crack,
sometimes sound like thunder.
You can hear the whole mountain, / you can hear the whole mountain roll.

I: Come here, Buck! (*He calls from a distance*)…
I'm gonna have to redo this.
I'm gonna get this out a here and then I'm getting out a here.

B: Yeah.

I: (*laughs*) Buck don't like this, do ya?

B: No, it makes me nervous.
Like this right here, this here's gonna drop out .
And that right there, that slab where it's done broke there around / right there.
Just, let's go up here (*he begins to walk back towards the man trip*)

H: (*laughs*) Ok.

Buckwheat begins to laugh and quietly walk back. I tell Ichabod that it is ok, that he doesn't have to get it for me. He says that he wants to, that it would just take some doing, and that he just doesn't want to break the fossil. Buckwheat says he thinks he will get out from under this, and I begin to follow him, somewhat abandoning Ichabod in his search.

Ichabod: (*he hollers behind us from under the fossil*) Here you go! (*I go back to where Ichabod is and we look at the fossil he brought down from the ceiling*)
Purty isn't it?
This over here, this top's bad over here.

Hannah: Yeah. (*we begin to head back to the man trip, me slightly ahead of him*)

I: This is worse. (*he drops a piece of metal-sounding rock to the ground and I bolt*)
See this stuff right here—oh you don't have to run!
I just throwed that! (*Ichabod and Hannah laugh*)
Boy I throwed that and she went! (*he motions with his hands to show how I ran*)

H: I'm getting rabbity!

Buckwheat: (*laughing*) She's got miner blood in her!
Red hat blood, huh.

H: That's the first time since I've been down here I ran! (*laughing*)

I: Yeah you done good!
And I had to scare you didn't I!
We let's get out of here.

I hear the loud clink and clatter of rock falling behind my head and hitting the ground. Instinctively, I bolt, charging ahead for a few feet until I pass Buckwheat and he begins to laugh at me. "I got rabbity," I say, and for the first time I actually have a slight idea of what that really feels like: that sudden paralyzing fear and realization that the ground around you is coming down all about you. I remember from the childhood story: "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" said Chicken Little. They both laugh and explain that what I heard was Ichabod dropping the pieces of rock he had wiggled loose onto the ground. I feel a little foolish. They knew. Buckwheat wasn't looking at Ichabod when the rocks hit the ground, but he knew that it was not a rock fall or the threat of one. Ichabod comes walking back toward us, holding the tiny

flower image in his hand, and he hands it to me saying, "There, that's something for you to keep. I've never seen one like that before." When I try to get him to keep it he says that he got it for me. We wrap it in a piece of paper towel Buckwheat brought and head back into the man trip and out of the mines.

We get on the trip again and head out. Ichabod says he used to bring his kids pictures and fossils for 'Coal Appreciation Week' at school. Buckwheat was going to bring his oldest daughter into the mine but his wife wouldn't let her. I ask him what his wife said about the mines.

Buckwheat: Well I tried to get her to come in here, when they used to have—

Ichabod: I think all of our wives ought to come in here at one time.
See this mud and water and
stuff you got to put up to.

Hannah: Do you feel like they don't understand the work?

I: They's a lot a bull crap that goes on.

H: Like what? / Like what kind of bull crap?

B: Carry on and / exaggeration right here,
"People lay around, sleep all the time, don't do anything."

H: Oh, like it's not real work. / Oh gosh.

B: It's just like over there in that intake? You go over there and work all day.

I: Like we had some bad top there, and we had to go take care of ye. It'd be in that intake there where it'd be cold all day long.
Or if you know
or if you got some, if you got some pump problems you'd have to wade down in that water up to ye waist.

H: Now, from what I've heard this seems like higher top.

I: Yeah. / I've worked in 48 inches.
This is about the highest I've been in at one time, ain't you Buck?

B : Yeah, I come over here—

I: 28 inches, I've worked in 28 inches you'd have to lay on ye side to eat ye dinner.
Buck has too, / haven't ye Buck? (*Buckwheat nods*)

H: Where would your wife hear those stories from, bull crap stories?

B: Aah, everbody.
She knows more about this place than I do.

I: We call em "Wal-Mart Rumors." (*all laugh*)

B: Yeah, Wal-Mart, that's what it is: Wal-Mart.

It has gotten colder outside. My eyes need some time to adjust to the light. There is a sign outside: "Work safe, Have fun, Do your job, Git'er Done!" with a caricature image of Ichabod and his name printed below. He "radios-in" that he is outside, and we walk back over gravel up to the head's office.

Head/Mike: Have you learned anything?

Hannah: I've learned a lot. / It's hard work.

Mike: Yeah most people don't think it is.

H: Mm hmm, it is, it is

M: Ain't too warm either

H: And important too.
I'm hopin that's, what / writing this project will, show other people.

M: Nah. / Most people think just flippin a light switch is all it is. (*laughs*)

H: That's true!
That's what they think.

M: Especially up around the cities and all of that.

H: What do you think of that attitude?

M: They call us rednecks and stupid don't they?
They ort to come down here.
They think we're overpaid most a the time,
"Yeah, coal miners are overpaid yeah."
Hey Don, (*he hollers over to Donald*)
I said most people up in the cities think coal miners is overpaid, and all this. They ort to come down and go in one time.

Donald: That's exactly Hannah, really.

I take the equipment off—the hat comes off, and Don takes it over to his truck. We go inside, and I hesitate because I don't want to get the place muddy. They laugh at me. Inside, Mike sits down with me in the head's office and we talk for nearly an hour over Styrofoam cups of hot Columbian coffee. Mike gives me many pictures from this mines that chronicle it from the very moment they opened its mouth into the side of the mountain.

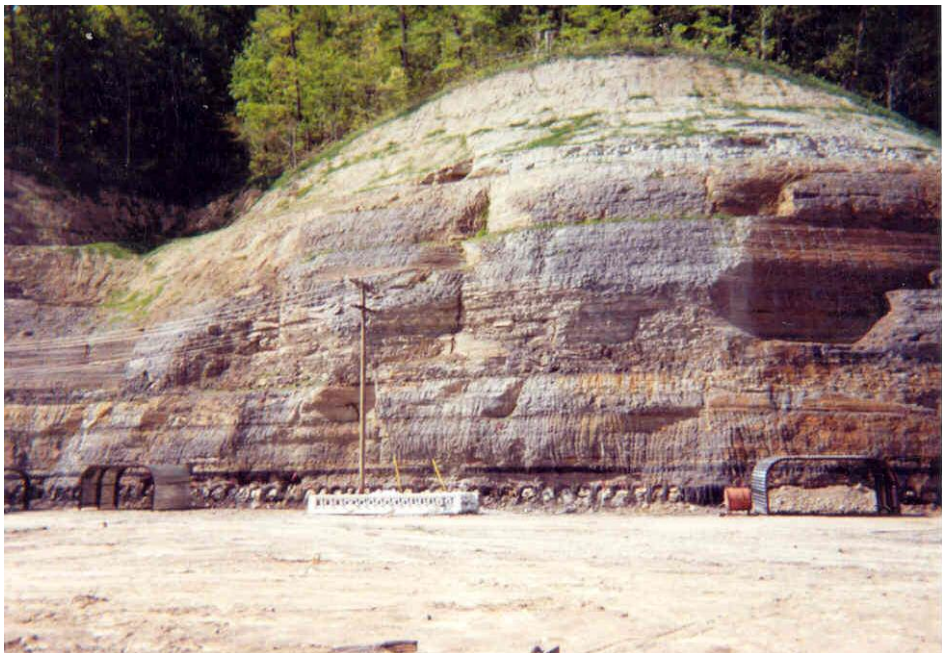


Figure 45 The mountainside before cutting in to form the drift mouth. Photo courtesy of Mike.

Mike brings out the Coal Miner Bible—it's the notebook of how they have complied with all the federal laws. He brings out the inspector's book—a larger white copy, and then a smaller red volume that has all the mining laws for VA.

Ichabod says that they would not return to work in the places where we walked until they began to "pull pillars," which the Head said would be in February of 2006. So soon! All this was done so soon, in so short an amount of time! They began in May—eight months (we are here in late December). And in nine months they would be at the end of the seam, or as far as they would go. In that place, I imagine hands reaching into the sand and pulling them back out again—men stretching into the earth. The Head said that city people look at coal miners as dumb: "they call us hicks, hillbillies…I'd like to see them try to type on their computers without us breaking our backs to bring out the coal that makes the computers go!"

II. Back Home

…I am back at home now, sneezing. Mucus: slippery, wet, coal-caked…difficult to separate myself from the coal. It has been incorporated into the whole and the whole is becoming it. Like Luce Irigaray's body-blurring through the "intimacy of the mucus[57]"; like Sartre's example of the

[57] Irigaray calls for "sensuous engagement" with the other and with the world, and like Leder she sees Merleau-Ponty's chiasm as a fluid relation between "joined hands perhaps represent[ing the] memory of the intimacy of the mucus" (qtd. in Shildrik 113).

child who first encounters the possibility of boundary morphing between solid and liquid by immersing her fingers in honey[58]; I am joined with the mines.

My face—a thin scrim overlays my features—I scrape the coal off my face and it builds skin and coal under my nails—I am underneath this scrim and in the nails.

Under nails—a black, jagged rim under my nails, a thin stubborn seam etched into the line conjoining dead tissue and living flesh at the quick—to get coal under your nails is to bring it into that liminal zone between necessity and excess, living finger and sloughing nail—impenetrable, coal cohabits this space and refuses to leave me. It will not go—as Gillian Welch sings, "Well I do my best with the soap and the water, but the damned old dirt won't go."

I forgot that there was so much earth above me. How many stones and shards of rock are precariously balanced over my head at this moment? But I didn't think that then, in the moment of being in that space. I do now. How do they go back there, day after day and night after night? I wish I had saved one of those razor-sharp pieces to show to the cast—it was about the size of the palm of my hand.

The cribs we passed by on our way into the mine on the man trip served a double function of holding the roof up near the pillar and holding the ribs back from where they had rolled off of the pillars and were pushing outward resting between the crib and the pillar. I wasn't scared, because I knew that Ichabod and Buckwheat were there with me, literally on either side of me during most of the time I was in the mines walking around and just opposite of me on the battery powered cart. I feel better with their bodies close to me. They are strong—they could lift a rib off of me…if my body could withstand the pressure of the fall. But again, in my mind I didn't consciously go that far—all I thought of was that I felt these strong bodies near me, and I felt safer because of it.

My mother was so worried about me—that was also something I had to put out of my mind. She couldn't stop holding me when I came home [visited her] that evening, and when I told her it was difficult to describe the experience and that I needed time to process it, she said that I "had better find the words to do it" and that I was just going to have to tell her about it right then. I felt attacked, I left the house for a while to run other errands that I had to do that day. Was this the worry that other mothers went through? The mothers of other coal miners? When Steve said his mother did not sleep, is this what he meant? Was this what his mother went through?

Steve: But my older brother, we was always

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[58] Mary Douglas discusses Sartre's honey image in Danger and Purity (Douglas 47).

basically, workin at the same mines.
But they wouldn't let two brothers / work / on the same shift or on the same crew.
Because / if they was / a tragedy there

Hannah: Right.

S: then the family would lose / too many people at one time.
So / what it ended up bein, / I worked day shift / or evening shift
and he was always on a different shift.

H: So you never saw him?

S: No.
Well, / Mom / never slept.

H: Oh my gosh.

S: It's pitiful that, she didn't sleep for (*he breaks down crying*)
I guess, 25 years.
She never slept any because / she would worry? / When I was in there?

H: Mm hmm.

S: And then / when Randy was in there?
She wouldn't sleep

H: Mm hmm.

S: And she has a lot a trouble over it now.
And both of us are disabled.
All those years / of worryin / has really,

H: It'll wear on you. / It will wear on you.

S: Oh yeah.
And, I mean and she'll tell ya
she'll say, "Well, I can't sleep.
I never slept the whole time you was in the mines"

Steve bears this burden—it was on him and his brother that she stayed up, and she wears this in her body now. And they are both disabled, a marker that he and his brother are now doubly a cause for her to lose sleep over. Steve weeps with love for his mother, over the sorrow of her worry, and under the pressure of what is almost an accusation: "I can't sleep." Perhaps this is his mother's one way of fighting back against the dangers of mining and her worry over both sons going into the mines. Steve said their father wouldn't say anything against the brothers working in the mines—guilt is her one tactic. I felt the same pressure weighing on me—my mother wanted her arms around me at the end of the day, she was "worried sick" about me the whole day. What is the role of wives, mothers, and spouses in mining culture? How does worry surface, and with what effects?

III. Summary

My experiences in the mines radically broadened the questions I had asked up until this point. I began to consider and empathize with the families of these coal miners—what strain and stress do the spouses, parents, and children of miners endure, and how do they cope with this stress? As I listened to the mines and fled from its warnings, "getting rabbity" and feeling a bit of shame for it, I understood the felt sense of fear that is possible in this new and terrifying place as well as the joy and exuberance of playing and laughing in this space of danger. Listening with my whole body to miners and the mines-body, I learned through affective co-presence what miners had told me was "just indescribable." I also became more certain of miners' body-to-body relationship with place. Following my mucus-coal experience, I began to think in terms of the effect of place on the body—what does the physical wear of the mines on miners' bodies do to their daily experience and psychological understanding of the nature of their work? Growing so close to the mines-body as an interactive character, how do they cope with disability as separation from the mines-body and this community of miners?

A week after my visit to 36, two of the miners I interacted with were seriously injured in a rib roll.

Figure 46 A rib roll, caution-taped off. Photo courtesy of Mike.

The lived effects of miners' disabling injuries are the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7: THE BODY DIS-ABLED

This study honors the body as a temporal and corporeal source of experience and knowledge. Having discussed the dangers of and sustaining structures for life in the mines, this chapter investigates miners' stories after they become disabled. What is the embodied experience of the body dis-abled? What is the status of miners' dis-abled bodies as enfreaked, monstered, and abject? I discuss the psychological difficulty of leaving the mines and the practical difficulty miners face in trying to gain compensation after they have become disabled.

I. Dis-Abled Bodies

How is culture and space imprinted on the moving body? Miners' very breathing tells an audible story of pain and lived experience. They know the mines intimately, literally internalizing this place that now shapes breath and movement as they endure second and third stage black lung. Mining "gets into your blood," seeping into their pores, conjoining with their blood, creating a new substance out of flesh and bone, irreversibly altering the corporeality of both miners' bodies and the mines-body. Miners wear the physical mark of coal: stains embedded into their skin; missing limbs; and the invisible yet perceptible scars on the lungs, neck and back that surface in altered movement, raspy speech and slowed gait.

"When I Got Hurt…"

Miners' bodies are ravaged inside as well as out—not only do they have severed arms, missing fingers, or scarred backs, but most all have black lung disease and rock dust disease. Earl's wounds are largely imperceptible, invisible—black lung and rock dust have "eaten up his lungs" and when he was recommended for a heart transplant he told his doctors that his body would reject it. He now faces dealing with the present, living in a body that, as he says, is "still breathing in the mines" Miners described the scars on their bodies—visible markers of the presence of the mines—as well as the scars on the breath. Their audible breathing reveals the invisible and internal mucus-and-coal-lining on their lungs and/or the rock dust film in their lungs that "feels just like broken glass" against every breath. Many

have multiple back and neck injuries—ruptured disks, cracked vertebrae, lower back injuries—which occasionally provoke neurological disorders that, for example, cause the legs to go numb from the waist down from the mere act of sitting down. Because of the prolonged exposure to rock dust and coal dust hampers breathing, they run out of pulmonary power faster—they suffer from enlarged hearts, and heart attacks are common.

Harley described how he became disabled. As we talked, Harley pushed his arms against his chair's armrests and hoisted his lower body upward in his cushioned seat, trying to get comfortable. I sat opposite him, a table between us, in the particle-board-paneled back room of my father's office in Kingsport. *I am listening.* We had been performing, talking, laughing, and sighing together for about two hours when he told me this story:

Harley Colley (C): When I got hurt
you know I was still in 30 inches.

Hannah (H): Hmm.

C: So I'd say that table was 30 inches. (*He nods at the table between us*)

H: Wow. / What happened?

C: …Well, I was runnin what they call a man trip, there's a little 3-wheeled buggy.
And I's a commin out a there.
Well like I said all this stuff travels by electric this, piece, of equipment.
They got, what's called transformer…

H: Mm hmm.

C: Something happened, one a them blowed up…
Well I looked over here (*he turns his head to imitate looking at the explosion*)
to see what that big racket was, you know, that's just natural.
And when I turned back that rock, hit me here. (*he points to the top of his head*)

H: Mmm.

C: And it busted that light, drove my / neck back
and my neck just jarred up, drug me across that piece a machinery.
And, that's / that's what happened there.
And it just happened that it, blowed up at that time.
What it was it was an electric arc
and that, that made a loud pop.
Well I just, looked over to see if I could see what happened you know,
instead a stopping. But like I say I wasn't payin attention I should a stopped my ride…
See my light was crushed…
What happened, it crushed my light.
And if that piece of equipment hadn't had a light I'd a been a sittin right there.

H: Oh my gosh.

C: Have you ever been in a total, dark room?

I mean you couldn't see your hand like this, like at, that's how dark it is? Well you know kinda what I'm a talking about, anyway…
I mean you that's right you put your hand that close and you can't see nothing then there ain't no, outline of sky. Say it's dark / at night
but you can look up, and you can see the outline, of the sky and mountains? But it ain't that way, like I said, in that cave, it ain't that way.
Ain't no outline, it's black. (*both laugh*)
But that light on that (*he points to where his hat would be*), it cut off, I don't know how long it could a been there I don't really know.
But, after I'd come back, to myself / and
tried to feel around and see whether I was bleedin or whatever and
got, kinda / back to myself, I made it on outside.

H: Oh my gosh.

C: But, that guy out there on the outside, helped me repair my light and I, don't remember exactly now what had happened in there but anyway I got up and went out a there.

H: Did you walk?

C: Yeah, yeah I walked, I went back inside.
I was goin to work you know.

H: Whoa!

C: But then / you know (*laughs*)
it just kept a hurtin and getting worser and worser and worser and I,
there it was. And I told em like [I just told] you, and they took me up.
So I told em.

H: That same day?

C: Yeah. / And my boss took me outside.
And they wanted to know if I wanted to call the rescue squad, and I told em, "No."
Cause I lived 10 minutes down the road.
I said uh, "I'll call you, / have my wife call you, / in say, 10, 12 minutes,
you know. So if you don't hear nothing from me
in 20 minutes, you come down through there,"

H: Mm hmm

C: I said, "see where I'm at."
And they agreed to that. That's how they let me come home. I drove myself home.

H: And then what happened when you got, what did your wife say?

C: Well, / she knowed I was hurt / and hurt bad.
And she just got ready and took, took me to the emergency room.

H: Mmm.

C: Well, it just so happened that her dad was up there, so / he stayed with the two kids. And and uh / she took me to the emergency room. And come a big snow.
Scared the living shit out of her.

H: In the winter?

C: Oh yeah, January.
And, she's comin down through there here I am they've got this here on my neck choking the foire [fire] out a me! (*both laugh*)
At just to end up like this, I's black as coal back then, they didn't even take about nothing, I want to say, off.
Then she flew out a there buddy, and she hit a curve and that thing went around twice. (*he spins his hand to show the car spinning on the ice*)
And I said, "Now listen here girl—" –and they done got me on pain pills by then—
I said, "if you don't straighten up, I'm drivin us home!" (*Hannah laughs*)
I said, "I can't afford to be in a wreck,
here I am plum to pieces!"

H: Oh my gosh!

C: But uh / yeah they give me some pain pills and stuff and then they took
gave me something, the next day
to get me set up an MRI and stuff. They really couldn't do nothing fer me.
That was the first thing, / more or less.
But then / took a bunch of x-ray and said they didn't believe / it was broke,
you know, my neck was broke. But it, / my disks, / they're out a line.

H: Yeah.

C: So they put, a big brace on my neck where it come loose / until I got over it.

H: Oh my gosh. / And did you have to have surgery?

C: No I didn't.
And I still ain't had it. They want me to.
But I said, "As long as I can drive, / I can take the pain."
A friend a mine / he's in a wheelchair on account of a surgery.
They ort a done his lower back and he could walk. But he said he'd take pain pills and stuff and he could get around kinda / and move and things. And now he's in a wheelchair.
It didn't work for him.

H: Mmm!

C: So I told em, / if I can keep, easin along like I'v e been that's what I'll do…
until it gets to where I can't stand it, uh.

H: Is it, what does it do to your body?

C: Well it, / I really, don't know but / they's, I hurt my lower back too.
Sometimes it'll pinch down here on my lower back right here?
And these both legs will go numb, / you know there.
And that, hip right there my billfold's tryin to go in there?
Like cause when I drive?
Sittin on it?
It just like it'd go numb.

H: Hmm.

C: So, as long as I can keep goin like I have.

H: Yeah / I know.

—Well I don't *know.* *(laughs nervously*)

C: (*smiles, laughs softly*) No, you don't know.

As an empathetic listener, I meant only to encourage Harley with these last words, but I immediately realized the haughty assumption embedded in my response and quickly retracted it. I didn't know what his body knew—I didn't own his body-knowledge. Harley made it clear to me that his body is on a different line than mine—miners who thrust their bodies into the earth and emerge physically broken and culturally disparaged are on a different line than my privileged, seemingly "whole" and relatively healthy body. He smiled, excusing me—he seemed resigned to the fact that so many, *many* others think they do understand disability. But Harley lives with constant pain, numbness, the threat of surgery, and the loss of a former way of life. As Soyini Madison wrote of her ethnographic experiences in Ghana,

> In this land I have seen the human body in forms that are beautiful, insufferable, and somewhere in between—I have seen bodies endure and not—there are too many bodies pressed upon my memory hovering between death, starvation, and imprisonment.
> These are bodies that are on a different line than mine.
> (Madison Human Being)

"That Blood Didn't Go Away Overnight…"

While some of the miners had, like Harley, been seriously hurt themselves in the mines, *all* of the miners I spoke with said they had witnessed others being injured or killed in the mines. One of Earl's stories haunted me:

Earl: And / but it does it / you can just feel, Hannah.
I don't know and then they's some times that
that you get an uneasy feelin or something like that. And
and the heartbreakin thing, just like I said,
that uh, once that you, really see someone get / banged up, pretty good,
now that takes something out of ye. It's a part of ye life
feels like it goes for them. But uh
I don't know an in particular, that / where I have worked / that uh
three men, uh got killed.
But I didn't see it di-rectly.
But, I was friends,
I mean more than just, cause, like I was telling ye in the coal mines / you get so close.

Hannah: Yeah.

E: And uh, / I tell ye what it, it's hard and ye say, "Is it easy to go back?"
It takes a long time, the area / that this happens in, once that they's a death
anytime that you go by / they's a feelin this,

H: How, what does it feel like?

E: it's not a / I don't know I can't explain it to ye.

H: I know it must be so hard to put it into words.

E: It is.
And, I don't know but, / that's that's just part of it, it.
And you can't be—
or I ain't gonna say ye can't be, I know they's some hard hearted people but
it comes to that or a death, / I don't see how,

H: Would people avoid that room or that place?

E: Some will, some really will. And I have seen, I will tell ye this,
a place where / we worked it wasn't Westmoreland.
It was in the low coal area.

H: Yeah.

E: That, a fella got killed.
I wasn't at, it was on different shifts and everthing.
But Hannah, honest: / for ever and ever
I don't' know why, but uh, / they's quite a bit a blood that was / there?
And Hannah, that blood didn't go away overnight.
It didn't go away in a week.
That blood was there for a long time.
And you would take what we called rock dust, sprinkle it, you could take coal dust,
try to put over it?
It came back through that.

H: Really?

E: And once things like that's happens, / now it is, it's a weird odd feeling.
And you, you've not, / or I've not, this is how I was:
I didn't have the
(*pause*)
I's just uneasy. I said, / "God I didn't do anything," but,
(*pause*)
you just look at that and the first thing goes through ye mind, / "Lord, that could a been me."

Miners know the mines-body *through* their bodies—it is both an intersubjective relationship and an *intercorporeal* relationship. Merleau-Ponty says that fleshy thickness and the skin's reversible permeability make "intercorporiety" possible as communication between the self and the world of others (Oliver 199). Miners say that coal mining "gets into your blood"—this is an integral relationship between the bodies of the miners and the body

of the land. Coal gets into the bloodstream of miners (breathed into the lungs) and blood spills back into the mines (poured from miner into place through deadly rock falls). As Earl described, blood stains were a magically persistent substance—no matter how much coal dust or rock dust the miners put down over the stain, the blood kept visibly seeping through, marking that place. In the mines, the dead aren't completely forgotten—their presence seeps to the surface, marking in memory what their blood marks on rock and stone.

Normalized and Dis-abled Bodies

In one training and instructional video given to me by Bill, a rock fall buries a man named Donzil Cutlip in the mines, leaving him trapped under literally tons of coal for 14 hours. When he is pulled out, his arms had been crushed and pinned underneath him for so long that the circulation was cut off and they rotted underneath him. What is the status of Donzil's very apparently marked and "mutated" body with its missing arms? What different ways of looking/gazing are placed onto the bodies of coal miners who walk with labored steps and breathe in oxygen through nose tubes as they go, slowly, from the car, to the door, inside the store, and back again?

Aristotle's anxieties over the moral failure of unnatural bodies are prevalent today in the form of "an inner anxiety about the relation of creatures on display and normative form and identity" (Shildrick 23). This anxiety has surfaced in the freak show, where bodies on display are a form of subsistence for individuals. In Sideshow U.S.A., Rachel Adams illustrates how bodies are enfreaked, how 'normal' bodies are stabilized against the bodies of others and how bodies are constructed through photography and freak shows of the 19th century. Adams investigates the bodies of so-labeled "freaks," bodies on whose surfaces the nervous instability of normative cultural values are inscribed as visible markers: "Freaks are inherently mutable and slippery creatures who make our profoundest fears and desires legible on the surfaces of their bodies" (Adams 58). Monstered and normative bodies are discursively crafted and facilitated by the gaze, such that freakishness is not so much *in the flesh* as it is "a way of thinking about and presenting people" (qtd. in Shildrick 24).

The binary able/disabled marks "able" identity as implicit and the self-same. "Able" is set in a constant state of being, in the present—"I am able"—not in a future sense of excited action put onto the body—"I am abled." The normative body needs nothing more to be—nor has it seemingly been altered to reach the state of being—able. Disability is not

really a state of being at all but is named as an act taken on the normative body, which is the enemy of the 'natural' or given body: "dis-abled." This negative act was done sometime in the past to the "able" body and in which past the body is forever doomed to inhabit. Living in that moment in which the whole body became unwhole, those labeled "disabled" operate day to day in bodies codified as perpetually living (passively) in the passive tense.

The normal body risks contagion from these monstrous others—we refuse these bodies and they become refuse. Monsters "haunt the margins" of western discourse—like Kristeva's abject and Derrida's supplement and trace, they are that which must be excluded but cannot be fully shunned, both seductive and threatening (Shildrick 4). Monsters maintain an ambiguous identity, living in a liminal space between here and nowhere, on the margins: "The monster is not just abhorrent, it is also enticing, a figure that calls to us, that invites recognition. Simultaneously threat and promise, the monster, as with the feminine, comes to embody those things which an ordered and limited life must try, and finally fail, to abject" (5). Monsters are the absent presence, the "undecidable signifier at the heart of *differance*, the spectre of the other who haunts the selfsame, which ensures that change is not only possible but perhaps inevitable" (5). It is the ambivalence of monsters that is truly threatening and provoking even to violence (11). Enticing, calling to us, inviting us to recognize its threatening and promising presence, the monstrous is pushed away by the superego, yet cannot be fully driven away. Kristeva extends Derrida's understanding of the interconnectedness and inextricable nature of the self and other in her definition of the abject—that which I refuse but which I cannot wholly separate myself from because *my self* and my identity is built on this relation of difference[59].

In what ways are dis-abilities masked—both consciously by those miners who try to work through the pain of injuries and keep working in the mines, and in the very fibers of a majority of those injuries which are done to the lungs, the spine, and the heart? Mining injuries are commonly invisible to the naked eye—miners often have back problems, which surface as a repetitive limp in everyday movement, and black lung, which evidences itself to the public in the form of audible breathing and the inability to walk or run even short distances. The invisible nature of these injuries complicates the gaze—are we looking at a

[59] This is the "not not me" in Schechner's terms. Similarly, in Danger and Purity Mary Douglas sees 'dirt' as relationally defined matter-out-of-place. What is the status and definition of "dirt" in coal mining communities and on/as the bodies of miners?

"normal" body (which we expect to perform according to preset and singular definitional parameters), or an abnormal and disabled body (at which we may give a gaze of generous pity and kindly assign them another set of equally predetermined and singular performance parameters)?

Disabled miners describe an embodied experience similar to an unwitting drag performance—is she (disabled), or isn't she? *What* is she? The need to categorize and clearly mark the body as able or not reveals the normative fetishization in society of a static, unchanging bodily identity. As Shildrick and Price remind us, however, "all identities are constantly shifting and developing, both through resistance to existing norms, and through the incitement of new norms. But the process is never complete, and nor is there any final truth of the body at which to aim" (Shildrick Price 443). Living as simultaneously halved and doubled selves, invisibly injured miners navigate daily movements and interactions with others as both "normal" and "freaks":

Eddie: And uh / I guess one of the, the other things that, bothers me the most about it is maybe a lot a times the impression / or the thoughts that other people might have about ye. In other words I look / like maybe there's nothing wrong with me…
Lot a people criticize other people because they talk about
having back trouble something like that, and you look at em and they look like they're normal-lookin…

Hannah: Mmm.

E: So that's, that's one of the biggest things, I never did like nobody havin bad thoughts about me, Hannah.

H: Yeah.

E: You know.

H: Nobody would.

E: Well, some people look at ye you know—

H: No, I mean nobody would like that [to be looked at in a bad way].

E: Yeah, nobody would like it, but / like now and / I like to do everything that I can.

H: Yeah.

E: I pick up odd jobs for people, and I do what I can.

H: Yeah.

E: But still there's always that fear, you know,

people are gonna look at ye or try to cause you a problem or trouble.

Shildrick's notions of 'witness-as-touch' and embracing the monster challenge any distanced or objectifying gaze at those bodies which are (abjectly) already a part of us.

II. The Compensation Game

"Disability" is performative—like a curse or oath, it is a word that *does something* in and for miners' lives and bodies. Naming the body *disabled* transforms not only its identity (the "whole" becomes "unwhole"—not that, not myself, the abject) but inscribes into its flesh a series of laws by which this body will hereafter be policed. "Proving" disability is a game with clear rules, roles, winners, and losers. Many miners reported that local doctors are in league with companies in order to deny compensation claims to genuinely disabled coal miners. Miners say that some doctors give a clean bill of health to miners with second stage rock dust or crippling leg injuries. Without a doctor's verification, injured miners may not claim disability status and receive compensation.

The process for gaining disability status and thereby "earning" workman's compensation and disability insurance checks requires the trade of bodily disclosure, and basic human dignity. This system of exchange often operates within networks of collusion and deception. It takes most former miners over a year to "prove" dis-ability so that they can collect social security disability checks. One man said he was depressed at the sight of the checks themselves, every month a letter enters his house, firmly printing in black and blue that he—his name—was *disabled*, not a miner, not "himself," but some other definition imprinted on his body. Even the amount of effort entailed in getting approval can be dis-abling and dis-empowering for miners. Many miners who participate in the dis-abling process of attempting to prove black lung status are denied that status (due to a local system of doctors "in bed" with the companies and insurance agencies) and live unable to breathe but unable to gain compensation[60]. Keeping disability becomes a game of internalized surveillance for miners, where survival often comes at the expense of human dignity.

Proving Disability

One miner said that the compensation process made him feel "like a rat in a box, being tortured by the doctors." The process, as some miners described it, is "brutal." When

[60] They call the process "getting my black lung."

miners get hurt on the job, they first fill out an accident report on which they list any and all places that they may have been hurt. They are taken to the nearest hospital emergency room, usually either in Bristol, VA or in Kingsport, TN (either of which can be 45 minutes to an hour away from the mine site). Emergency room doctors, miners say, tend to want to stay out of the cycle of diagnosing disability. ER doctors provide minimum analysis and treatment—they perform x-rays and ask how their injuries feel according to the 1-10 pain scale (with its coordinating progression of smiley to frowning faces ☺ 😐 ☹). Unless x-rays immediately reveal an undeniable break they proclaim the injury as muscle strain, prescribe muscle relaxers, and recommend occupational therapy.

Local occupational therapy doctors (recommended by the company, paid by workman's compensation, and often called "comp doctors") perform an exam on miners, again usually diagnosing problems as muscle strain and referring the miner to a physical therapist, who is usually one of a panel of physical therapists who work for companies distributing workman's compensation. Miners say that these comp doctors sometimes earn upwards of $200,000 in royalty fees—that is, apart from services rendered—just so that companies can recommend these doctors to their employees. Miners visit the comp doctor, who runs an MRI or Myelogram and interprets the film to the miner, sometimes recommending surgery when obvious damage has shown up in the film (for which the same doctor collects the surgery fee). Or *again,* and more often than not, the comp doctor tells the miner that "it's not as bad as it seems" and offers physical therapy for a time, by which the doctor "earns" his royalty fee given by the company for saving them the full costs of workman's compensation: by law, workman's compensation can provide up to 500 weeks of pay, but often miners never see compensation past the first few weeks. This also saves the insurance company from being required to pay indefinitely for miners' surgeries, prescription medications, and the like as a result of their disabling injury. Sometimes physical therapy is supplanted by what are called "work hardening programs," through which miners with very serious injuries such as hernias are "toughened up" in order to return to work—it is a process miners liken to "torture" and that often amounts to re-injury.

Donald said that he was sent to a company doctor with disastrous results:

Hannah: Do they send you to specific doctors?

Donald: Yeah, / the company doctor…
I went to a company doctor over my black lung you know and the, rock dust ye know?

H: Yeah?

D: And, he told, he tells me, / uh, he looks at me
and, puts his little, steth—whatche call em but they check ye with that little round stethoscope or whatever?
Anyway, he puts this right here.
He'd take this finger and puts it on the inside of my knee.
He looked at me and he said uh,
"I'll tell ye what's wrong with your breathin." I said, "Well I'd like to know."
He said, "You're out a shape."
Here I was workin 10 6-hour days a week and hunted at home a lot!

H: *What*!

D: And he said, "You're out a shape," he said, "If you'd start doin exercise—" I said, "Buddy look!
I come home," I said, "me and my wife walks up and down the road. / We walk ever day."
He said, "You should *run."*
I said, "*What*?" He said, "You should run," he said,
"I'm gonna write down he said you're just out a shape."
So, I went.
I went and took my own money out a my own pocket and went and had my own x-rays done.
Quick as I went up there, she says,
"Right here here's silicosis." (*he points with finger to an imaginary x-ray*)
Well, / finally I left I said, "I don't know what you've been, got against coal miners," I said, "But I'm not out a shape," and I said, "You can't bring black lung back or rock dust," I said, "You can't get rid of it once you've got it. It's a life threatening disease and you—"
And he said, "Well, I'm still writing on your report that you're just out a shape."
And that's exactly what he wrote. (*laughs*)

H: Oh my gosh!

D: You was talking about company doctors?
And I said it's kinda disheartening ye know,
knowin what ye done and what all ye,

H: Yeah. / Yeah.

D: and knowin that,
if he could just stay in there five hours and work like you, did he'd be a, man you know .

The doctor in Donald's story has the power of the pen—the word he writes determines Donald's bodily status and ability. Doctor-gods name, pronounce, and bless "disability" on others with the scratch of a pen on paper. "Proving disability" seems an exercise in showing the body to be the thing itself and an ideology surrounding that thing—I am disabled, I am both the body and the body lacking (vs. the normalized body). As Drew Leder has noted, we rarely notice the body until it steps out of line, so to speak, and becomes

the body hurting (qtd. in Wendell 325). "Proving disability" is also often a scene of contestation between the felt body (I hurt or I feel fine) and the doctor's prescribed body (you're well or unwell). The state *threatens* to make hurting miners whole by proclaiming "you are abled." Thus proclaimed, coal miners are Othered to their own bodies—in effect, they corporeally represent a "whole" body while simultaneously living out a pain-filled, hurting experience that the "normal" body would abject as its supplement "disabled." Invisibly disabled miners embody both the sign "able" and its sticky trace supplement "disabled"—and the state performs aporia onto their bodies, flipping identity again and again: able-not-able-able-not-able-…

Meanwhile in the process, the company claims it can only be held responsible for those injuries reported in the initial accident report. Whereas a miner may have had his neck crushed from hitting a rock on the mine trip in or out of the mines, the neck injury at the time may overpower any sense of pain in the lower back. But later, when subsequent compounded injuries surface clearly as a result of the initial injury, the company is not responsible for bills related to these initially unreported injuries.

Often, a comp doctor "just stops your comp"—the doctor proclaims the miner is better after a certain amount of time in physical therapy and sends the miner back to work. This was the case with Donald and his comp doctor. The lived effects of an able-bodied diagnosis for truly injured and hurting miners find repercussions not only in the end of workman's compensation and dead-ending disability claims to insurance companies, but on their next job as well. Because the miner is still injured—but, according to the comp doctor's proclamation, he is seemingly able again—he is not able to perform his job as usual and the company uses his able-bodied-poor-performance as an excuse to cut his paycheck or fire him. Miners cannot feasibly bring a discrimination suit if they are not officially "disabled" and so they are left both unable to hold a job *and* unable to claim disability from social security on their officially-able-yet-disabled bodies.

Many companies offer incentives and awards for safety on the job: foremen and mine managers encourage miners who were injured not to report their injuries in exchange for an added monetary bonus for X amount of hours without injury.

> Donald: Well, when I let the T-bar down to move up to the next row?
> Well the rock broke off the T-bar, come across, fell all the way across the drill when it hit it.

It's
I mean you're, you're just had seconds.
And hit just rode me down and hit me right dead on top of the head and drove me down into the ground.

Hannah: Mmm!

D: And / hit just kindly blacked me out for a second.
And, and then, well
I mean ye people, (*both exhale*) / it just, ye layin there.
And that rock—now this is honest the truth—
I was layin there and I was skin all to pieces. Well
I went over to the next place to tell the boss you know, "Look here," you know, "I got tore up pretty bad," you know.

H: Yeah.

D: "Well how bout you go up with these other guys out to dinner now?"
And me sittin there telling him, I said, "Man I'm lucky to be alive right now! I'm, I mean, serious!"
Well when I went outside.
Go out, finally showed the superintendent, you know, "Look here man, I'm tore all to pieces," you know, "Cut all to pieces. I ain't hurt real bad I'm just skin all to pieces," and I said,

H: Yeah.

D: "and just, just in case something happened, you know, I want to turn in an accident report."

H: File a report.

D: They'd make ye stay there for three hours fillin out an accident report.

H: Before you got medical care?

D: Well, uh, / you didn't want to get medical care.
And, I mean they, they, they, they done everthing to deter you to, to keep from goin to the doctor.
"You'll be alright tomorrow, see if you're alright" (*Hannah exhales*)
And, well, take for example one day I's a drillin.
And / the drill head goes up and down, ye see?
Well you got these old big arms over here,
and the drill would be loaded with so much junk it was unbelievable.
You're workin with stuff on top of it.

H: Mm hmm.

D: And uh, well / one day I's a workin.
Next thing I knowed I woke up on the ground I's sittin here and I
I got up you know and I kindly knocked to my feet and I said,
"Well what in the world's goin on here?" you know?
And they was a piece a steel that flew, that rolled off that drill into that pinch arm
and hit just, when hit pinched it it just shot it out a there.
And it was a piece a steel, about 4 foot long, and it's round
come up and hit me right there across the eye. (*Hannah gasps*)
Cut me right across the eye right here.

H: And it grazed you like that?

D: Yeah, and uh
well I can still feel the dent from that bone right there?
But hit cut me and / I, I just happened to
feel the blood runnin down the side of my face. And I got up you know and
kindly knocked out a little bit, and, "What in the world happened?" you know.

H: Yeah

D: And uh, / and after I seed still in there, I knowed what it was
well, I went outside.
This guy says, uh,
"Are they any way / that you, would not turn this in?"
He said, "Cause we don't need no—"
They, they, they keep constant, "You don't need no accident [reports for your section.]"
And they would compete us against one another.

H: Mmm.

D: In other words if these, if this crew don't get hurt we'd get a hundred dollar coal bonus next week.
Like at really meant something to somebody.
In other words, somebody got hurt, the whole crew was mad at ye.

H: Mm hmm.

D: And uh / but I set there the other night, and he talked me into / goin outa there.
And when I come back to work the next day,
both a my eyes was black.
And here I was cut with this gash right here in my eye and it finally healed up here, you know, and

H: Yeah.

D: what could you say?
You left the mines, you might as well just went ahead and done it at home. Cause oncet you left the mines that was it. But
I seed so much a that go on it was unbelievable and they still do it today.
And they'll uh
they did have a little catalogue, if nobody gets hurt you can pick out a this, and maybe it'd be like a reel and a rod or something real simple.

H: Yeah.

D: And uh, / I mean, / and / at last
I kept tryin to tell all the young guys, "Look, if you get hurt regardless go turn out and fill out that report,
fill out an accident report. Cause
hit don't do nothing in the long run but hurt you and
it betters the company," you know.
Cause they, they don't
to this day, they still got people sittin outside hurt
that really should be at the doctor and hurt.

Donald's word-of-mouth warning to younger miners is one of the ways young bucks are mentored into mining. They learn the ropes of mining practice and insider information on how to read and resist company rhetoric from older, more experienced miners. In addition to "a rod and reel," miners are offered the incentive of a different and less labor-intensive job (such as supervision) if they do not report their injury. One man reported that his friend had been injured but was enticed not to report the injury in exchange for a different job on the mine site. A month later, this miner's 'new' job was found 'unnecessary' and eliminated, and the now-disabled miner had become unfit to take back his former job and was fired from the company with no compensation:

Steve: I hearedt / they have sent to Dr. Mackaway
and he is their, like, go-to man.

Hannah: Yeah.

S: I guess.
And / I mean guys that's, on—
one guy he was on a walker, / I was goin to physical therapy with him.

H: Mm hmm.

S: And he said, "Aaw man," he says
"I got a letter yesterday—"
—they just built a new house.
Scoop ran over him, bout got his legs cut off.

H: Oh my gosh.

S: And, he was in physical therapy with me up there, and I'd worked with him for years.

H: Yeah.

S: And he's just building a new house, man.
So, they started payin him comp.
Well, / after about a year / they decided, "Aah, we don't need to pay him anymore."

H: Hmm.

S: And he'd worked with em for 20-some years, been with this company.
Well, / they decided, they needed their hatchet man, you know, / Dr. Mackaway.

H: Mmm.

S: Well my buddy, Smurf, he come to therapy one day and he said, "Aww, man I don't know what I'm gonna do." Said, "I got a letter from the company."
Said uh,
"They want a second opinion."
I said, "Second opinion on what?"

He said, "Well on my,
how I'm getting along and stuff, you know."
I said, "Well these people here are writing reports, I'm sure these therapists are givin em reports."
He said, "Yeah but they want me to go to see Dr. Mackaway." And I said, "Aww man!"
I said, "Smurf that was my doctor? / And he done me so dirty."

H: Mmm!

S: I said, "If they's anyway that you can get out of it,
don't go over there."
He said, "I gotta go, / I really gotta go."
And he went the next day?
And the next day they stopped his comp,
because Dr. Mackaway wrote him a clean bill a health told him that he was able to go back to work.

H: Oh gosh.

S: So they no longer had to pay him any compensation benefits.
And him building his house!
So Dr. Mackaway down here, / I don't see how he lays down and goes to sleep at night.
I try to clear my conscience,
If I done something that bothered you?
I would, I'd say, "Hey,
Hannah, let's—"
or, "Hannah, I'm sorry let's

H: Yeah.

S: let's talk about this, let's get this straightened out.
I don't want to go to bed tonight, thinking / that I hurt your feelings,

H: Mm hmm.

S: or done you dirty."
But, Dr. Mackaway, / I don't see how he does, I don't see how he goes to sleep.
And I don't know how many people—my Uncle
had a knee replacement, and Dr. Mackaway done him dirty.

H: Gosh.

S: I've, just so many people I could—

H: And it's all part of the system that's / so / complex and—

S: They have got their, list a doctors.
And they'll send you to them doctors. If you don't go to them doctors,
they won't pay.
They don't have to pay their doctor bill if you don't go to their doctor.
But if you go to their doctor, then they're gonna get out a payin you compensation.

H: Yeah, yeah.

S: So, somebody along the way there,
I've never seen em give Dr. Mackaway any money?

But, / I'd just about bet my life on,

H: Yeah.

S: that they're giving it to him.

Steve begins this story with "I heardt" and goes on to describe how rumors and what Pollock calls "open secrets" operate to assist miners in navigating the complicated emotional and legal process of bodily change miners undergo as the mines-body presses down, in, and through their bodies. Miners develop their own networks of support for each other when they are injured but still working in the mines, such as Donald's words to younger miners about reporting all injuries. Truth circulates through mining communities as winds of knowledge that miners know are there and feel the effects of but—like air—they may not necessarily see. Knowing without seeing, "I've never seen em give Dr. Mackaway any money / but / I'd just about bet my life on,…that they're giving it to him." Part of the power of these truth-telling networks among miners relies on their secrecy—as an undercurrent of whispers, confidential conversations, and insider's information, such knowledge gains power through a collective source of voices (you can't condemn what everybody knows).

Through what Madison calls "theories of the flesh," Steve knows the system via community narratives that reveal who does who dirty. While rural Appalachians are often painted as physically and ideologically dirty, Steve reflects a community sentiment that both rejects this identity and at the same time names those urban doctors who *do* dirt onto miners. Dirt is an act, a performance, and an action verb as well as an adverb. Steve makes a poignant distinction between good, *clean* work and the *dirty* work of urban doctors. Donald extended the clean/dirty binary into gendered definitions of being a *real* man vs. being a company doctor: "And I said it's kinda disheartening, ye know / …and knowin that / if he could just stay in there 5 hours and work like you did he'd be a, man you know." Steve and Donald's stories reference the generative effect of miners' work in the dirt that they believe can clean dirty doctors and make them into "real" (clean, hard-working) men.

Steve described another situation in which the company was not held responsible for accidents incurred while Steve was working with them:

Hannah: What was the last straw for you?

Steve: When I got crippled / and they denied / that I got hurt over there.

I said, "Hey, / these people / if, if I'd a got killed over there,
would they'd a say, 'Didn't get killed over here!'?
Where would my family be?"
See at the time I, when I went in the mines I went in there for myself.

H: Yeah.

S: But I *stayed* / for my family / for my kids, and my wife.
And / I thought, "Well / I don't know anything else.
So how could I / get out a here / by not knowin anything else—how, what,
how else could I support my family?"
So I stayed.
And / I, I stayed for them.
And then, I got out for them.
Because I said, "Hey man, / if I'd a got killed right here, they wouldn't a, they would a gotten nothing."
Because / the whole time, I went without a check for / like two and a half years.
I got hurt September / of two thousand one.
And / they denied me / a, any kind of compensation checks.
They paid my doctor bills, / but they didn't want to pay me a wage.
Well, I was crippled up—I mean my leg was, it was enormous.

H: You can't work, yeah.

S: Well, I / and I couldn't work.
And now you talk about drivin me crazy.

H: Uh huh.

S: They had me over a barrel.
Sayin, "Hey man you, you didn't get hurt over here.
We're gonna pay your doctor bills though."
They paid my doctor bill.
But they wouldn't give me and they wouldn't compensate me anything / to buy, uh
electricity or, you know, to pay my bills or nothing.

H: How could they do that?...What had happened to you?

S: …Well what it was / uh, in 1982,
I believe it to be. No, it was in 92.

H: Uh huh.

S: I stepped off of a shuttle car—I was runnin a shuttle car at the time, and I stepped off the shuttle car and there was a big water hole
and I twisted my knee.

H: Hmm.

S: Well, I had to have knee surgery.

H: Yeah.

S: Well / then from / '92 up until September / of two thousand and one
never missed a day's work.

H: Mm hmm.

S: But then when I got my leg fixed up they said, "No, that / that's an old injury."
And they have these doctors around here / paid off.

It is telling that Steve's insurance company denied that Steve had been hurt in the mine they support, *and yet* they are willing to pay his "doctor's bills." There is a more than obvious contradiction here. In an effort to avoid having to pay for what may be lifelong medical costs (medications, surgeries, etc.), insurance companies will pacify injured miners with quick and plentiful funds for immediate medical bills, provided miners sign a release that frees companies from any further costs. Miners have the legal right to get a second opinion from a neural or orthopedic surgeon to offset the company doctor's diagnosis, but this second opinion must be paid for out of pocket by the miner. Many miners said that "you can't win against comp without a lawyer." Often the insurance company will encourage miners to settle for a single one-time sum, usually in exchange for financial immunity from any future medical costs from bodily damages accrued as a result of the miner's injury.

Harley described his act of rebellion against this confusing and intricately-networked system:

Hannah (H): Was the company good to you?

Harley Colley (C): Well you know that, it really weren't the company that I had to fight with it was the compensation.

H: Was it a, hard fight?

C: Well not really I, / you know they, / I was layin in the floor, / couldn't get up.
And they called and told me to go back to work.
Said that, that their doctor over here at Abington—I forget his name right now,
but said I was able to go back to work. And my wife laughed and said, "Why he can't even get up!" So
he says, "Well I'm shocked."
And she, well, then she says, "Well how am I supposed to feed my family here?" Talking about "wantin a, problem," I believe that's the way the lady said, the lady said, "Well you'll find out."
We went us the next day and got us a lawyer.
And then two weeks later they reinstated my comp.

In what to me is the greatest crime, the UMWA, the agency whose sole purpose is to help miners *and to whom miners pay hefty monthly dues*, does not have structures in place to guide miners and prepare them for when disability will inevitably will happen to them.

Understandably, the UMWA's goal of improving worker's safety shuns the possibility, much less the inevitability, that miners would plan for injury. But this worthy goal ignores the present reality that miners—today, as I type this—are inhaling the coal and rock dust that causes black lung and rock dust diseases. And as one miner said, no matter how many safety precautions are put in place, "if you're in the mines for more than 20 years, / you're gonna get black lung." So single-minded is the UMWA's mission to improve working environments and worker's rights on the job that it *ignores* the presently inevitable conclusion of miners' work in disability and absolves itself from any responsibility for ensuring the rights and dignity due to these miners who are disabled. Where are the training sessions that would educate current "able" miners as to the process of filing a claim against the company, or on the consequences of not carefully filling out injury reports when they happen, or to the real and lived effects of this cyclical process of company-paid doctors, or to a list of doctors who are not paid by companies? Why are disabled miners suddenly plucked out of one type of darkness, the mines, only to plunge into another darkness entirely, murky waters of disability claims and wrangling with insurance companies—without any preparation on the process until it is effectively too late?

Un/Speakable Bodies

Many miners feel betrayed by the companies to whom they typically devoted their whole lives—who then, as Steve said, "stabbed me in the back." For miners who can afford to pay for non-company doctors to examine their lungs—or who have the funds to hire a lawyer to speak for them—their coal-stained voices can be heard. For those who cannot afford it, they are silenced under systematic "soundscapes of power" that take what little breath they have away (Conquergood "Interventions" 149). What is the un/speakable status of these coal miners' bodies—the living ('healthy' miners who, when I told them about this study as a means for them to have a wider audience for their voices, said "nah, I guess we'll always be on the bottom"), the living-dead (the dis-abled whose lungs are being eaten by the mines in life) and the dead corpses?

The living disabled body is dissected and each part assigned a price tag. Choosing to keep an "optional" yet functionally useless body part after injury in the mines can have devastating financial consequences in terms of disability compensation. Donald described a situation in which he unknowingly traded dignity for disability:

Donald: Well, we was sittin there, we'd take turn about runnin, this equipment ye know?
Well, when it / when it was my turn to turn the plate?
Well I wretch in there to turn the plate.
I look around and he's lookin off.
Next thing I knowed, my hand goes up in under there.
I squawl at him, you know you can imagine anybody just
clampin down on ye hand just as tight as they can with a pair a plyers?

Hannah: Oh my gosh…

D: Well, I squawl at him, he turns around,
he hits the boost wide open and go right on up through the top.
Well it cuts this little finger off in the glove
and right then / it, no pain at all.
I mean just, I mean they wasn't no pain whatsoever.
And, they cut this one off in my glove.

H: Oh my gosh!

D: And had this, had thisn flat, all the way flat.
That I could see through this, whole finger right here all the way through both sides of it.
And uh
he [the doctor] told me, he said, "I can either take thisn on off, or let you use it as a
just a *finger*," he said, "It won't be no good, but it'll be there." And I said,
"Well I'd rather it, be there."

H: Uh huh.

D: So when he puts that on, / they automatically knock me down from
100 percent disability on it, to 30 percent.

Disability here is linked to visibility—an apparently lacking hand gains 100%, but a visually "whole" hand loses 70% of its claim on disability. Donald's fragmented body visibly marks itself as partial or whole, while an "im-partial" doctor (a whole body) validates and sanctifies these body fragments as owning a particular quantity of loss. Donald's story speaks to those larger ideologies promulgating the social and biological sciences that privilege sight and visual comprehension (similar to the way Conquergood describes Geertz's overseer model of ethnography) to felt, embodied understanding. Here, visual loss or gain trumps the body's invisible sensing/feeling. Donald would rather "it" be there, no longer part of his sensed body but a mask for apparent dis-ability. But choosing the visible presence of "just a *finger*" that "won't be no good, but it'll be there" means assuming the normalized appearance along with its accompanying responsibilities—or, at least, 70% of them. Able or disabled identi-ty is linked to what is visibly identi-cal and identi-fiable.

To Donald, his dis-ability is proven through the internal felt effects of the body, but these sensed proofs often must measure up to visible proofs. As Shildrick and Price write, "the demand to know intimate details about the individual is a common feature of state bureaucracy, but is nowhere more apparent than in the transaction between the welfare claimant and the multifarious over-seeing benefit agencies" (Shildrick Price 434). When the insurance company sees the doctor "put[] that on" (that, a thing, separate from his felt body), "they automatically knock me down": "they" cannot easily be made to compensate for that which "they" cannot see. This same struggle threads through miners' stories of their other seemingly invisible injuries: black lung, spinal and neck injuries, and rock dust disease. Donald's reference to "they" implies multiple sets of eyes watching miners—comp doctors, physical therapists, insurance companies, in addition to the neighbors who see these miners laid up at home day after day.

To prove disability and gain compensation, miners submit their bodies to the objectifying eye of the compensation doctor to the point of being turned inside out, dissected on the operating table to *show* these insides to various powerful "they"s. Many miners worry foremost about their families, about how to provide for them with mounting debt and medical costs to shore up bodies that are still being "eaten" by the mines. More than one miner told me they have asked their wives to have the doctor perform an autopsy—they call it "getting my autopsy"—when they die.

Harley Colley (C): Oh yeah.
I got black lung too, but they turned me down.
I done let them know in West Virgina over that.
But / but all that work for Harmon, I had to have x-rays done.
They, they told me I had second stage rock dust.

Hannah (H): Mmm.

C: Then when I went up there for that test?
"I ain't got nothing the matter with me"
some of em says. But I tell ye, I'll not get it.
So I told my wife, / "Do an autopsy."
That's the only way.
And I'm walkin still breathin it anyway.

I imagine this scene in choreographed movements and stage pictures: the doctor buttons up his coat; the miner buttons down his shirt. The miner lies down on the dissection table, takes the doctor's scalpel, and hands it to his wife. She takes the knife and cuts down

her husband's chest, folding back the flesh, pulling out the lungs, peeling back the thin internal membrane to reveal coal-lined tissues. When his own breath fails him, this dehumanizing performance is "the only way" for his wife to gain compensation, or for embodied truth to voice itself. The autopsy "speaks" to and for their bodies. It gives voice to the corpse whose body was silenced in life (under medical practices that denied compensation because of a lack of "proof" that the lungs were corroded) and now speaks *through* death (through expired lungs, science/rational/modern voices give authority and authenticity to the body that could not speak for itself in life).

Keeping Disability

Compensation companies will sometimes send detectives to spy on miners in their homes, in their yards, and in their daily activities. Using video surveillance, detectives attempt to catch miners working at or in their homes doing jobs they should not be able to do given their claimed disabilities. Of course, this surveillance does not account for injuries that have a cumulative effect on pain—some men and women may be able to lift lighter boxes or furniture with severe back injuries but will have to rest from the pain incurred for the remainder of the day. Once caught on tape, though, a single "offense" is enough to "undo" formal disability status. The "offense" of these offensive bodies seems to be waged against the homogenized and objectively tested category of "disability": offensively uncooperative bodies challenge what may be understood, defined, and clearly marked as "disability." Pain-filled bodies, when in motion—any motion, it seems—are in danger of stepping/slipping/falling out of normative category of "disability" (a territory mapped and policed by bodies outside its borders). And the fact that these slippages may "undo" their bodily status points to the parallels between disability status and the status of the body as a stage on which appropriate actions and scenes may be played, policed, chastised, categorized, shamed, and silenced.

External visual policing turns inward, as families begin to self-police their actions. Wives warn and chastise their husbands "don't ride the lawn mower" outside for fear that they would be caught on videotape attempting to perform tasks that, according to their doctors, couldn't be done. They are fearfully aware of the invisible eye of the compensation companies—rumors of undercover detectives lurking with the panoptical lens of the company spread like tentacles into their homes. The effect is psychological paralysis.

The power systems that discipline the body greatly rely on volitional acquiescence and desire rather than brute force. As Shildrick and Price state,

> Indeed the efficacy of disciplinary practices may be greatest when they appear not as external demands on the individual but as self-generated and self-policed behaviours…[which] constitute what Foucault calls the technologies of the self. In other words, the objectifying gaze of the human sciences, which fragments and divides the body against itself, has its counterpart in a personal in-sight, which equally finds the body untrustworthy and in need of governance. Moreover, each form of surveillance incites the other, and renders its subjects wholly transparent. (Shildrick Price 438)

The internalized gaze of the company is complicated by the gaze of others on what appears to be an able body. Many disabled coal miners could "pass" for "whole" and "normal" bodies (a form of drag for miners). To avoid being labeled as "freakish" or as many of them say, "a sorry" (someone who is able but too lazy or "sorry" to work), disabled miners perform ability and able-bodiedness. One miner said that after he became disabled and could not work, he felt so self-conscious that his neighbors were watching him, looking at him as a sorry that he began to ritually and conspicuously go outside in view of his neighbors and pick up rocks in his drive way, doing the only work he physically could manage so as to carry out the full performance of the "normal" body he appeared to have.

Eddie: And I remember and, and what I'm telling you is the honest to gosh truth.
And one time we [he and his friend Joe Jackson] was talking you know and
and I remember Joe telling me that, an idle mind was the devil's workshop.

Hannah: Mm hmm.

E: I never knowed, Hannah, what he was talking bout
till / I had to quit work.
And they stopped me from workin or doin anything.

H: Mm hmm.

E: And I knowed what he was talking about.
And then that's when the devil / started, playin tricks with me.
And that's when I started comin [to a psychologist].

H: Hmm.

E: But, you know you're inspired by a lot a people, / a lot a people you're around.
You know, and that's the one thing I remember about Joe Jackson.
Everybody kinda has something that you remember them about you know.
That's what he told me: "An idle mind is the devil's workshop."

H: Mmm.

E: So when they stopped me from workin and
it even got to the point where I'd be in my backyard and
and I'd had a little cart behind my lawnmower and I'd lay down and
pick up / gravel and stuff out a the yard and
cause I was afraid people was a watchin me. We lived in between two roads, you know.
And / I said, "I ain't gonna do this." (*Hannah laughs softly*)
So I just started getting up and / doin what I wanted to do and that was it, / you know.

The eye of the devil is in his neighbors, who constantly watch his able-seeming body as it sits at home. Miners are caught in a triple gaze between: the neighbors who call them sorry; the comp doctors who call them "able;" and the other doctors who pull miners out of the mines against their will. Eddie takes control of his life by taking control of their gaze—he claims ownership over his body to "[do] what I wanted to do, and that was it."

III. Summary

Culture and space imprint on miners' disabled bodies, constricting breath and movement. "Once your minin' days are over," the body endures the effects of a life squeezed for years into 30 inch crawl spaces. Miners endure constant pain both physically, through black lung disease and missing limbs, and psychically, in the separation from their job as well as relationships with miners and the mines-body. Proving disability is a complex and multifarious obstacle for many miners. Networks of comp doctors "in bed" with the company keep miners out of the compensation they deserve and need to pay for everyday necessities such as electricity and house payments. Without either the "able" body to work and the "disabled" label to earn compensation, many former miners live in a liminal zone. The following chapter addresses how miners deal with dis-ability through re-membering the body and the places and spaces mining bodies inhabit.

CHAPTER 8: THE BODY RE-MEMBERED

As I became friends with more and more disabled miners, they revealed the painful corollary to their former relationship with the mines-body: intense feelings of loss not only of their former way of life, but of an irrecoverable relationship with place. My questions compounded: How do miners re-member the past and sustain themselves in the present after they become disabled and are unable to work in the mines or remain a part of mining communities? How do dreams and nightmares figure into the traumatic loss of the mines-body and their separation from mining communities? Many of them keep mementos from the mines—what is the function of these remnants of the past in the present and for the future? How are the mining towns themselves disabled? In these boom-turned-ghost-towns, how does a region deal with its ghosts? Having survived danger in the mines, how do miners deal with the daily pain of disability?

This chapter asks, how do coal miners use memory (personal and collective family/community memories) to sustain them in the present? Many said that after they become disabled, they disassociate from other miners and from mining communities—they turn inward, retreating from the company of those with whom they had formed sustained relationships. Why? In a seemingly contradictory movement, many miners felt compelled to return to the site of the mines—Earl said he would often return to the mouth of an old mine he once worked at and just stare at it. What is the role of the mines-body and other miners' bodies in remembering mining identity? In re-membering the body itself? Many narrate their injuries as a death of an old self and passage into a new body. How do miners use memory and story to suture together a corporeally fragmented body?

I. Leaving the Mines

The process of dealing with the after-effects of forcible removal from the mines is sometimes more painful and traumatic than wrestling with the daily dangers of living in the mines-body. Miners stress that they have difficulty leaving the mines-body—their survival of the danger of this place is complicated by the trauma of separation from it and the

difficulty of accepting survival itself. Caruth, Felman, Laub, and Lanzmann stress that trauma is not neurosis or merely repression, but "a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment […] a repeated suffering […] also a continual leaving of its site" (Caruth "Introduction" 10). Earl performs literal "continual leaving" each week: he moved from St. Charles, yet he comes back for church service every Sunday. He leaves the site of so much pain only to be called back—by the voice of the wound—into this site again and again.

Trauma challenges us to listen to impossibility, to listen to the event and the teller's departure from that event. Listening itself is potentially traumatizing (as Caruth says, *wounding*) for the listener but is necessary for ethical witnessing. One of the normative ways that "listening" often plays out in disability culture is through various support groups. As Shildrick and Price argue, the normative parameters set by disability support groups stabilize disabled identity, helping members to form a new identity secured and validated by their inclusion in a named, recognized Group:

> At an uncontested individual level, the deployment of norms offers a fantasy of control, a way of pinning down, categorizing and assuming the ability to manage a condition which constantly escapes attempts at closure, which continually produces new symptoms, or which returns to previous symptoms after a respite of weeks or months. They offer a way of adapting to the functioning of a body which suddenly runs out of energy, leaving you stranded in the middle of a shopping expedition, or half-way up a flight of stairs, or in the middle of making love. They create an illusion of mastery, never completely absent but never totally achieved. (Shildrick Price 442)

Shildrick and Price bring forth the ways that support groups normalize dis-ability from the inside out, providing support and a sense of shared experience between members, at the expense of stabilizing disability with a clear and centered set of definitional parameters. The rules of inclusion and exclusion within disability culture are based on a binary system of sameness and difference. Citing Butler, Shildrick and Price write that disability itself "is performative in the sense that it constitutes as an effect the very subject that it appears to express" (qtd. in Shildrick Price 442).

Contrary to the experiences of disability support groups that Shildrick and Price study, however, many of the miners I interviewed shied away from interaction with other miners—those codified as able or disabled—either in the form of planned one-to-one

interaction or support group participation. Perhaps these miners shun further surveillance of their bodies by others, even if these others may share in and help them cope with common experience. Eddie offered a different reason:

> Eddie: I remember when I first started comin to [see a psychologist]
> I really got depressed and bothered. And
> and I mean I even got to the point, Hannah, to where I don't go to the union meetings. I haven't been to the union meetings in years and years and years.
> Because I didn't want to be around / the guys that / put me
> in memory of the job I loved so much, you know what I'm sayin?

The bodies of other miners literally emplace other miners back into the mines-body: "guys that / *put me / in memory*." Coal miners witness to the impossibility of understanding the death of a body they still inhabit but which has become entirely new and 'broken.' Earl's subjectivity is formed in the site of a wound, as incommensurably the same yet an entirely different body (the former and the current: together, the re-membered body). Disabled coal miners stitch-together the torn tissue fragments of their present 'un-whole' bodies through a strategic dance of remembering and forgetting. They re-member through narratives that create 'whole' selves out of these incongruous, dichotomous corporeal selves.

Eddie makes the un-whole whole by forgetting the past (or "whole") self that otherwise creates a supplement of his present body. Through not-seeing his body in other miners' bodies, he is able to live in the present without the pain of re-membering a past that nevertheless haunts him. This haunting plays out in the constant striving away from these communities of miners who nonetheless surround him. Many other miners also said that after they become disabled, they disassociate from other miners and from mining communities—they turn inward, retreating to a more comfortable and removed space separate from mining space. Miners' bodily presence has the power to *put* other former miners *in memory*, physically emplacing them in another time/space/body through affective presence.

Flash-images of being in the mines appear to coal miners at the sight/site of current and other former miners[61]. For some, this sight integrates painful memory—for others, it re-

[61] In Margurite Duras's novel The Lover, when the woman sees the body of her Japanese lover, she cannot tell the difference between his live body and the dead body of her German lover—the sight of the live body inaugurates the "continual reappearance of a death she has not quite grasped, the reemergence, in sight, of her *not knowing* the difference between life and death" (Caruth Unclaimed 36-7).

opens the wound of incommensurability between present and past bodies, a sight to be avoided. Why do some coal miners not want to be in the presence of other coal miners after they are injured? Outside the mines, what does site/sight of these bodies do to/for disabled miners? Beyond the possibility of knowing a history of the loss of loved bodies, trauma testimony speaks to the impossibility that opens up the possibility to witness (Caruth Unclaimed 39). At the sight/site of other miners, coal miners relive in the memory of a traumatic loss that opens open an ambiguous space between the living and the dead. Their trauma is both in the bodily injury *and* in the loss of leaving that place.

This former corporeal self haunts Earl, calls him back into St. Charles, into the company of miners who are "like medicine" to him as he runs into them at the local clinic. Earl re-members St. Charles through fragments of physical remains of the town, and he re-members his own body through negotiated encounters and avoidance of former coal miners. In another conversation, this time back in Kingsport and comfortably seated in a private interview room, Earl told me about a recent and accidental meeting with an old friend in St. Charles when he returned for a physical:

Earl: First time I seen / one a my old buddies / I ran into him in a doctors' office.
Uh,
(*pause*)
it's been less than a month ago.
And he was one a the older / miners?
And Hannah I'm telling you the truth I would have rather, have sat / and talked—
his name is Haggie Barnette—
and I would have rather sat right there just like you and I
and talked to him. Not that I didn't need to see the *doctor*,
or need medication or anything?
But that time right there was precious to me.
Because I had not seen that man in 11 years

Hannah: Hmm.

Earl: And when I sat and looked at him,
I said, "There was one a the older coal miners
that took me under his wing,
that," I said, "and I learned a lot a things from."
And I said, "You set and you look at him now,
and," I said uh, / "he's not the same, ner everthing," because he had aged
quite a bit, he was crippled up.
Not like me, braces on his legs.

Hannah: Mmm.

Earl: And, that's when ye,
it's special time but that's when ye heart bleeds too.
And uh / I just got to thinking that,
that man, I said how *could* a *coal miner*
have affected me—and it's not just me—
in the manner that they have, Hannah.
It's like I told ye, I might be prejudiced, but to me, they're special, / they're so special.

As Earl spoke—and as he was silent—the memory of this encounter caused him to change his body position: his eyes moistened, his face with its chiseled wrinkles seemed to slightly glow, and his hands were very still, as if he did not want to 'break' that moment, now doubled and twice-lived through its ghosted presence in our co-performing witness space. The air felt thick, air seemed to press heavily on me to hold my body still with his. He turned his eyes from where he had been staring off at a point past my ear and focused on me. He said, "How could a coal miner affect me like that?" His words had said little about the encounter thus far (he later went on to narrate their conversation in detail), but the room became affectively charged through this witnessed memory, the air pregnant with emotion to the point that it seemed to *hold our bodies down* and tight into that moment.

Felman writes that the *accident* is only known through its effects, in the way it pursues the witness, whose testimony in turn pursues the accident. The witness becomes a medium of testimony, of accident, willing to be (re)possessed by pain to tell the story—pursuing the accident into the unknown, through fragmentation and darkness, because of the witnesses' belief in testimony's historical significance beyond that individual (hence the significance of witnessing to trauma) (Felman 31). Earl felt a similar significance with Haggie—times spent with each other were "special times," because what was shared between them went <u>beyond</u> them. Memory turns back on itself, folds over through testimony in order "to penetrate, the state of being *stricken, wounded* by reality" and to then reemerge to engage reality (34). In this movement at the site of the wound and within woundedness, the event is made accessible (Felman 34). For one Holocaust survivor, her husband "knew who [she] was" and knew that she *was* loss, dispossession, 'answerlessness' (53). The narrator knows herself only through the movement of her testimony to that loss—this knowledge of loss (and of her subjectivity) exists only through the process of testifying (53).

Coal miners answer to the loss of the coal mines through sometimes silent body-to-body presence-testimony of that impossibility of knowing the depth of their relationship with

the mines-body. These testimonies are located in silences—stories told in the mood created between Haggie and Earl's bodies, *moving* Earl's body through affectively charged particles in the air that *transform* Earl's consciousness: "How *could* a coal miner have affected me like that?" What does Haggie's body do to/for Earl? The encounter seems to create a productive ambiguity between remembering the past-dead through the sight of the living-dying body of Haggie; bearing witness together to death and dying through their own visibly dying bodies. It is *sight* that first arouses Earl's connection to Haggie—"when I sat and looked at him"—not a distancing gaze (as Lacan and Mulvey describe), but a loving look (as Oliver describes) that sees Haggie as "not like me" but also Schechner's *not-not-me*, a "special person" like himself. Sharing time together, re-membering who they once were, Haggie and Earl stitch together an imaginative "whole" body from the fragments of the present in that moment.

Passing from the isolation of a traumatic event happens only through listening (Caruth "Introduction" 11). Earl says that seeing Haggie was "better than medicine" for him—seeing and listening, listening through Oliver's "loving eyes," listening through co-presence, as affirmation of a sort of truth and "passing out of isolation" through the affective co-presence listening between Earl and Haggie. Speaking and listening "from the site of trauma" relies on "what we don't yet know of our own traumatic pasts" (11). Haggie knows what Earl does not yet know of the trauma of survival, and vice versa—their intersubjective witnessing to one another through co-presence and listening allows the formation of inner witness that forms subjectivity itself.

II. Body Memory

For miners with black lung, coal is written on each staggered breath, performatively iterated through each lungful of air. How does the body remember, sometimes beyond a person's will? Coal miners' subjectivities complicate the bifurcation of physical/mental trauma because they live with physical wounds that comprise a "new body": for those with black lung, each breath re-marks the gap between what once was and what incommensurably is. What is the role of physical pain in remembering? Caruth cites a useful example in her work Unclaimed Experience. She notes that in the film Hiroshima Mon Amour when a Japanese man slaps his lover, the slap materially brings/strikes her into the present moment and tangible presence of the Japanese lover's body. The slap marks a difference that interrupts her isolated narrative of looking to the dead body of her former lover (a German)

as "the first" (42). In my study, the physical pain from mining injuries (the breath-by-breath pain of chest-aching black lung, of back injuries that numb legs from the waist down) slaps miners such as Earl from confusion of past/present into the immediacy of now in/as *this* body and materiality (pain as both a reminder and a refusal of the past in forcing full focus on the present body).

What is the coal miners' body in relation to subjectivity? How do coal miners re-member bodies that are living-dying-eaten ("the coal's done eat up my lungs"), bodies made inextricably one with the mines-body and yet traumatically separated from a daily embodied relationship with that mines-body, such that all they have are the remains of that daily communication, body-to-body contact, in every coal-mucus breath? The enfleshed memory of that miner-and-mines-body relationship and their traumatic separation is repeated, re-enacted through every constricted, painful inhalation. Flashback-repetitions are so indelibly embedded with the ictus rhythms of fluid-flowing organs that they become background for daily activities: walking to the car, eating a sandwich, writing a check, or saying hello. What does it mean that coal miners must constantly *forget* their pain-filled breath as a reminder of coal mining bodies in order to live sanely as the body of the present? How do they psychically/narratively re-cast pain in order to live with the seemingly more painful loss of daily relationship with the mines-body? How might this answer to the fatalism of their narratives?

III. Dreams and Trauma

Cathy Caruth writes that trauma "achieves a haunting power"—it hovers belatedly, possessing others (Caruth Unclaimed 4-5). Trauma is revealed in the effects of its repetition—in its refusal to assimilate into consciousness and be fully known, trauma repeats itself (through dreams, actions, silences) as (etymologically) a *wound* that 'cries out' and re/turns on the survivor through haunting gestures (4). Caruth asks, "is trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it" (7)? In trauma narratives, there is both the crisis of death and crisis of life—of seeing death and of incommensurably surviving it (7). Trauma memory questions the notion of simple, self-referential History.

Seeing and listening from the *site of trauma*, witnessing from the *site of the wound,* we sense through incomprehension, through *not* understanding (56). Freud understands the flashback (a painful repetition) as unmediated traumatic experience that has not been

rendered meaningful through narrative sense (59). Traumatic dreams and flashbacks "bear witness to a survival that exceeds the very claims and consciousness of the one who endures it" (60). Repetitions are attempts to master and claim both an experience that was never grasped *in time* (in the time of the occurrence) *and* survival itself (62-4). What does it mean that both the once-wounded body *and consciousness* survive trauma? The body experiences trauma directly, but the psyche does not, and psychic experience is accessible only through recognition of its *inaccessibility* (61). What is the role of the coal miners' wounded and painful bodies in witnessing survival?

Flashbacks can re-traumatize and re-wound subjectivity—Caruth suggests this may account for Holocaust camp prisoners' or Vietnam war veterans' suicide only after they have survived the experience (63). The trauma is both within the experience and in the survival of it; in traumatic dreams *and* in the waking up into consciousness. For example, in Unclaimed Experience, Caruth recounts Freud's dream, in which a father loses his child's body in a fire. Freud's account of a father's dream of the actual death of his son transforms death into life—the father cannot see the corpse of his son *live* except through unconscious dream (95). There is a death of the old body that haunts miners who live as/in a new (pain-full) body—this old body is accessed through dreams and is marked by the trauma of waking to the new/pained body. Freud stresses that it is the wish-fulfillment of consciousness *not* to wake up from dream. In Freud's example, the father's dream functions to keep the father asleep.

For Lacan, this same dream functions to awaken the father—the son's call, "Wake up!" summons the father to respond through waking (traumatically) to consciousness. Lacan locates trauma in the awakening—the "necessity and impossibility of responding to another's death" (100). Caruth says that the awakening is a repetition, a re-wounding, of the trauma (reenacting the child's death), but it is also a new act of answering the child's command to depart and wake up, marking the difference to which the father incommensurably wakes (from living son in dream to dead son in conscious experience) (106). Passing on the child's words (the call for the father to awaken and survive to tell others of his son's burning body) answers back to the child's death but is not a "final word." The performance of the father's telling helps this trauma to intentionally unend and purposefully perpetuate—to witness from the site of the wound and find healing in the recognition of the impossibility of understanding the child's death.

Many miners told me stories of dreams they would have about coal mining[62]—one miner called his dreams "nightmares," yet as he continued in his story the "nightmare" was not a traumatic experience envisioned in the mines (he said he dreamed he was "just doing my job, workin the machines" and enjoying himself) but the traumatic awakening *into* his present circumstance of being disabled and unable to work in that space anymore:

Hannah: Do you ever dream about mining?

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[62] Earl's dreams leave a residue in conscious thought, like a stubborn stain that "you don't completely…get the dream out."

Earl: And I've, I really,
I don't know ***why***, I dreams I don't know .
I've often thought about it, I said, "That's so strange."
I said, "Why would ye dream about goin back in the coal mines?"
And I said, "Ye're ridin in, one a them cars there,"
or, / just about like I told ye when we was runnin
in the long wall and ye can see the roof just like a rain storm once it started, / uh, to

Hannah: Mm hmm.

E: to cut? And I have seen that.
But / you say, "Did it ever fall?" —no.
Now I don't know why.
But you always something happens you don't, completely,
I don't feel, get the dream out. But you wake up or something and I said, "Now that was aweful strange."

H: Hmm.

E: And I do not, uh Hannah I don't like to,
you say, "Maybe that's a superstition or something," —I don't know. But uh
I just don't like to keep dreamin
two or three times about, individuals that
that I've worked with or something because you
you get a feelin, "Look, is something really, fixin to happen?" Or,
"Have I seen them for the last time?" Or

H: Mmm.

E: And, ye might say, "Well now that's strange or stupid Earl."
No, maybe that's part of (*he slaps the table*)
what was put into me as a coal miner or something. Like I said, that
they's things that you cannot explain.
But you know, they happen. And you can say, "Man
I got feelins there," or, or, "How that affects me there."

Earl believes that perhaps this dream was put into him as part of being a coal miner, a part of what makes coal mining get "into his blood." Like those stains on coal miners' knees, Earl can't get is residue of these dreams out of his blood. Part of coal mining culture, it seems, is recognizing the power of the gaps between new/old bodies that these dreams represent.

Sam: I have before.
I haven't in a long time, but used to.
You know uh,
a few years after I couldn't go to work, I used to wake up
thinking I was late for work. And / yeah and
and even to the point where I'd be letting my basket down you know to get my work clothes on and stuff like that? (*laughs*) / Yeah.

H: Now what do you mean letting your basket down?

S: Well, you go into the bath house
and ye, when ye come out ye hang ye
work clothes on a basket, pull em up in the ceiling you know?

H: Huh, I didn't know that.

S: Yeah you'd let em, that's where you'd change clothes,
put your work clothes on, yeah.

H: Huh.

S: Yeah.
I remember / one time I dreamed that
I's, a little bit late and I was hurryin and
I'd a let, all kinds a baskets down tryin to find mine letting the wrong one down and it was just crazy to watch. (*Hannah laughs*)
And I said, "Gosh."
And then I'd wake up.
And you'd um, / be at home you know.

H: Hmm. / Would you be disappointed when you'd wake up?

S: Yeaaaah!
Just like about now, I know, like when I was in Vietnam I'd
dream about bein home and,
you know, be talking and right in my livin room. I mean I could see everthing:

H: Yeah.

S: coffee table and / family in there. And then you wake up
and realize and, / gosh, / yeah.

Sam compares his waking life now outside the mines to his experiences in Vietnam, and his dreams of going back and working in the mines are a visit back home with family in his living room. Dreams offer an escape from the present war (raging in his body and with insurance companies) that has upset his former way of life. Sam's trauma is in his waking. These dreams parallel Caruth's writing on flashbacks—these dreams haunt former coal miners as "nightmares" in the awakening:

Eddie: When I got hurt…
it just felt like somebody stuck a knife in my back and / that was it.

> It was 1:58 pm on January the 20th.
> It was, I mean it was just weird.
> It happened and I looked at my watch
> and it started from there…
> It bothered me so bad,
> because, I would go, to bed and have
> nightmares if you would, about the coal mines.
> I would be in, in there runnin the miners and everything you know.
> And wake up, and be disappointed.

Eddie still dreams of working in the mines—"and then I wake up." The site of awakening is the re-wounding of this trauma, the re-enactment of the fissure: "I dreamed that I was working in the mines, just doing my daily work…and then I wake up." The trauma of these dreams is facing the old body—seeing the body that they cannot see/perform in conscious life. In Freud's dream, the father sees the body of his son alive, and in Freud's interpretation the consciousness wants to remain in dream to perpetuate this seeing/vision/encounter. But as Lacan points out, the child's dream-voice ("wake up, can't you see I'm burning?") is what wakes the sleeping father into consciousness, and this waking—the survival of the consciousness—is the traumatic re-wounding.

Like Sam's dream, the nightmare nature of Eddie's dream is in the waking—he wakens to the nightmare of separation from the mines which he rejoins only in sleep. For coal miners, they are both the father and dead child of Freud's dream—two bodies fused in one subjectivity that lives in the gap, in the wound, in the site of incommensurability between the body that was able and the body that is dis-abled. In this liminal site coal miners witness to the impossible past-present-future of coal mining experience in and after the mines. Their former bodies have 'died,' they take on radically altered and transformed dis-abled bodies, painful bodies—yet remain haunted by this able flesh and sinew whose transmuted tissues they embody all the same. The child/able-flesh cries out to them, "Can't you see I'm burning?"

Caruth maintains that the paradoxical nature of the necessity to comprehend through the *in*comprehensibility of death is apparent in bringing together Lacan and Freud's otherwise competing interpretations. Embracing this paradox is, to Caruth, the source of witnessing to impossibility, to that which has not yet been comprehended and could not be seen *in time* at the time of the event's occurrence. Coal miners face the paradox between an old/whole body that lives through dreams and the new/disabled body living in waking life—

this feeds into their stories of coal mining as "just unbelievable" or "just impossible," yet they *lived* it and *do* remember it. These dreams present a way to fulfill the subconscious desire to return, a thought many of them shun in conscious life because of the pain of being "put [] in memory / of that job I loved so much."

IV. Remains

In my fieldwork, coal miners testified not only to the loss of their own formerly able bodies, but also to the bodily loss of others to death. These tremendous losses were not so much overcome as infilled and circumvented by the swelling horde of tangible mementos many miners kept as touchstones for memories of the past. Building on Love and Kohn's work, these souvenirs are positive touchstones for memories. Coal miners brought these artifacts to me, and an excess of objects amassed on my kitchen table: 13 instructional videos dating from 1938-1998 which were and are used in training new miners; five grocery-bagfuls of small and large fossils dating from 250-300 million years old; newer mining caps with battery-powered lights; a child's turtle-top mining helmet from the 1920's; carbide lanterns (one handed down from grandfather to uncle to son); 30-year-old methane gas detectors called "possum lamps;" a boxed sticker collection; photographs; a United Mine Workers' contract; and Jimmy's scrapbook chronicling his mother's death in the mines. These remains of their own and others' lives were objects charged with narrative power and story.

What is the function of these "souvenirs" for miners? What functions do keepsakes handed down through generations of miners serve for the miners who keep them? How do miners treat these objects—how does one particular object call to be addressed and handled in a certain (caressing, caring) way? What powers do these objects have and hold over their owners? What is the weight of these objects as they are carried on over the years? What do they lend in terms of continuity (following Myerhoff's work) and shaping a personal identity through story and generations of stories?

<u>Cat Counts</u>

One of the most poignant tangible touchstones for memory presented to me was a scrapbook of Jimmy Castle's mother's death. Jimmy's story of his mother's death is worth quoting at length:

> Jimmy: And then when I, when I turned 18
> is when she went because of, you know, social security was over for us. Unless I went to

school, like I went to school and she could have gone on for me.
But I didn't go on to college I just went straight into the mines.

Hannah: You basically went in at the same time?

J: Right.
She, she had / as soon as I got out
maybe a year like at, you know she, she'd started.

H: Mm hmm.

J: And she was workin, she said, "Come on, you know, and go to work, uh
and get ye a good job

H: Yeah.

J: that was union."

H: Yeah.

J: And I was workin in what they called McClure Two and she was in McClure One.
I worked in a slope mines and she worked in a shaft.

H: What are those?

J: A slope is one that you'd go in, like on a Jeep / or a, like a buggy.
And you can, you can just drive in it.

H: Hmm.

J: Deep mines, you go down the elevator.

H: Mm hmm.

J: And it goes down and then, uh
you go off and get to the section of coal, cause of the coal seam down there?

H: Right.

J: So, that's uh / in the mine she got killed in
course, it had a lot a gas in it, and when you go down in a deep mines?
The, they're really / gassy.

H: Mm hmm.

J: And that was a problem.
That's what, probably got her killed there.
She went / down in there, they was down,
I forget how many feet they was down but they was in a low / seam.

H: Mm hmm.

J: And uh / the gas / generally they had braddishes you got neutral area which is
where ye track comes in and ye ride ye Jeeps up to the front of it.

H: Right.

J: And they'd braddish it off.

H: Mm hmm.

J: And it's sealed off and that's, that's the reason they call that a neutral area.
And then you have all ye headings to where they'd
dig the coal, you know.

H: Yeah.

J: So you might have five or six headings / that they're takin out
and they'll cut a heading / and move to another one. And then uh, a pinner
will come and pin that section up.

H: Yeah.

J: And put roof bolts in?

H: Yeah.

J: And they just follow each other, they'd cut this one and another one moves over and
they'll take like a 20 foot cut at a time.

H: Yeah.

J: And they keep the neutral area / based off, and the gas
the air comes up, and it takes the gas from
around the front, you know, and it brings it back out in what they call the return.

H: Mm hmm.

J: And it goes back out.
Well, if you've got any breakage of your braddishes / in the neutral area
then the gas comes back around, it can cut back into the neutral area.

H: Yeah.

J: And then that's what, caused the explosion.

H: Mmm.

J: Uh, they was either a braddish out / or a lot a times they, they'd use curtains

H: Yeah.

J: and they'd keep the curtains up.

H: That's what I've heard about, curtains.

J: Yeah, curtains will
you know, keep the gas, the gas actually it stays up kind a high anyway, it rises.
And uh, they keep the curtains up, so
what had happened either the curtain, was down
or the braddish was out, and they hadn't kept the braddish up or something.
And it had come around and come back into the neutral area.

And then the foreman was a comin up on a Jeep, and, that's on the rails?

H: Uh huh.

J: So,
you get a lot a sparks

H: From the rail?

J: From that, and / the gas had accumulated, on the / on the track itself.
And as he come up he set it off,
And once it set it off that followed, the
the gas, where it was comin in it followed it and come back around.

H: Mmm!

J: And then followed the, you know, all the way back around to the gas from where the gas was comin from.

H: Yeah,

J: And that's what / you know, everbody that was workin up / around the face…

H: Mmm!

J: …But that's what, that's what set it off.
And they had a bunch of violations but none of em
you know / they couldn't account
that they was what caused / you know / caused it. But / who knows
you know, what was hid or covered up or whatever.

H: Yeah,

J: Because they was a big
law suit was filed and they had six or seven big lawyers from way up in Washington DC that was

H: Yeah.

J: you know, fightin / against it.

H: Yeah.

J: But nothing ever come of it.
Some, something, something happened somewhere along the line to where they uh
uh, they said they wasn't no
responsibility ever responsibility wasn't, through the company?

H: Yeah.

J: Of what happened that it was just something that / you know could a happened
anyway and / and it wasn't nobody's fault.

H: What did you think?

J: I think they was responsible, I mean, you know, because of the

that's something, you know they had violations there was a lot a violations that was you know

H: Yeah.

J: that was written up?

H: Yeah.

J: Through the inspectors.

H: Yeah.

J: But still yet / you can't
the big companies like at, you, you can't fight.
They've got more money than anybody else there, you're, you're not gonna beat a big company that's got money, / you know.
Even though you got lawyers.
They find a way of getting around,
So they've pretty well got away
you know, with nothing
you know, I mean payin nothing now.

H: Oh my gosh,

J: Which, they should a been a lot more done / than what they was.

It wasn't long after that to where they shut the mines down the mines are shut down now but they're talking about goin back in and opening it back up / and startin in.

H: Mmm!

J: But they're gonna lease it under a different name, so.

H: Does that mean it won't be union?

J: uh, that's the reason they changed it to another name.

H: I heard that same story from somebody else.

J: Yeah, but see that's how they, got away from the union they just put it in a different name?

H: Mm hmm.

J: Actually the same place owns it they put it in a different name and they come back so they're / they know the ways, around / around all the stuff.

H: Oh my gosh,

J: Aah, (*he sighs deeply*)
you know, you just can't fight the big corporations.

Jimmy's Scrapbook

To help him tell this story, Jimmy brought a scrapbook with him. Through the book, Jimmy brought forth stories of a community tied together in this loss. From that story about the loss of one life, the individual lives of at least 50 others in Jimmy's community poured out between us through co-constructed conversation, interested questions, shared laughter and sorrow, and active listening. The scrapbook opened up the collective life of this mining community, which exceeded the borders of underground mining places and aboveground towns to show mining space as a shifting and mobile force.

In-filled. Excessive. Piling up so many pieces to supplant a lost life. Jimmy's scrapbook objects have a storytelling and even story-making agency of their own; they "contain their own narratives, talk back to subjects, demand dialogue, and offer engagement" (Love Kohn 4). Through this tangible memento of his past, I participated in what Lisa Love and Nathaniel Kohn call "memory-morphing" between the bodies of Self and Other, between myself and Cat's family (1). Charged with meaning and agency, such souvenirs "can serve as positive fetishes," allowing the owner to join with the Other that has been encountered and the Other for which the souvenir stands (1).

Jimmy carefully turned the black construction paper pages of the scrapbook, pointing out death and benefit certificates, and photos of Cat's gravesite the day of her burial.

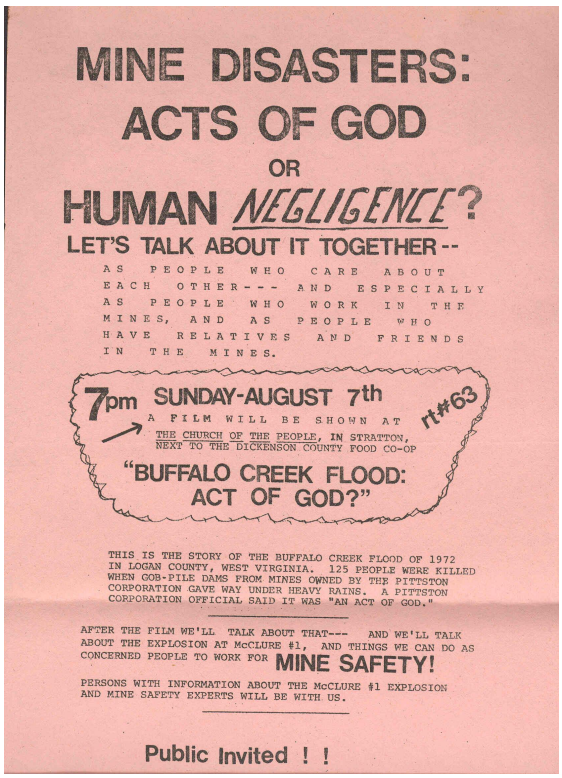

Mine Explosion

oice Of Virginia's Baby" USPS 684-350 25 Cents

Kills Seven

Virginia State Troopers Direct A Vehicle Arriving At McClure

Court



MINE DISASTERS:
ACTS OF GOD
OR
HUMAN NEGLIGENCE?
LET'S TALK ABOUT IT TOGETHER--

AS PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT EACH OTHER--- AND ESPECIALLY AS PEOPLE WHO WORK IN THE MINES, AND AS PEOPLE WHO HAVE RELATIVES AND FRIENDS IN THE MINES.

7pm SUNDAY-AUGUST 7th

rt#63

A FILM WILL BE SHOWN AT THE CHURCH OF THE PEOPLE, IN STRATTON, NEXT TO THE DICKENSON COUNTY FOOD CO-OP

"BUFFALO CREEK FLOOD: ACT OF GOD?"

THIS IS THE STORY OF THE BUFFALO CREEK FLOOD OF 1972 IN LOGAN COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA. 125 PEOPLE WERE KILLED WHEN GOB-PILE DAMS FROM MINES OWNED BY THE PITTSTON CORPORATION GAVE WAY UNDER HEAVY RAINS. A PITTSTON CORPORATION OFFICIAL SAID IT WAS "AN ACT OF GOD."

AFTER THE FILM WE'LL TALK ABOUT THAT--- AND WE'LL TALK ABOUT THE EXPLOSION AT McCLURE #1, AND THINGS WE CAN DO AS CONCERNED PEOPLE TO WORK FOR MINE SAFETY!

PERSONS WITH INFORMATION ABOUT THE McCLURE #1 EXPLOSION AND MINE SAFETY EXPERTS WILL BE WITH US.

Public Invited ! !

Figure 47 Newspaper articles, photographs, and posters from Jimmy Castle's scrapbook. The cluster of black and white photographs were taken with Cat's old camera and unexposed film. Courtesy of Jimmy Castle.

There were so many flowers—evidence not only of how many people loved her, but of the grand scale that this death marked in this community, welling up in an excess of flower bouquets and intricate flower-pictures of a miner's hat and a shovel and pick. On the gravesite there is a concrete replica of a contemporary miner's cap and light.

Jimmy turned the page to some black and white photos whose style seemed strangely out of place among the yellowed color prints:

Jimmy: Some a these are in black and white because of the
I think that somebody had a black and white camera there that
Mom had had, and it still had film in it that.

H: Oh wow. / Oh wow!

J: And it was, it was old.
This was one she'd had and it was real old and it still had film in it and that's the reason we used the black and white cause it still had the film it was one she had.

H: Oh my gosh.

J: And we used that and cause we didn't figure it, it would even work and the pictures took.

H: Wow.

J: And it was in black and white, cause it was from the old Polaroid cameras it was real old.
And she'd had for years and it actually worked, and we couldn't believe it so we kept them pictures.

My skin prickled when Jimmy told me about these pictures. Using her camera to shoot pictures of her own grave, it was as if Cat's eye was on her own funeral. The family didn't expect the photos to come out, as if the eye of the camera would die with the owner. But she "looks on" through her camera, a miracle, almost a glimpse into her vision at the graveside (Fig. 47).

Turning more pages, the book is filled with excessive documentation—signed checks and gasoline receipts…I wondered how he collected all of these pieces. It was as if he was saving every scrap from her life and her final days, in a nervous drive to pile up that which might keep the memory tangible and make a body come back to embodied presence before him. But Jimmy didn't make the album—he later told me that his wife put this together for him.

Jimmy often seemed to keep the scrapbook at a distance from him. He would point with his pinkie finger to the pictures and letters pasted inside. As we talked, he kept his gaze mostly on my face and eyes, looking down occasionally at the book but often only as a passing glance. While I poured over these photos, Jimmy averted his gaze, as if trying to keep himself from being drawn in by its power. He kept saying, "You can take it with ye," and "Some of this stuff will take time to read through," encouraging me to make copies, read, and look at it closely. Yet his attitude seemed to contradict this—as if the pain of his mother's death emanated out from this object and, to avoid this pain, he kept at a safe distance from it.

Jimmy: And uh / this was some a the stuff / this was some of the
you know where it told about the mines? And this picture actually
this right here is my brother in law. (*see Fig. 47 newspaper article—people in car*)

H: Really?

J: And this was when they was comin down into the mines / after the explosion?

H: Oh gosh.

J: And this is my brother in law and my sister she's settin in the back and this was
a friend of my / my mom's?

H: Mmm!

J: And
they was commin
to the mines the night of the explosion this was when all the cops was down
there?

H: Mmm.

J: And I come, behind em you know, I hadn't got there yet.

H: Yeah.

J: But they woke me up, they come to my door, a friend a mine did
and uh, knocked on my door and woke me up it was kinda late at night and she worked night
shift.
And come to the door and he said uh,
"There's been an explosion at the mines."
And I only lived like two miles from where the mine was at.
And the first thing I did was I looked uh,
well no she worked the evening shift and she got off at about 11 o'clock.

H: Mm hmm,

J: And this was about 12 or 1 o'clock.
And uh / he said there'd been an explosion at the mines.

And uh / I looked at the clock and I said,
I said, "Well mom's probably done out by now,"
I said, "Ye know, it's already over," and he said, "No it happened earlier." *(This last part is said fast and together—his hope is simultaneous with its rebuttal)*

H: Mmm.

J: And then when he said that I said, "Oh Lord,"
and uh / so I got ready and we all went down there.
And they didn't tell us nothing we sat there all night.
And / it was way up into the next day / before they finally told us
you know / that / there wasn't none of em survived.

H: And you stayed up all night anxious.

J: Yeah. / Yeah.
And they knowed, they knowed from the first, / you know.
They just kept sayin it was too hot to get in there before they could, tell but they already knew.
But they made us all sit there you know all that time until they finally told us that
they wasn't nobody survived it, you know.

H: How did they know? Did they dig in there, did they find…?

J: Yeah, yeah they finally, you know went in / and uh,

H: That night? Or…?

J: It was the next day.
It was the next day they finally got in.

H: Mmm!

J: Because it was still hot in there you know the gas
they's afraid a settin the gas back off cause a the / the fire had actually burnt itself out.

H: Shew! / Gosh.

J: This is a picture of her right here, before she went in one night.

H: Ohh.

J: She had her lunch box there. I think we've still got her lunch box and

H: Really?

J: and her stuff, some of her stuff.

H: Mmm.

J: And this / these are just some of the stuff that that tells about what happened, this and this there.

At the end of the scrapbook, Jimmy's wife had included photographs of their two children. As we talked about these photos at the end—including some additional press

photos of Elvis, a particular favorite of his wife—our story about Cat seemed to lift beyond these pages, connecting Cat's story to the generations after her who survive her death. At the sight of his children, and in response to my questions about them and their interests, Jimmy pulled out his wallet and began to show me more recent pictures of his children. Touchstones of the dead called forth touchstones of the living. The scrapbook offered an end to Cat's story that, as with Caruth's analysis of Freud's dream, answers back to loss without giving a "final word." The scrapbook guided us to the excess of stories effusing out of Cat's life experiences, and it also provided a way out of loss into a trajectory of living bodies, full of promise and hope for the future. Full of proud Papa smiles, he poured over these pictures of his children. The scrapbook called Jimmy out of Cat's death and into the life she gave him and her grandchildren, in the end turning Cat's story into a survivor's story.

My reactions to Jimmy's scrapbook and his story come in spurts and flash images: mother; melting bodies; loss; pain; too hot to get in there; too hot to get out; waiting; waiting; waiting. The remains of a life—black and white pictures of Cat's gravesite, taken with Cat's own camera and unexposed film, her death certificate, newspaper articles from The New York Times—stories packed into objects charged with narrative power and energy. Jimmy gave me the scrapbook for a while so I could have time to look through it.

Her pictures haunted me.

Over the summer there were other objects: a carbide lamp that belonged to Donald's grandfather, who passed it on to his uncle, who then passed it to Donald. Donald's mining hat with the coal etched into its scored top. Eddie brought me one of his five boxes of mining stickers that were keepsake collectables, objects that he and other miners traded when they worked in the mines. These precious keepsakes amassed in my hands and piled up on my kitchen table, each one charged with the order to *tell*, to *remember*, to never forget, even as the fragile tin rim of Donald's carbide lamp threatened to cave in under my touch.

V. Remembering St. Charles

These bodily losses to disability and death paralleled the deteriorating economic and social natures of the small Appalachian towns in which Jimmy and many other miners live. One afternoon in November, Earl took me to his hometown of St. Charles, Virginia. Many houses lay half-burned, and former businesses sat with sad holes punched through the display windows. We drove down what was once the main street of St. Charles, and he filled in the

gaps of the landscape with his words. I wondered, in this space of so much obvious departure and loss: How would southwest Virginia be different without mining? What does this work do in/to this community to make it what it is? What does the phenomenon of mining labor really evoke in how communities are made?

Ghost Towns

Miners described the evolving relationship between coal camp towns and the mines—Earl's story of his hometown of St. Charles serves as a primary example of this relationship. Earl said that when he was younger and his father was a miner, St. Charles was less than three and a half miles away from five major coal companies.

> Earl: Where that town / was a boom town, as you can call it
> I, as, as coal mining / started to thrive / in thE[63] 30's…
> And one time / they had twenty-two / that's the most I could remember / taxi cabs.
> They was even a bus / that they ran / up and down / the holler…
> But they were / just crowded with homes.
> And then / like I said these uh / these coal camp areas, or the town
> Saint Charles was / approximately at yer farthest point, three and a half miles
> from *five major coal companies*…
> But [you] would / say, "Good Lord New York's not got a thing on Saint Charles except the tall buildings."

Currently, many coal miners still live in St. Charles, but they must drive 30 minutes to an hour away from the town to reach the closest mines. Work at a union mine takes one on a farther drive. These coal mines still offer the best paying jobs around and offer coal miners "star status" in their communities (many say it is not a problem for them to get loans from local banks or purchase a new car on credit because they are known for working for a high-paying company).

Earl took me to St. Charles in November, 2004. We drove and walked up and down what was once the main street of St. Charles, and he filled in the gaps of the landscape with his words. He contrasted a place that was once "solid[64]" but now riddled with "gaps"—gaps between houses where arson has leveled homes, and gaps in the sense of community spirit he once felt in St. Charles:

> Earl: This place right here—

---

[63] Earl often voices "the" with a hard-"E" at the end—I respect his pronunciation through the capitalized "thE."

[64] Earl: That's a saddened part, you know, at one time
they wasn't gaps like these, where these homes are close together…
But this was a *solid*, I mean to tell ye. Big time.

now it's a shame Hannah / that was, burnt, this right here was burned…
This Hannah right here is uh / that wasn't / it got out a control
and just right / this whole thing right now
that uh what you're seein there / in the last few days / the uh
aluminum siding and stuff has been taken off a that…
And that's what / it's just heart *breakin*, Hannah things that, you see like this and you say,
"Who would ever want…?" / or this and that.
You've got / just some nuts, really.

Hannah: Yeah.

E: And most of the time it comes right back to / that, a lot a the time, I'd say,
the old drugs, or something like that's involved.
And, they just don't care…
And uh, let you see this a little bit,
and I'll show ye what I'm a talking about, which is heart *breaking.*
You don't know / where the pride / in the people could a gone.

H: Yeah.

E: Or something that, it just, it wasn't like that.

Earl marks the incommensurability between past and present. For Earl, it seems, "the pride" of the town is a physical absence that picked up and moved out with the coal camps. He contrasts the town today, with very few cars, with the "busy busy busy" streets that used to be there. Earl said he finally had to move from St. Charles not because "that wasn't good enough for you…it's not that I'm better than anyone," but because the present reality of St. Charles was irreconcilable with the home he had known it to be.

Earl: This has been my home practically all my life.

Hannah: Yeah.

E: And that's why I say / that / when you know,
hey, you come in part of this, you looked at
part of it as we go on up in the holler / that you look at—
you could say, "How could that have changed

H: Mm hmm.

E: to be like that?"
And I was here to see it.
And I often wondered,
and I said, "It wasn't one of them deals: overnight," I said, "It took years."
And probably we didn't notice it as much / where we was goin by all the time as
we do right now. And then
you get to thinking about what *was* up here and what was up *there.* (*a loud truck passes*)
I even today, Hannah.
I even think, "Lord that, that seems impossible but I *seen* it."

Moving away from the town meant leaving home as well as leaving a spiritual calling. Earl understands this to be the place where God had "planted" him, and switching church communities would be the equivalent of breaking a spiritual bond for him. He returns here every Sunday, like a weekly pilgrimage:

> Earl: Yeah we come / that, we come here Sunday morning and
> go home till about Sunday night and then
> come down there where you and I left [in Jonesville].
> Come back up here that uh / you figure you allow / 30 minutes / and uh
> that's what it'll take. And I say, "We'll / we'll be up at the church," and
> and that's why I told you a lot a people / says that, "You've got churches all around ye."
> But, when / when you're really, I believe Hannah, that ye belong to God,
> that he puts you in a church, you just can't up and—that's like a school.
> That's like, it's not easy to get up and say,
> "Hey, I'll go to school there next year, I didn't like this," and / hop around.
> But uh / I've really been a, blessed person right here, and this church still is.
>
> Hannah: Hmm.
>
> E: And that's just why I say that / I don't understand a lot a things but,
>
> H: That's home.
>
> E: (*nods*) that's home.

The incommensurability between past and present realities inhabiting the same space haunts him. He assures me, "take me to my word, as far as people they's some wonderful people right here," which is why he does not understand the rampant poverty and drug abuse. Arson has become a popular pastime for high and bored youth in the area. What lagging industry and economic stagnation hasn't destroyed in St. Charles, arson fires have.

Figure 48 Arson fires destroyed one of the first houses Earl and I came to when we entered St. Charles. Only the chimney remains here. Photo by the author.

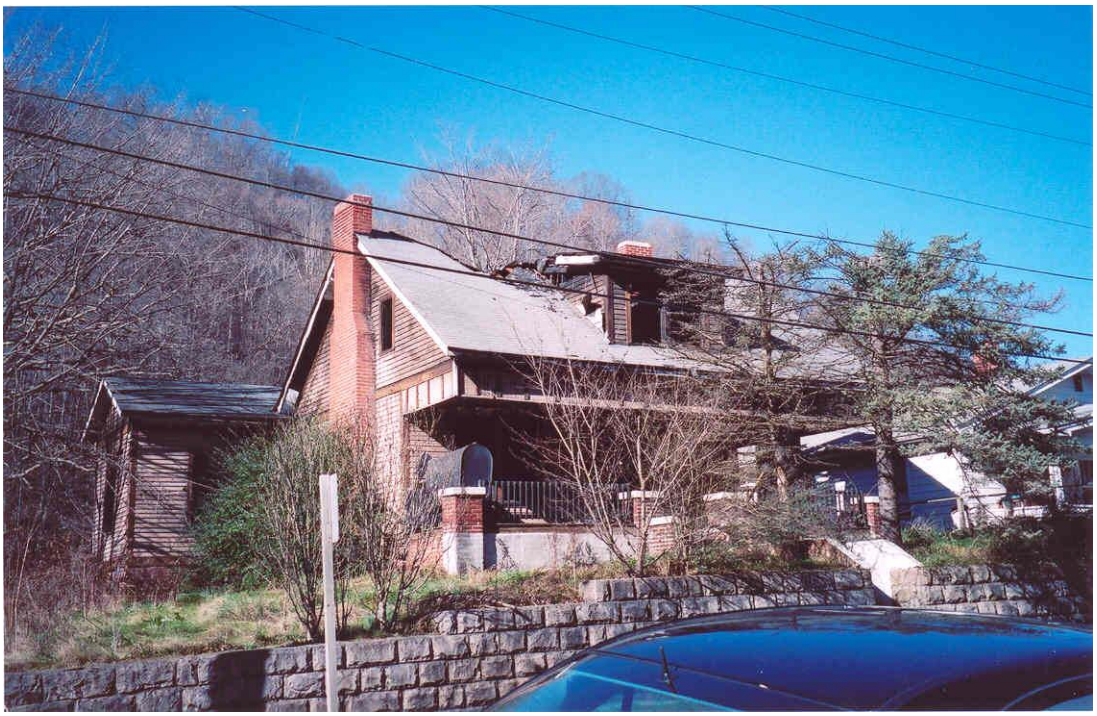


Figure 49 Immediately to the right of the lot depicted in Fig. 48, this home had also showed arson damage on its upper story. Photo by the author.

E: Right chere was a shoe shop, just like we said where it started here / and come up.
And you come up and you had the / the beer joint "Tom Little's Beer Joint."
You had, believe it or not Hannah, you had in between there / there was a Kroger store.

H: Really?

E: A Kroger store, that sit right in here.

H: Hmm.

E: And then, when you went up just a little bit / there set the candy shop.
Then, there was the theatre.
And that was not I mean
I'm not gonna tell ye it was a / it wasn't one a them that, hold a hundred people,
hey, it was a big theater, really.
Alright, it uh / at the the-at-er then right beside a that, / that uh, you had another little, uh,
well they's a restaurant there but that was / that was the / a lady that uh
her name was Scott—no relationship—that ran, that right there had wonderful food and
and it was a place that a lot a the kids and everthing from
school would even go there and sit down, plus some grown ups it's / clean nice.
Didn't have to worry about this and that.

H: Yeah.

E: And then / like I said on this other side
on this other side of where the sportsmen's club, would sit
that was built across they's a bridge, we're goin to go over
they's a creek, or, and everthing ran under that building,

H: Hmm

E: and uh, everything.
And then right above that right there / you had like I said Roberts's Creek Caf-uh, Café,
beer joint.
And now, right next to it / where the building that uh, separate / you had what they
called at the time / a Five and Ten or a novelty

H: Mm hmm.

E: store.

H: All of that?

E: Plus / right before / you got up against the building there / right there, Doc Shaun
we had a pharmacy here in St. Charles.

H: Hmm.

E: And it's one of the / that ye see in books see on television the old / old something.

H: Mm hmm.

E: And then the buildings that you see right now / that uh / those were set
they's a person that they did catch right there that's / and I'm thankful, I mean
but he's, he's in prison right now.

Earl says there were many hardware stores here, evidence of the growing town in need of lumber and building supplies. We look into the shell of a building that looks solid from one side, but as you drive past the inside looks like it was bombed out. It is a brick hull that encases piles of rusted metal machinery parts—infilled with used and discarded parts. He uses the physical remains of this building to contrast "then" and "now" in St. Charles:

Earl: And then uh / and then you look at this right now see that's what I'm a sayin
just these through here and I want you to look and, when you have to look at something like
this Hannah and say, / "This is heart breakin…"
And, like I say this / the upstairs here
the upstairs in that building (*he motions to the two-story building beside the hollowed-out alley*)
the upstairs and look at those windows right there / that's
that's the thing I say when ye come up here, / Hannah, and
and ye whenever ye come, and say that wasn't done the last time. That had been—
cause when I seen that windows, I said, "God, what's it all comin to?"

H: Mmm.

E: I said, "Why do they want to destroy / something like at?"
And where that says, "The Clothes / Closet?"

H: Yeah?

E: That used to be, right there—and I would say they was probably more money
than any bank around here—that's where Lee Bank
and Trust Company / was located.

H: Wow.

E: Right there. / Lee Bank and Trust Company.

Earl likens the image of illegal drug sales and use in St. Charles to that of a "broken record"—this place is condemned to play the same tune over and over again. The phonograph needle that reads the record's song skips on the scratched surface of St. Charles—the scratch was put there by companies who pulled out through the 1970's, devastating a local economy that had built its booming livelihood on mining work. Formerly agricultural, then dependent on "five major coal companies" for its work, the symbiotic relationship between town and company broke down as companies pulled out in favor of a cheaper workforce in non-union communities and thicker seams of coal elsewhere. Bill summarized this as "the coal companies robbed us." As the record of time in St. Charles spins round and round, the needle sticks in this gap in the economic landscape of the town.

Fiscally stagnant communities dwindled in size and, as Earl says, in "pride." Miners stayed, holding jobs at nearby mines or more often commuting to other mines half an hour to an hour away from their hometowns.

The "big business" of drug trade has overtaken coal mining in St. Charles now. Dealers trade in everything from Lortab, Xanax, and OxyContin to cocaine and marijuana—and the main dealer's home is well-known to most residents. According to these residents, the sheriff knows this dealer's identity, too. The nearest police force is in neighboring Pennington Gap, a 15-to-20-minute drive away down the wending, two-lane road that leads into St. Charles. This travel estimate is in good summer weather, when runoff water from nearby strip mines forms streams in the road instead of winter ice patches.

OxyContin is the major threat in St. Charles. Earl's physician, Dr. Art Van Zee, began a petition to take the drug off the market because of all the abuse and harm he has seen in St. Charles. A 2001 Roanoke Times article by Laurence Hammack outlined the controversy:

> Dr. Art Van Zee was at home when he was asked to report to Lee County Community Hospital. A young woman had been rushed to the emergency room after she stopped breathing.
>
> "When they called me, I didn't realize I knew this young woman," Van Zee said.
>
> "I didn't realize it until I got up to the bedside and saw this unconscious woman hooked up to a breathing machine. I remembered then that she had been two months old when I held her in my arms at the clinic."
>
> Two decades earlier, Van Zee had vaccinated the woman as an infant at his clinic in St. Charles, a town of 159 residents on a country road that abruptly dead-ends at a coal mine near the Kentucky border.
>
> After being called to the hospital in January 2000, he learned the woman had suffered a nearly fatal overdose of OxyContin, a prescription painkiller widely abused in the mountainous reaches of far Southwest Virginia.
>
> That incident alone did not motivate the small-town doctor to take on a company that sold more than a billion dollars worth of OxyContin last year.
>
> It was all the other cases like it that eventually convinced Van Zee that OxyContin was causing more harm than good. Earlier this year, he started a petition drive asking

Purdue Pharma of Connecticut to take its best-selling product off the market, or have the Food and Drug Administration order a recall of the potent painkiller.

More than 8,000 people have signed the petition so far.

Purdue Pharma says its product is dangerous only when addicts crush the tablets and snort or inject the powder for a high similar to heroin's. Recalling the drug would be a disservice to hundreds of thousands of legitimate patients, the company says.

The controversy has thrust a soft-spoken doctor from the coalfields into a growing national debate. Van Zee has been asked to testify before a U.S. Senate committee studying OxyContin abuse, and the Web site that carries his petition has attracted attention across from across the country.

Not all of the reaction has been positive.

"Are you a real doctor?" wrote one person who logged on to www.recalloxycontinnow.org. "If you are, you should not be. I wouldn't send my dog to be treated by you."

"Law-abiding pain patients should not have to pay the price for a hundred or so idiot druggies who made a bad decision," wrote another person identified only as "King of Pain."

Van Zee, whose efforts also have prompted angry, late-night phone calls to his home, said he was a little surprised at the intensity of people's feelings. While sufferers of chronic pain should not have to live in pain, he said, there are other medications just as effective as OxyContin but less prone to abuse.

The opium-based drug is so strong, he said, that one 40-milligram tablet is equivalent to eight doses of Percocet, another pain medication.

And while some people refer to OxyContin abusers as "druggies," Van Zee knows many of them as young people from good families who did not have a prior history of drug use.

Van Zee has worked in Lee County for 25 years. After growing up in small town in Nevada, he wanted to practice medicine in a rural area. He decided that St. Charles was the right place after visiting the town as part of a health fair conducted by a student organization at Vanderbilt University, where he completed his residency.

He married a coal miner's daughter - now an attorney - and settled down in a farmhouse near Dryden.

At Stone Mountain Health Services, a community-based health care organization, Van Zee often gets to know three generations of the families he treats. He can't walk

> down the street without bumping into patients at every turn. "They are in many ways an extended family," he said.
>
> So it's especially painful for Van Zee to see young people steal from their parents and grandparents to feed an OxyContin addiction that usually leads them to a hospital bed, a jail cell, or in some cases an early grave.
>
> "I don't know how many parents have sat and cried while talking to me about how painful it is to have their child become a liar and a thief in their own home," he said. "That's a level of pain and tragedy that's impossible to quantify."
>
> While Van Zee is convinced that OxyContin is a "defective product," a recall appears unlikely. Both the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Food and Drug Administration say they have no plans to restrict the drug's availability - even though the DEA says OxyContin has been abused like no other prescription drug in recent years.
>
> Van Zee is convinced that sooner or later others will realize the problem is not going away. That might not happen until OxyContin abuse takes hold in more urban areas, he said.
>
> "If it's a bunch of poor folks up in the mountains, it doesn't affect them personally," he said of the bureaucrats.
>
> Since 1997, there have been at least 55 fatal overdoses in Western Virginia in which OxyContin's active ingredient was either the direct cause or a contributing factor, according to the state medical examiner's office. Purdue Pharma says its product can't be blamed for all those deaths, because in many cases the victim was drinking alcohol and taking other drugs.
>
> Van Zee scoffs at such a suggestion, given the strength of OxyContin compared to other prescription drugs.
>
> "To me, that's like somebody who was shot with a howitzer and a BB gun, and you walk up and say it's a little hard to tell what killed him," he said. (Hammack)

Residents of St. Charles live in between what is and what was—a liminal state of existence where neighbors who sell OxyContin for $100 a pill live incommensurably present with the ghosted memories of streets elbow-to-elbow with people who took pride in their town. Local rumor is that sheriff knows who these drug dealers are and gives them a slap on the wrist. Ironically, signs hang in St. Charles proudly proclaiming in thick black lettering on white posters: DRIVE SLOWLY: THE SHERIFF CARES ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN. Daniel, a St. Charles resident, said that many drug users are not helped by short-term

rehabilitation facilities presently available in the area. Daniel said that some of his friends who are addicted to OxyContin see short-term rehab as a "vacation," and after a few weeks they dive right back into their habit. Earl said that Dr. Van Zee has joined with representative Rick Boucher in an effort to bring a long-term drug rehabilitation center to the St. Charles area, though the project seems to have gained little momentum beyond local borders.

The St. Charles Health clinic and other local clinics sponsored by Stone Mountain Health Services have been a much needed windfall to smaller Appalachian mining communities.

Earl: And uh, that's / in all probability
that's been one of the greatest most important something that's / that have ever
and that's uh, that's government uh / run right there I mean funded.
And that Stone Mountain Health Services…
Stone Mountain has got about uh…they've got about a dozen places / in Buckhannan, Russell Scott County…
And that's why I say, that's important cause they run / we, we have people really
from Wise County, from Scott County / from Harlan,

Hannah: Yeah.

E: they run where it's government uh, funded it they run what they call / a "slidin, fee scale."
And it's accordin to the income and see that / and some of em even gets
they, they've got it here but they have to order / some of em even certain medicines that can't afford?
That they get / they get that at a discount rate, too.

H: That's wonderful,

E: And it is.

H: That must make a difference in this community.

E: It does. / It really does.

Ghost-Graves

After an hour of walking and driving around St. Charles (the effects of which registered on his 60-year-old body through a three-day immobility which followed), he eagerly guided me to drive down a lonely road (one of three main paved arteries in town). He asked me to stop at a barren grass-and-gravel space beside the train tracks, seemingly void of any sign of human intervention or past presence. He got out of the car and seemed to be pulled by this place further up and further in, moving closer to the train tracks and looking

penetratingly beyond into the hillside stretching upward across the rails. After some silence he began to tell me the exact date in 1977 when on this site, several of his closest friends died in a violent mining explosion. The following transcription of his narrative performance continues from context of this conversation, shrouded in the hushed reverence of his voice:

Earl: Right here, this is where we'd,
quite a few people, now that in behind / right in behind this hump.

Hannah: Uh huh.

Earl: Which you see there / they's a mine, it's not open now they had to close those up

Hannah: Mm hmm.

Earl: But they's a mine opening / right there
in behind that. *(he looks up at the hill, holding out his right hand towards the trees)*
And at the time when this happened that was "P & P" / coal company.

Hannah: Mmm.

Earl: Right, they's another in behind this right down here,
they's another opening which, that would be the drift, not the drift mouth, but the intake
or fan?

Hannah: Mm hmm

Earl: Where it was at / is right here / in this area.
But uh / where they was four men (*brief pause, his voice wavers)*

that, this is where they lost their life in a *(brief pause)*

Hannah: Oh gosh.

Earl: methane explosion.

Hannah: Shew.

Earl: And that was / that was July the 7th / 19 and 77.

Hannah: Mmm.

Earl: Never will for get that.

At the foot of the ridge where Earl told me that his friends died in a mining explosion, rattling coal trucks punctured the soundscape, drowning out Earl's words. His falling tears blended with the coal and dirt dust that slowly sifted through the air and onto our faces. These particles crawled through the air as if this place were pulling itself up and out into the air to attach to tears, face, hands, mouth and lungs. The truck droned on—the sound entered

our ears and filled our bodies—the loud, LOUD moan of the whining motor and shifting coal, while tires as large as my body spun, crunching rocks, dirt, and asphalt beneath the truck's tonnage. These sounds entered my body, penetrated my ears and filled my insides. Their reverberations moved my flesh and resonated in my bones. Listening with my body, I felt the simultaneous insistence of their progress narrative—"produce, produce, we still are working, we still have coal"—and their agonized impoverished cries—"we are *poor*, this is all we have, all we have left." These rattling sounds were both interruption and punctuation for Earl's story about the closed mine.

As Riessman notes, my voice and presence play a crucial role as encouraging the flow of narrative between us, sustained by an interested "mmm" and empathetic "oh gosh." Earl began bewildered by the sight of what is ("right here…it's not open now") and somewhat awkwardly stumbled through to what persistently makes itself *seen*: "you see there / they's a mine / it's not open now… / but *they's a mine opening* / right there." He nestled into a distanced appraisal that stabilizes memory, offering control through the comforting objective phrase, "four men": a statistic, no names here, in contrast to the litany of specific names he later recounts following this passage: Roger Tester, Glen Johnson, Harold, Randal, his wife Patricia and other neighbors called by name. His voice—which had become steady and decided—began to waver with emotion, and I saw his face pucker under the prick of pain, memory visibly pulling at his skin: "that, this…" He struggled to make narrative *fit* around the chaos of what he experienced, moving back to the script he read in headlines, "lost their life in a"—he paused between this more comfortably clinical assessment and the piercing clause, again framed cautiously, clinically—"/ methane explosion." Perhaps this was an ellipsis for narratives my young, female ears should not hear—a selective forgetting of "proceedings too terrible to relate" (Morrison 301). Earl paused—there is a sense of compulsion, urgency behind his silence, as if he *must* get through to the next line, and his voice wavered under the burden of this memory.

And then his narrative exploded into repetitive, performative re-iterations: "That was/ that was," he said, stumbling over an as-yet unintegrated comprehension that *it happened*, "that *was."* As in Caruth's discussion of Freud's dream, the death occurred *and* Earl survived, paradoxes that support the need to witness to impossibility (Caruth Unclaimed 95). Excessively, he repeated the precise day, month, year that he "never will forget." In this

repetition is an imperative for me, now sharing and shouldering this story, double wounded as I stood at the site of this event now ghosted into our presence through Earl's story about what is "not there" yet persistently makes itself visible in story. Earl's *spatializing* narrative transformed place (a tree-covered ridgeside across the train tracks) into a space of mining and of death: the "mine opening," a fiery, gaping hole spewing blood, steaming flesh, charred bodies wrapped in plastic (de Certeau 115). He continues:

> Earl: I, right there where is showed you where my uncle lived besides where mom, I told you she lived?
> [The] Perkinses lived right there, / and lost a son in this.
> And that was, one a the
>
> Hannah: Mmm
>
> Earl: I mean sad and... (*long pause*)
>
> I do know I mean you don't want to be around but
> when something—I know when they finally *was*
> trying to get up there to em and they have so—
> I was right (*he pauses and looks at the hill, as if transcribing this story from the sight of this place, and it just gave him another cue*)
>
> this little hump wasn't there then, but I saw there / through the opennin
> come out? I mean naturally you wasn't (*pauses, a truck passes by loudly*)
>
> you wasn't aimin to see nothing like that you knowed what you, would see but… (*long pause*)
>
> I mean you's in shock and so you this-this-this ain't happenin here.

Earl's narrative broke loose in fits, starts, and pauses, punctuated by the chaotic swirling soundscape of *now*—the trains and trucks passing by loudly, irrepressibly. Earl's pauses witness to the impossibility of this experience, welling up into performative percussive "this-this-this ain't happenin here," a denial that is, as Bal notes, a dissociation that doubles and triples the narrative strand, repeating the spectre of the event irrepressibly over and over: *this* again *this* again *this*—stopped short as a denial ("ain't happenin here") that nevertheless is voiced as (psychological) truth that *does* happen to him *here and now*, re-wounding him in the present moment through ghosted memory (Bal ix). In this space, Earl re-membered what used to be, ghosting it into our presence: the "hump" *is* an opening to a mine site.

This conversation flowed from and blended with earlier talk, when Earl filled in the gaps in St. Charles's Main Street and suburbs: buildings and mines burned down, filled in, eviscerated, leaving ashy skeletal frameworks, an indistinguishable "hump" across a lonely stretch of rail. He said, "all this (*pointing to empty Main Street lots*) was *solid*." With de Certeau, Kuftinec notes that pedestrians as well as politicians can remap the city through everyday practices[65]. Earl re-mapped St. Charles through narrative performance to enact the possibility (however futile) of its return/rebirth. "Negotiat[ing] meaning through anecdotal debris," Earl (re)creates "solid" ground from fragments of a discarded town (89)[66].

Earl felt he had to move away from St. Charles to separate himself corporeally from the mining culture he called (and *calls*) 'home' in order to gain some sense of closure on the *body* that he was—the lively corporeal self he watched slowly suffocate in the mines, replaced by the living-dead body of his present[67]. The land of St. Charles itself seems to narrate the past—a haunting residue, living memory—speaking a horror story he transcribes from sight.

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[65] Such "public writing reminds residents of the ghosts of the past that continue to haunt the city. Obituaries are posted on trees. A sign near the absent Stari Most warns pedestrians 'Don't Forget'" (Kuftinec 87).

[66] Ganguly writes that "the stories people tell about their pasts have more to [do] with the continuing shoring up of self-understanding than with historical 'truths'" (Ganguly 30). Earl's interpretation of St. Charles as 'solid,' just like the excessive in-filling of remembered stores, taxi cabs (Daniel reported 100 taxis in St. Charles at one time, though most people said from 30-50). Like Laub and Feldman, the psychological truths of their narratives are the truths we live by—what matters is that this narrative that has become legend seemingly throughout southwest Virginia "shores up" the present reality of poverty with an imagined past that was "solid." Earl and other residents of St. Charles "think about how it used to be" *all the time*—in the face of "the way it is now" this "solid" past is narratively constructed as something solid to stand on in the present, and perhaps look hopefully toward a future where, as many miners say, "they say mining's coming back in Virginia"—like Laub's example of the Auschwitz survivor who remembered four chimneys blowing up to sustain her hope that resistance was possible, St. Charles residents and beyond incant the trope of "32 taxi cabs" as a narrative trope of the present that looks forward in order to construct a past that makes that desired-for future possible.

[67] Different from Brison's survivors of Auschwitz or rape who struggle to recover or master a psychic sense of self "as I once was," coal miners struggle with the embodied corporeal daily life of a body that is incommensurably different than the old. While narrative presents a sometimes helpful integrative tool (Bal's "Helpful Memories"), *making sense* extends beyond verbal or linear sense to the affective body-to-body witness of two men together in a doctor's office, "just sat there like you and I." Because of the coperforming witness environment created between "you and I," Earl and I, I feel with his "indescribable" pain and loss and witness to what is beyond my recognition (Felman, Laub) with loving eyes (Oliver). I am not suggesting that they merely look back nostalgically at an imagined 'whole' (which itself is a narrative construct), but rather they cope with incommensurability of a radically different corporeal fabrication—the one mobile and relatively pain-free, the other *suddenly* immobilized and in constant pain. Different than Myerhoff's study, these bodies are not always young vs. old—many are disabled in their 30's. Where the old body may be psychically 'brought back from the dead' ("I died in Vietnam"), the current body presents a breathing, living/dying version of a past self.

Forgetting his young/dead body is necessary for survival in the present. This fissure between two radically different bodies that nonetheless haunt one another through shared tissues, shared psychic space, a rip in consciousness between old/young and new/broken body is a site of trauma. Following Caruth, what (parts of the) past do coal miners betray to become "sane seeing and knowing" people (Caruth Unclaimed 32-3)? What (specific) bodies must be forgotten in order to "exit into the freedom of forgetting" (33)? Duras's survivor inaugurates a historically and socially integrated body through forgetting—what degree/kinds of forgetting are necessary, what bodies must be made sight un-seen to re-integrate coal miners' own (physically and psychically dis-abled) bodies in the present? What is the nature of fragmentation/reintegration of their bodies in their narratives?

VI. Dealing With Disability and Loss

For disabled coal miners, coping strategies are not only for enduing the mines, but for enduring their embodied reality after the mines. How do coal miners deal with the present reality of their disabilities and inability to return to the mines? How do they deal with these multiple losses: of their former bodies, and of their daily relationship with other coal miners and with the mines-body?

Story-telling

Story-telling moves memory. For many miners, storytelling helped them respond productively to often overwhelming and disempowering conditions. What is the power of personal narrative in their lives? For Eddie, storytelling offered a symbolic means of making his disabled body move again in the mines. Eddie juxtaposed mining as a "dying thing" with those stories that could bring it "alive" again:

Eddie: Well do you plan on goin—I'll ask you one question, you,

Hannah: Yeah?

E: You plan on goin to the mines?

H: Yes. / I do.

E: I'll bet.

H: Yeah. / I can't see doing this project and not doing that.

E: Oh I couldn't…but / I think it would be

H: Yeah.

E: I think it would be / yeah, I think it would be good

H: Mm hmm.

E: I have told him when he's talked to me about this interview / it's kind of a dyin thing that
you know maybe if somebody like you didn't keep it alive
you wouldn't know what it was like.

H: How is a dying thing?

E: Well, / which we've talked about St. Charles.

H: Yeah.

E: I's talk, I had to go uh, the other day Monday for a / a black lung physical.
And uh / this woman, she's a / uh, what do they call em?
a practical, nurse what is it, nurse practitioner?

H: Nurse practitioner?

E: Yeah (*laughs*) / she's uh, makes this
I seen her two years ago, and she's the one that done the physical, but she lives in Appalachia.
Appalachia used to be a boomin town.
So did St. Charles.

H: Yeah.

E: But hit's, you know, since the coal mining has / decreased so much
towns have died, dried up you know.
People's way of lives have,
you know, left. And / uh / it's just kinda like myself:
I used to make / pretty good money, real good money.
And, when I had to give it up, you know, it's your way of life it's just, been taken away from ye.
And it's not only the money Hannah.
It's the ability to be able to do something that you've loved you know.
And, not that one person was so great or good.
But how so many people would profit
from maybe what one, person's effort would be that day by
runnin the coal, / you know, or something like at.

H: Hmm.

E: And it's just like / you know with, with everything else.
I like to watch the shows where, most dangerous jobs on / <u>The Learning Channel</u>?

H: Yeah.

E: And I see these, big massive equipments that / one man, you know—
like the other evening I was watchin this where they, uh now I don't mean to get off the subject, but this is how it is.

H: No, go ahead.

E: I think it's in China or Japan where they're trying to build one of the tallest buildings in the world.

H: Mmm.

E: And that man, one single man is on the very top of that building with that, crane that they set up
you know every story.
And he goes, the crane goes, the cable goes allll the way down to the ground, and he has to bring up whatever they have.

H: Mm hmm.

E: You know.
And be so precise with it.
Where like they were setting this one thing they could a been
three or four men could a been killed all at once.

H: Mm hmm.

E: And that one man, and that one piece a machinery / is what's controlling all of that you know.

H: Yeah,

E: And hit, anything like that / could be a dying art, if you would?
If somebody doesn't keep it alive.

H: Mm hmm.

What is the importance of my role as a storyteller for Eddie? Eddie began this story by asking me if I was going into the mines, knowing that my goal was to tell his and other miners' stories. He says that mining is a "dying art"—dying in terms of St. Charles and Appalachia becoming ghost towns of their former selves, and dying in terms of the bodies of miners who wheeze and cough through coal infested lungs that will not support them any longer in their work. Eddie encouraged me to go into the mines, beyond the warnings of my father whom he respects, because it is crucial that these bodies—of the miners and of the mines—are kept alive *through story.* Mining can live not only through the doing of that work but through remembering. Recording, writing it down, and sharing mining life through ephemeral stories told in time to wider audiences who Eddie may never see or meet—this *does* something for Eddie. Eddie told me my job as ethnographer and its importance—*go* there, *see* it, *witness* body-to-body. And then, *tell*. Otherwise, this culture will die.

By telling me that I need to go to the mines to know mining culture, Eddie validates place as powerful co-narrator and witness of experience. He needs for me to go there and listen not only to the miners at work, but to the story the mines themselves tell, the stories

that place speaks to miners. Like describing a staged performance or living sculpture, this work is an art form that I can appreciate best when I go and experience it in person. Mining is an art to him, a technique, something that has a beauty for miners and a skill that can be admired and passed down the generations.

As Eddie and so many other miners phrase it, disability robbed[68] him of his way of life: "And, when I had to give it up, you know, it's your way of life it's just, been taken away

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[68] Several of these miners admit to working well past the point of pain after they are injured to avoid both the loss of their job (read: identity) and the label "disabled." Eddie echoed this sentiment in his own story about working through pain:

Hannah: You mentioned when you had to quit, you said "the accident."
What was the accident?

Eddie: Mm hmm.
The accident was when that / like the sharp
knife went into my back, that was it. (*from working the sledge hammer)*
Yeah, / I / went and told the boss / what happened
and he said, "What you want to do?" I was hurtin real bad it, it had
come up into my neck and out this left arm
and it went down through my groins and out the right leg and, and it was a
it was shooting pains.
And I said, "Well I'm gonna to keep workin."
I said, "But I want the report made out."
If you didn't make a report out—

H: —you can't claim it later—

E: —right, you can't claim it later.
So I remember workin close to a week afterwards.
And then it kept getting so bad that uh
I had to go to the doctor so they sent me to a doctor that was close to town there. Dr. Taylor he was a
compensation doctor they sent me to him, and
I think I worked the biggest part of the day.

H: Mmm.

E: I, I'd worked about four or five days / like that / I, and / this is another thing about
bein such a unique group a people / the men that I worked with took care of me.

H: Hmm.

E: They would take the miner and…
They would uh, / take the miner and set it up
put it in place for me and fix everything where all I had to do was go over there and
and operate the miner.

H: Huh.

E: That was all I had to do.

from ye. / And it's not only the money Hannah. / It's the ability to be able to do something that you've loved you know." Disability couples with the fate of his town due to coal

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And I went to Doc Taylor and he found / part of the problems he said I had degenerative disk disease extremely bad and / blood pressure was shot up I remember that.
And he said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "I'm goin back to work."
So I went back to work I worked about another week
and had to go back to him I had to leave work that day and go back to him and he, he stopped me from workin.

H: Mmm!

E: And I / and then I went through / all the uh, normal procedures for people
goin to different doctors, tests/ the physical therapy and stuff, and quick-as-I-could-I-went-back-to-work

H: Yeah.

E: in the mines.

H: Were you just so frustrated?

E: Frustrated, aggravated, uh, / never had dealt with pain like that before in my life.
Change a life, / you know you get into a routine.
I never did, uh, / you / workin in union mines you got so many days
say per month, that you could take off you know?

H: Yeah.

E: And I never did use my days until
come around to huntin season or Christmas that's when I took em off used to be a real avid hunter and stuff.
And uh I just wouldn't
I'd save em till then you know.

H: Yeah.

E: And uh, / anyhow, I went back to work.
And uh / worked so long.
Doctor, come, went back to the doctor they took me back off work.
And I got tied in with a doctor that used to be in this area
Dr. Valdez Rodregus, he was a neural surgeon over in there, / one of the best.
And he allowed me to
take some, more, they done some more testin and stuff on me and some more treatments and I went back to work again.

H: Mmm.

E: And uh, / then they stopped me from workin'.

Like so many other miners, Eddie said that the *doctors* stopped him from going back into the mines, not necessarily his injuries. Part of the psychology of coal mining is the drive to work against the threat of injury, through pain and suffering. Though many miners discourage their children from mining—as Steve said, "I told my kids / it's back breakin work"—they simultaneously are drawn to it.

companies pulling out of southwest Virginia. Mining threatens to die out with the town, which has "dried up." Remembering this way of life is a tactic against death, disability, and drying out. *Telling* memory has a restorative effect—as a sustaining performative structure, it waters and nurtures that imagined space located both within a community and within his own blood that threatens to scorch, cake over, and wisp away, like dust in a desert wind.

As Palmer said, talking about mining moves his coal-infused blood and makes it course faster through his veins:

> Palmer: But I still want that I've got that urge to go back.
> Today, to this day when I hear people talk about coal minin
> it, it stirs something up in me. I don't know what it does to
> give me that urge to go back.

Telling literally moves Palmer's blood—telling evokes heat in the body and a quickened pulse. When the body gives out, the work of making memory go, stirring blood, and moving coal within these communities becomes the labor of storytelling.

How small or seemingly invisible can a mining story be to move the body? Sight evoked narratives for Earl. Haggie's silent body triggered stories of Earl as a young buck in the mines, learning from Haggie as a father-figure and mentor, and sharing in the trauma and joys of mining community. A silent body told these narratives to him. For Earl, storytelling happens through the body, which serves a silent witness. Co-presence *tells* him a story of two men whose lives were wholly transformed by the mines. Storytelling in this way provides continuity for him between the generations—Earl sees one who has gone before him, Haggie, and in that older body he potentially sees his own future. Earl said that seeing Haggie was "better than medicine" for him. These "sight-stories" provide a felt sense of corporal healing for him that lies outside and beyond enlightenment science rationales, pills, and potions. In claiming the healing power of "sight-stories," Earl cites his own active and embodied "theory of the flesh" that, like Foucault's notion of "subjugated knowledges," evades transcription and thus often evades legitimation (Madison "Possibilities" 276, Foucault qtd. in Conquergood "Interventions" 146).

<u>Isolation</u>

Earl's narrative reveals the ways that storytelling can restore and heal. Eddie also talks about the positive effects of storytelling to keep culture and memory alive. For others, however, and even within Eddie and Earl's larger narratives, these positive effects are laced

with too much pain and loss. Embedded in Palmer's narrative about how storytelling "stirs something up in me"—which he said with a wistful and excited look in his eye—is the implied understanding that stories "give me that urge to go back" to a place that he is now denied access. Unable to work in the mines due to his injuries, the "urge" is bittersweet because it can be fulfilled only through story.

To avoid the pain of resurrecting that "urge" to go back, many miners said that they go into seclusion after they become disabled. Even Earl's medicinal meeting with Haggie was a chance accident. Eddie said he chose to segregate himself from other miners because it hurt him too much to remember that way of life that has been "taken away" from him. He stopped going to union meetings, which before he had ritually attended.

Eddie: I remember when I first started comin to him [a psychologist],
I really got depressed and bothered and
and I mean I even got to the point Hannah to where I don't go to the union meetings. I haven't been to the union meetings in years and years and years.
Because I didn't want to be around
the guys that / put me
in memory of the job I loved so much you know what I'm sayin?

Hannah: Yeah.

E: So I didn't, I quit goin to the meetings and stuff.
And I, and there's guys that live right around, close to me that I worked in the mines with
and I don't associate with them.

H: Mmm.

E: It's not that I don't like *them.*
But for such a long time / until Uncle Wayne[69] got me on the right path
it bothered me so bad.

For Eddie, isolation is a way of living with the present. Not all former miners separate themselves from other miners—Donald and Buckwheat remain close friends and hunting buddies, and Harley, said he keeps in close touch with his former mining buddies. Harley told me that he doesn't shy away from his old friends now that he is disabled. But Eddie and many others said that they didn't want to be in the company of the memories that these miners' bodies evoked. What role does memory of the past play in constructing the present identity for disabled coal miners in southwest VA? Memory seems to have stopped for him at his injury: the exact time he "died" in the mines his memories "died" there also.

[69] "Uncle Wayne" is Eddie's term of endearment for my Papa. They are not genetically related, but Eddie feels close enough to him to call him his Uncle—related and elevated in age/stature.

What are the multiple deaths involved for Eddie in an injury he describes as "just like someone stabbed me in the back" and after which the doctors "pulled him out" of the mines?

Union meetings literally place Eddie "in memory" of the mines. Storytelling has the powerful effect of spatializing place. Storytelling brings the space of mining outside the place (the mines) that initially evoked it and transforms interview space into mining space. Steve said that storytelling literally evokes the material reality of the coal mines:

> Steve: And / sometimes you could hunt / with each other, like durin huntin season.
>
> Hannah: Mm hmm.
>
> S: You'd say, "Hey man let's / let's go up, just, up there."
> Well you get up there and get around the cave, and what did you do?
> You coal mined all day. You sit there and talked about coal minin.
> If you was around em, you'd talk about coal minin.
>
> H: Yeah.
>
> S: And, I finally told em up there one day I say (*both laugh*)
> we was at uh, / 300 mile away at, from where we worked.
> And I said, "Boys I'll tell you the
> coal dust is getting too thick for—" (*Hannah laughs, both laugh*)
> I said, "I'm gonna have to go to bed!" (*Hannah laughs*)
> But they would talk and talk about, and / loved to talk about it.
> They really do.

Steve brings up the difference between mining place, the specific locale, and mining space, which travels. Steve recognizes Michel de Certeau's distinction between place as "an instantaneous configuration of positions" implying "an indication of stability" and space as "practiced place," implying mobility and instability (de Certeau 117). Stories and lives layer onto and map over places to create space—de Certeau's article "Walking in the City" describes this intimate and appropriative relationship between person and place which creates and narrates spaces in everyday life. Talking about the mines literally brings thick coal dust into the air, choking Steve. This reincarnation of mining space some 300 miles away from the worksite is palpable to the point that he has to get away and get fresh air. Mining space re-presents coal dust, which he might just be tired of and want a vacation from; but, these spatializing stories may also create a psychological "health hazard" by bringing the mines over his head again.

When Steve and I talked together, our spatializing stories also brought up a cloud of coal dust that settled on everything as well. Through his stories, the ceiling of the room

where we met became the mine roof, and wood paneled walls became the coal- and rock-dust encrusted walls of the mine. When he began to describe the mines earlier in one interview, he was emotionally overpowered by the felt presence of the mining space he created through his story:

> Steve: And then when you started down in there it was just
> I mean it's just like a different atmosphere. (*he looks away from me and begins to visualize the mines around him*)
>
> Hannah: Huh.
>
> S: The air was, uh,
>
> (*pause*)
> (*he starts to tear up, crying*) I'm sorry.
>
> H: It's ok, it's ok. (*I lean in towards him. He reaches for a Kleenex, dabs his eyes and tears continue to fall as he continues*)
>
> S: But the air was, / still, sort of.
>
> H: Mm hmm.
>
> S: But what it, the air was actually movin.
> But, the way you were movin
> it was movin the same way and you couldn't tell, that it was movin / until you stopped.
> And then once you stopped then you could feel it
> like blowin your hair or / or whatever.

Remembering the mines in the face of separation from them now is painful and wounding. Through co-presence listening I am wounded as well. The intense love and relationship Steve had with the mines-body exceeds the boundaries of bodily containment. He silently erupts in tears—the body leaks and seeps outwards, as if his insides were longingly and lovingly reaching towards the space he created through this story even as that story-space pressed against his body, choking these tears out of him. He apologized, embarrassed at losing control and giving way to emotion—yet this loss of control mirrored the chaos of intense and multiple losses and a love for the mines-body inexpressible through words alone. His body took control of the telling, overriding his will to edit, tame, and push the excess of love and loss from the story.

Steve's story reveals that storytelling can both heal and threaten. Isolation from other miners removes the threat of resurrecting these stories and hence the mining space that accompanies them. Isolation also offers a miner a way to avoid the gaze of others who knew

the miner when she inhabited a different body. Internalizing the gaze of these others reminds disabled miners of their own loss—moreover, the gaze of the "whole" body on the "unwhole" body reinscribes the disabled as such, painfully scratching into the body again and again the dehumanizing identity of one who is inherently lacking. Creating a new and isolated life to match the new and foreign body they inhabit allows for a cleaner break and determined distancing between what they must accept now and what they longingly know they had before.

Family

Many of the men miners I became friends with told me of the unwavering support of their wives and families following disability. In this retreat inwards and away from other miners, disabled miners turn to their families for community. Often in these miners' personal narratives, they turn their own story over to their wives following disability. When I asked Eddie about how he became disabled, his detailed description of the exact hour and minute that he was "pulled" out of the mines turns immediately into a story of his wife's strength.

Eddie: When I got hurt—and I was talking with Wayne about this a while ago—
it was one of the most simplest things.
And as I told you I got the name "Coal Hog" you know I just went up there,
a piece of / what they call, bastard sandstone?

Hannah: People call it that.

E: Ok. / I was runnin the miner, it fell on top a my, my miner.
And it was maybe two or three inches thick.

H: Mmm.

E: You know and it, covered the whole miner and I couldn't run no more coal till I got that off from it.
So I backed the miner up I was workin in 40-inch coal, / 40, maybe 42 inch coal.
I backed the miner over into a high place and I just
grabbed a sledge hammer and jumped up on it and just started / beatin it up.
And I could, I told the boss I told all the doctors and everybody
exactly what time it happened it just felt like somebody stuck a knife in my back and
that was it.
It was 1:58 pm on January the 20$^{tt.}$. / It was, I mean it was just weird.
It happened and I looked at my watch. / And it started from there.
The reason I told you this is, after they'd finally stopped me from workin in the coal mines,
and I was in so much pain, / and my wife knows so much about how I am,
she told me, she said, "Eddie I'm not gonna baby ye."
In other words / I can't just lay around and
you know, expect her to wait on and take care of me.
In other words, she wanted me to get up and go and not quit.
So that's what I done.

H: Mmm.

E: It was those words that / kinda kept me goin.

Eddie described the stabbing pain in his back in exacting detail, down to the very minute it happened. I can't help but connect his description with the way he talks about the doctors who pulled him out of the mines, who in effect stabbed and killed his mining identity. When this happened to him, it was his wife's strength that pulled him through—her words drove him on, kept him going past the trauma that stagnated him and into a new space where movement, life, and usefulness were possible. Eddie went on to explain that the disks in his back and neck were jerked out of alignment, and his accident triggered a neurological disorder that took away his pinprick sensations and reflexes. The effect left him "very hyper" and caused his metabolism to "flip flop" over the past several years. Through all this, his wife was a model spouse according to Eddie's understanding of what a family should be in mining culture—she knew him, read his moods, and responded with tough and committed love.

Heterosexual families are the accepted norm in these mining communities, with that distinction encouraged by the predominant conservative protestant Christian values discussed in the next section. Within these families, however, women's roles have shifted. What is a wife's role in coal mining communities? With the rise of feminist theory and women's liberation, the traditional roles within and composing "family"—man/father as breadwinner, woman/mother as nurturer—have been fruitfully put into question. My ability to type these words as a chosen vocation is all due to these advances. Thanks to these women, the "traditional" family is a choice for many women, not a singular prescription for living. In the coal mining communities I studied, Eddie, Earl, and many other miners describe a traditional view of family that is no longer the necessary norm in mining culture—and they describe how both men and women encourage these roles in each other in order to sustain these chosen traditions. In this story and others, Eddie describes a wife who has formed her own path, like Jimmy's mother Cat, taking on both active and passive roles under the heading "wife." Eddie stresses his wife's role as nurturer and supporter, but elsewhere he talks about her devotion to her own vocation. As a nurturer, she is also *active* and *stubborn* in this story,

making Eddie work and *not* waiting on him. In being active, she pushes Eddie back into his "traditional" role—husband and wife work together to sustain these roles in their family.

Faith

As alluded to in this chapter and discussed in Chapter Three, Earl and other miners cope with stories of death through faith. In the face of certain death—either in the mines or in old age—Earl clings to religious texts that promise a new body to replace his crippled and broken one in the present:

> What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:
>
> "Death has been swallowed up in victory."
> "Where, O death, is your victory?
> Where, O death, is your sting?"
>
> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (Bible, 1 Cor. 15.50-58)

Christianity is so much the norm in this region that denominations within the Christian church are seen as separate religions. When I asked Earl if people practiced other religions or belonged to other faiths, he responded in terms of other denominations within the Christian faith:

> Hannah: You said that there were people who, didn't really believe anything at all.
> And that there were also other Christians in the mines.
> Did you ever come across anyone who believed in a different religion?
>
> Earl: Yes I have. / Yes I have,
>
> H: Can you tell me about that?
>
> E: At uh, a lot a times you will find, uh / and like I said uh
> I don't come down on that, I / I tell em, I say, "Look,
> I don't think that uh / ye doctrine's right."
> Because / uh, like I said, salvation comes only one way and you know that as well as I do
> without the blood there's no remission of sins.
> And, at the same time / you will find around here / in this area / you'll find what they call

> Church of God, or the Assembly of God / people.
> And those / to me, as a Baptist, / I'm not always right, / but I, I believe that uh
> with no disrespect towards you or anyone else

H: (*nodding*) Right.

E: because why do you believe I believe that we're closer to the Bible.

The options here seem to be either atheistic or some form of Christianity. This is not to deny the presence of Judaism, Hinduism, or other religions—which are visibly practiced in larger neighboring towns such as Kingsport—but to comment on the understood notion among coal miners that if other religions are practiced, this is done secretly and not openly discussed or promoted.

The news coverage of the recent Sago mining tragedy echoed Earl's narrative to me, as I saw so many members of that community rallying to the church building as a central site to congregate and offer collective support:

Earl: I'm glad that, that I've been / associated with the people I have in the coal minin industry.

Hannah: Mm hmm.

E: Especially at church this has given me strength durin my sickness and everthing.
That uh / cause it comes back a lot a times people don't know what just a little phone call
or a card / or, something can do when you're like that.

Faith helps Earl to recoup a sense of purpose and a trajectory into what is seemingly the only future there is for him or anyone: St. Charles will pass away, as will his body, but Jesus is forever. His faith helps him recast intense suffering as brief and momentary pain: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us" (Bible, Rom. 8.18).

VII. Summary

Once miners become disabled, their friends, dreams, and own very breath painfully reminds them of the loss of the older/"able" bodies they once had. Miners remember former mining days and the past-dead through tangible touchstones for memory, such as Jimmy's scrapbook of his mother's death. The mining towns themselves have become disabled through poverty and drug abuse. These ghost towns are remembered now through miners' stories that paint the former "solid" forms into the "gaps" in the landscape. As with the

sustaining performative structures miners developed while they worked, disabled miners face the difficulty of their present situation with the aid of storytelling, isolation, family, and faith.

CHAPTER 9: PERFORMING OUT OF THE DARK

When we charge theory to work against the forces of politics and culture,
Forces that go outside history and belonging,
To coerce figurations and formations of bodies
Into one unalterable thing
We put our bodies on the line.
When we teach the nature of intentional and avoidable suffering—
How to locate it between and among a mass of convoluted appearances
Even when these appearances are assembled or strengthened by our own country
Or our own complicity
We put our bodies on the line.
(D. Soyini Madison Is It a Human Being or a Girl? 2003)

This chapter investigates the process of staging my research as a live group performance, given April 29-May 1, 2005 in Chapel Hill, NC. I begin by describing the script-crafting process. I then discuss how I cast the performance and my aesthetic of directing rehearsals as a collaborative process. I include selective journal entries from the rehearsal process and explications of several scenes in the public performances. I also discuss the audiences' reactions to the show and the professional reviews we received. I include reflections about the collaborative process of rehearsing and the embodied experience of becoming these coal miners in live performance.

I. Embodied Ethnographic Performance

I recently directed and performed in a staged adaptation of these coal miners' narratives. Following Denzin (2003) and Madison (2005) I asked through this performance, who shapes dominant and reductive narratives of Appalachia and coal miners? How can critical performance ethnography "give[] a voice to those on the margin, moving them for the moment to the political center?" (Denzin Performance 18). I considered the ways that the Appalachian region and its people are pushed to the margins (seen as inherently backward and stupid) and the ways that many within Appalachian mining culture are marginalized (i.e., women). I celebrate the visceral experience of living in and through these coal miners' stories, using performance as a way of knowing others' perspectives through the body;

stories enter my body and, in Anna Deavere Smith's words, "become my own" in the repetition (Anna Smith xxiii). I absorb these stories—soaking my flesh to the marrow, these stories seep into my pores, circulate through my system, and become a part of my life. Performance serves as a temporal and embodied medium through which these coal miners' stories are passed on and out to wider audiences who may, in turn, engage with and be provoked by their perspectives. The performance of oral histories honors the unwritten yet invaluable, active, and present force of collective narrated experience. Following the work of D. Soyini Madison (2005), performance honors lived experience, allowing embodied narratives to be admired, known, and interrogated. More broadly, by questioning how and why we remember and story our lives in the ways we do both personally and communally, we may better understand, interpret, and challenge dominant means of story-ing lives. Performance re-presents narrated experience to open possibilities for empathy, disturbance, or questioning.

Out of the Dark told some of the stories of these miners as partial and incomplete *slices* of ongoing interaction, focusing on the epiphanies in individual miners' lives and raising critical questions regarding the human rights issues facing coal miners today (Denzin Interpretive 19). These issues include suffocating working conditions and the ongoing legal struggle for disabled coal miners to prove their disability status due to black lung or back injuries as they battle companies who are in bed with local compensation doctors. The performance also raised questions regarding sexual harassment in the mines and gender discrimination among miners. We raised these issues and stories through storytelling, interpretive movement, song, live cello accompaniment, shadow art, and body art involving interaction with the material dirt[70] and coal of miners' working lives.

Performances are "storied retellings that seek the truth of life's fictions via evocation rather than explanation or analysis. In them, ethnographers, audiences, and performers meet in a shared field of experience, emotion, and action" (16). In our performance, we sought to create Conquergood's "Dialogic Performance," a "genuine conversation" between miners, actors, and audience members in order to question the structures of power that have

[70] Our interpretive movement work with this dirt played between the literal mode of working in this dirt and the Mary Douglas's figurative cultural definition of dirt as "matter out of place," just as Appalachian coal miners are predominantly narrated as being "out of place" in clean, urban American society (Douglas 43).

controlled the image of Appalachia as passive, partial, and backward (Conquergood "Moral Act" 5, 9-11).

II. From the Field to the Page: Scripting Ethnographic Fieldwork

Beginning in December of 2004, I composed a script as an intertextual weaving of journal entries and transcribed interviews in addition to the artifacts, company-sponsored training videos, photographs and newspaper articles my coal mining co-performers brought to me over the past three years. The performance script went through 19 versions before it was whittled down from the over 1,000 pages of transcribed[71] interviews to an initial 250 page script and finally into a 24-page workable script which the cast received shortly before our first read-through in mid-March, 2005.

Image, Movement, Questions

During and after interviews and fieldwork, I made freeform drawings and wrote critical questions in my journals. These journal entries helped clarify the complex images and issues the miners had shared with me—the forms on the page came to respect the multilinear dimensions of their stories and experiences. The images came out in scribbles, all swirling: around me, around miners' lungs…

[71] Transcriptions were modeled after Denzin (2001), Pollock (1999) and Madison's (1998) models.

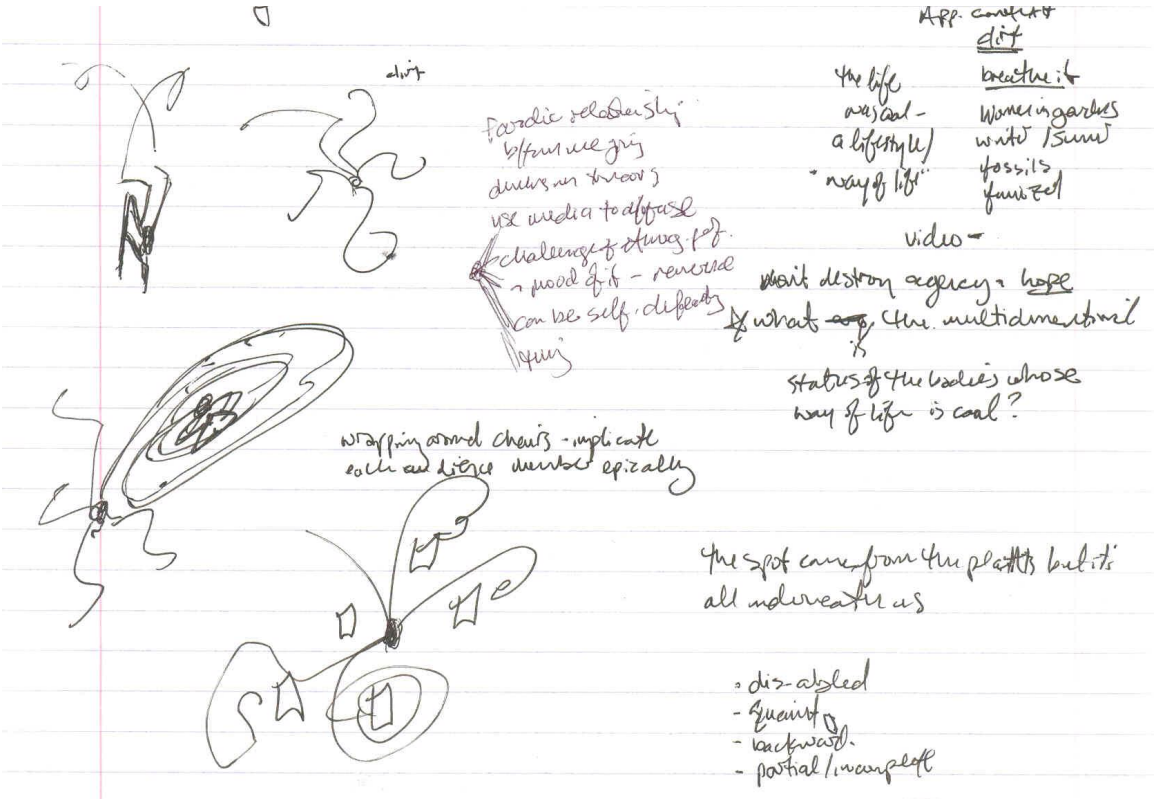

Figure 50 Initial sketches for stage pictures and movement sequences for <u>Out of the Dark.</u>

Journaling in this way allowed me to communicate to myself my own affective experience with mining—these stories and coal itself swirled in and around me; it was "in my blood" and tucked inside my flesh like the dirt under my fingernails from the mines. I wanted to get this dirt on other people who came to see the show. I wanted them to experience the mines as I had, with my hands immersed into it. I began to imagine vats of mud, coal, and dirt—I remembered sinking into the mud-and-coal slush as I walked towards the dripping stream of water coming from the roof bolt in the mines. "Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink…" as Coleridge wrote in "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Water, drowning them. We would have to get wet in the show.

Also, the audience must be implicated in this—they must understand the relevance of coal to their own lives every time they switch on a light or turn on a computer. I wanted to wrap their chairs with fabric symbolizing coal—they needed to see these lines of coal drawn thickly around them, just as coal itself wraps around miners' lungs and necks. I wanted to take the lights down from the ceiling of the performance space and plug them directly into

the vats of coal in our onstage mines, or connect the lights to cords of coal/fabric wrapped around miners' lungs. Movements and stage pictures led to other staging ideas linking mud, water, video projections, and miners pushing against walls of fabric to caress the living and mobile mines-body.

I began transcribing all of the interviews. Scripting became another conversation with the miners, this time outside their immediate presence when I listened to their stories again. I heard Earl's voice coming through the headphones: it was grainy and graveled from too-long exposure to coal and rock dust, but there was something steady, strong, soft and tender in his speech. I closed my eyes, listening to our voices bouncing back and forth in conversation. I raised my foot from the control peddle that ran my little playback machine to let the sound of his speech soak into my body. I was all sponge, filled, pricked, and squeezed by the voices echoing through wire and foam around my ears. Stopping the tapes, I journaled into the right hand side of the page when these twice-told stories doubled into my body and again bristled or caressed my skin into material reactions—horror, sorrow, fear, anger, and indignation rippled through my body and emerged in goosebumps, raised hairs on my forearms, or a grey-green feeling in my stomach. Or, in moments of equal communitas, I sat in the twice-lived flow of riotous laughter bubbling somewhere down below my diaphragm and bursting up and out through my chest, tensed throat and wide-open mouth. This laughter reverberated into my fleshy surface, moving me from the outside-in. I stopped the tape to let these stories have their way with me, journaling these reactions and the questions and connections my bodily reactions crystallized and distilled in the flesh.

Coding

I then re-read through all these interviews and coded them according to topical (examples: "dreams," "lunch buckets," "horseplay," "women," etc.) and emotional ("loss," "hurting/pain," "devotion to family," "love of place," etc.) themes[72]. I made an outline of these themes and tried to see patterns. In choosing theme names and searching for patterns, I asked: What was significant to these miners? And, equally as important, what were the

[72] I chose not to use a computer database to store these codes and clustered stories in order to continually remind myself of the context out of which these stories emerged. Because the performance traced the individual lives and collective experiences of miners in the context of a narrative performances, I wanted to keep these coded stories as contextualized and embedded narrative performances without the temptation of easily separating them from the stories preceding and following them. This process, for me, proved more organic and spurred further questions and connections between their stories by forcing me to dive into the messy and complex contexts of our conversations and their lives.

"hidden transcripts," as James Scott (1990) calls them? What were the gaps or conspicuously absent stories in these narratives—what wasn't or couldn't be voiced, and why? On this coded list, I made references to all the individual stories connected to that theme. For example, under the heading "Mines-Body," I listed subheadings and the coordinating stories and transcript page numbers associated with those subheadings:

Mines—body
- **Body Boundaries**
  - **Underground**
  - **Low Wall/Low Coal desc.** (Harley 1)
  - **5. MINE DESCRIPTIONS "No higher than this table" low wall**
  - Liminal border of surface/roots dangerous, draws thick line (Steve 75)
  - Liminal seasons—dangerous, water (Steve 100)
- **Body Parts**
  - **Fossils** (Palmer 19 shooting coal)
  - **Water**/Wet (Steve 35)
  - **Smells**
    - Bathrooms (Donald 48) (Steve 82)
    - Proximity to others (Steve 83)
    - Damp, musty (Harley 30)
  - **Temperature**
  - **Mice**/Rats (Pam 56)
  - **Air** (Steve 37)
  - **Dust**
  - **Gas**
  - **Top—bad/good**
  - **Coal itself**
  - **Kettlebottom**
  - Different colors (Donald 18) (Palmer 19)
  - Wind (Donald 27)
  - Rock Dust
  - Sulfur (Donald 68)
  - Water table (Steve 36)
  - Black, not dark (Palmer 6)
- **Miners**
  - **Man trip**
  - **"Feeling"**
  - **Noise**
  - **"City"**
  - **Scars—blood stains**
  - Diesel fumes
  - Marking bad top spots (Donald2, 13)
  - Curtains

The miners' interpretation of the mines-body language was so packed with narratives that it became another heading entirely ("Mine as Character/Ways Mines-Body Speaks") . In relation to the mines-body were "Miners' Bodies," a heading further divided into "before" and "after" bodies dated from disability:

Miners' Bodies

As miners:

Movement in mines

Lean ye head in low coal (Harley 2)
Duck walk (Harley 37)
Stay close to stay alive (Palmer 2)
Crawl to where you go to (Palmer 5)

Blood

Gets in ye blood
Seeing Mine and Coal pumped out—feels like blood
Blood is desire (Palmer 6, 45)
In son's blood now from working 3 years, can't go back, injected into his blood (Palmer 88)
Dad was coal miner, both born in and injected into him (Palmer 88)

Breed—different (also with Stereotypes)

Brains/education
Tough breed (Steve 88)

Working through pain

Wanting to **(Desire—wants to go back)** (Steve 83)
Needing to (Buckwheat, Donald 2, 18)
8. STAYING THROUGH INJURIES stay even though Hurt

Scars/Marks

Donald at beach (Donald 30)
Coal stains on knees (Donald 57)

Body remembers/doubles/re-eacts
Tired
Coming out of mine and standing up
Light/darkness (eyes)
Cleaning with joy water (Donald 43)
Morality/moral body is a good day's coal (Palmer 6)

Disabled former miners:

6. EFFECTS ON BODY black spots on knees—marks on the body (injuries)
Body (general)
Movement now
Lungs
Black lung

Cough up dust 5 years later (Palmer 78)
Dad—sit up with him to breathe (Palmer 78)
Rock dust (Donald 53)
Second stage rock dust—told wife do autopsy (Harley 46)

Heart
Scars/Marks
Body remembers/doubles/re-enacts
Breath—remembering dad through breath

"how *could* a *coal miner* / have affected me"—body remembers (Earl 9.17.04 22)

Legs
Earl rest 3 days after trip (St. Charles 1 1)
Injuries are invisible (Donald tape 2 5)
Had 2 knee surgeries, stomach busted open, crippling (Steve 90)
Hip, legs numb—no, you don't know* (Harley 45)
Pain pump (Sam 19)

I compared this list of codes with the coded list I had made from my first interview with Wayne two years earlier. I played with these themes from two years earlier as major headings for the performance (listed in the above examples in all-capital letters). This was a good check for my themes and added other themes I hadn't noticed in my original coding. But in the end, I decided this was not the best way to form final organization—the field research had changed my initial questions and added so many more concerns: women's embodied experiences in the mines, disabled miners wrestling with the compensation game and separation from the mines…the story was so much bigger and more complex now. It was also more focused: I started by asking about coal mining culture, understanding that miners had a unique relationship with the land as an effect of their work. Through fieldwork, I came to find that this relationship was an integral part of coal mining culture and *was* their work: the story was more about the bodies of coal miners in relation to the mines-body and how both of these bodies grew together and were broken apart. Disability was a question of coming to grips with losing the mines-body *and* the younger/"able" bodies they left behind in the mines.

Fieldwork changed my assumptions about what would be most important to the miners. It's not just about men working together; it's about men and women negotiating performances of the self in relation to each other and to the body of the mines. *Equally,* it's also about what happens to all of those bodies during and following "disability": the merging of under-/above-ground worlds, the divide between the human body "then" and "now," and the often painful separation from the mines-body. Mining culture demands that I think about notions of place and body in a radically holistic and interconnected way, reconfiguring each in relation to the other.

Choices

From this point, with my mammoth lists and stories compiled, organized, and sitting before me on my computer in a single word document, like some huge, wild, untamed plant grown out of control, I faced the slow and agonizing process of pruning my experience into something digestible for a theater audience. I didn't want to prune this wild thing before me—I wanted to just set all the pieces out there and let performance make them grow more out of control with the audience and actors. In the winnowing process of scripting, it hurt to snip and trim the miners' stories and to allow one story to speak for others like it, because I

knew the rich textures of each voice and each story as unique and valuable in its own right. But, by paring down the repetitive stories while still privileging the margins of coal mining culture, such as women miners' stories, the effect was a lively and diverse performance. Like water, performance entered these sprout-stories to free them into the excess and possibility of performance, allowing them to grow up, out, and full, beyond the place-borders of mining country to audiences in other states (North Carolina) and states of mind (the prejudice against supposedly backward Appalachians). Pruning many stories down to a few specific pieces and themes, performance reached in to interrogate these pieces down to their roots and exploded outwards to reveal the interconnected richness of seemingly small narratives.

Thus, a small moment and single line from Harley telling Hannah, "No, you don't know" becomes a weighty history of many pain-filled dis-abled bodies and past-dead loved ones whose exhausted and ghosted voices breathe through coal-wrapped lungs to explain and critique those larger structures of power that pretend to comprehend the lived, embodied, and daily pain of dis-ability. Pruning hones performance. It brings the focus of audience, actors, and subjects down to those small moments that are powerful, poignant, and that reveal the invisible truths by which we live. Pruning means trimming research down to the small, watering it with performance, and watching the small flower and bloom in the excessive possibilities of collaborative rehearsal processes. It honors the extraordinary in the ordinary, the particular, the fleeting, and the seemingly invisible.

I am learning to let go and let performance have its way with me and "my" show.
Performance wraps my body in its uncertainty, precariousness, and possibility.
Performance contorts my body.
This performance takes my body into forms and places it does not want to go.
It contorts my chest, and I cannot breathe.
I did not teach performance to do this.
It is teaching me.
It is bringing me closer into mining experience, into the mines themselves:
it is dark in this space,
my body hot with labor,
my sweat-filmed skin damp and clammy-cool in the absence of light.
This performance is not tame.
And it is not completely mine.

The winnowing process of choosing stories offered a challenge to my fieldwork. In pruning, I asked: What was most important to them? What stories are often unheard—outside of Appalachia, as well as within mining culture? What stories and experiences moved me, pricked my skin, or made me cry? I attempted to be self-reflexive about my role in their eyes as a storyteller (as I discussed in Chapter Eight, my role as storyteller and the doing of this show for a larger audience is important to them—it keeps their culture going), as someone who needs to listen and learn (as Harley taught me, "no, you don't know" what disability feels like), and someone who needed to go there (and, by implication, who needed to bring the audience into the mines as much as possible by all the means of performance). I was determined to critique those structures that kept Appalachia in another world, set apart as backward, quaint, ignorant, and irrelevant.

I pieced together a master script under themed headings and condensed it to the stories that were most powerful and moving. This was NOT about shock value or using their stories to move an audience to tears—this was about honoring what was most important to them and what my embodied experience in the mines taught me about the poignancy, poetics, and politics of mining culture. I moved into the miners' stories as they moved into me. All the while, I kept sketching the images that these stories evoked—stage pictures, movements, and ways of interacting with the images and objects the miners brought me. These stories pulled me out of my chair and into metaphoric movements.

The script evolved through nearly 20 versions. It swelled to 240 pages by version three, after which I slowly chipped away at it, like finding the sculpture inside a piece of marble. In organizing the stories, I wanted to trace the miners' story chronologically as they grew up to become coal miners, and I also wanted to show the nonlinear nature of memory and the interview process. Movement and image worked well to reflect and layer different time periods, generations, and duplicate stories—for example, when one story stood for many, movement and image helped to convey the presence of so many other stories and bodies weighing on a single account.

I also wanted audience to travel with me—I wanted to reflect my journey as I began to understand this world. I wanted the audience to see me making discoveries and learning from and with the miners. I thought our performance should show the co-constructed nature of interviews—they're telling this to *me*, a woman—and for this Hannah must always be in

the frame of the performance. The *Hannah* character grounded the audience with a central narrator who was not in control of her subjects but co-participated as a witness *with* them. She learned from them as she humbly and vulnerably dove into this messy, muddy space with them. The presence of the *Hannah* character throughout the performance stressed that these narrative performances were historically and socially situated within a particular context between Hannah and the miners, and this dynamic was an integral component of the stories revealed between coparticipants in a "field of shared emotional experience" (Denzin Interpretive 15).

The main goals of the performance followed the miners' stated desires and embodied experiences. They were:

1. to fight the common stereotypes of Appalachians as either "dirty and dangerous" or "simple and stupid;"
2. to show miners' complex relationship with earth;
3. to convey the hardships of dealing with and "proving" disability; and
4. to show the relevance of coal to daily life for those living in cities and urban spaces outside of Appalachia.

When I described these goals to Matt Spangler, a friend and colleague in Wordshed Productions[73], we began to brainstorm ideas for a title with his wife, Crystal, finally landing on the phrase Out of the Dark. The title alluded to the dual notion of unknown stories being brought into the light or public eye, and to the fact that these miners and the stories themselves come from an utterly different, dark, and underground place.

III. Page to Stage: Casting and Rehearsal Processes

Casting

Casting was a serious undertaking—in large part, the cast determined the size, nature, and dynamics of the show. Because I have a collaborative directing aesthetic, the major factor in choosing cast members was to determine if they had a passion for the work and a commitment to collaborative staging. While I knew that the production would heavily rely

[73] Since 2001, I have been a board member of Wordshed Productions performance company. Wordshed Productions, based in Chapel Hill, NC, and in San Jose, CA, is dedicated to the research, development, and presentation of literary and oral history adaptations. Wordshed believes that the necessary intimacy and immediacy of performance—whether in the form of live theatre or film—offers an ideal medium for the study and exploration of literature for both audiences and creators. In addition to its major production schedule, Wordshed also supports new works and adaptations by student performers and filmmakers. Since 1998, Wordshed has produced over 30 shows both nationally and internationally. See www.unc.edu/wordshed for more information.

on movement, I did not look to cast actors who had the prototypical "dancer's body." I wanted to create stage pictures with multiple types of bodies and body shapes. I also wanted to implicate gendered norms within the mines and trouble the notion that mine space is male-owned space. I was aware that these narratives were all filtered through my female body. For these reasons primarily, I decided to cast five women to play with and against gender, portraying the character *Hannah* and multiple specific men and women miners. Casting all women also offered an opportunity to isolate discussions of gender and choose when and where we wanted to engage questions of sexual harassment and women's "place" in and out of the mines.

In the end, I chose five performers. Annissa Clark's interests stemmed from her growing up in Kentucky and her devotion to performance for social justice. elizabeth nelson brought much experience in movement and a commitment to performance for social change. Shannon O'Neill was a new graduate student in performance studies and a recently-inducted member of Wordshed Productions. A talented and experienced singer, Shannon had never before acted in a theater production and wanted to try her wings in this capacity. To mirror the displacement that I felt in the mines, and to allow all the actors to learn from the performance process of performing the Other, I chose to cast another actor as the *Hannah* character and myself as a group of miners. After much searching[74], Dr. Madison recommended a talented and trusted undergraduate student, Cristina Garcia, for the role of *Hannah*. I met with Cristina privately, showed her the script, and asked her to read for the role. The reading went very well. Cristina's soft-spoken nature and kind manner immediately drew me to her, and she was interested in the collaborative rehearsal process and more experimental staging that this performance pursued. Cristina also added her soulful alto singing voice to our cast.

The cast was as follows:

Hannah Blevins – Earl, Donald, Ichabod, Man Miner, Ghost Lung Miner 2
Annissa Clark – Palmer, Bill, Pinner, Cat, Pam, Mike, Ghost Lung Miner 1
Cristina Garcia – Hannah

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[74] One of the original cast members developed a conflict and was unable to perform with us. One graduate student was very interested but had too intense of a writing schedule to commit to the rehearsal schedule. Another actor considered for the *Hannah* character was prevented from joining the cast because of (ironically enough for this show's content) a back injury which demanded that she cut extracurricular activities and stress to a minimum.

elizabeth nelson – Steve, Eddie, Woman Miner, Cat
Shannon O'Neill – Harley, Jimmy, Man Miner

Cellist and friend Susanna Branyon was cast as the live musician, who developed original adaptations of J. Mark Scearce's solo cello piece "Gaea's Lament[75]," Allison Krauss's bluegrass song "Down in a Hole," and her own original compositions to underscore the performance. Susanna and I met several times outside of rehearsals to experiment with the music that would underscore the actions onstage.

Collaborative Rehearsal

This script remained a malleable configuration, and through the rehearsal process we continue to refine and rework this script, adding and subtracting narratives at each rehearsal. The collaborative nature of our rehearsal process was a key element in the evolution of this performance—I wanted to create an environment where actors could understand my guiding vision for each scene and the performance as a whole but also work through other possibilities for performance and discover how my vision might necessarily change through the process of embodying these narratives in time and space. At all times we as a cast tried to be conscious of the ethics of ethnographic representation through performance and the need for contextualization.

Our first rehearsal was a time to gather, ask questions, and begin to immerse ourselves in all the textures of mining culture. The cast and Leslie Stewart, our stage manager, were invited to this first meeting. At our first rehearsal, I brought many artifacts and stories from my fieldwork for us to play with. I played some of my audiotapes from my fieldwork so that the actors could get an immediate sense of the accent and language of the miners (this was especially important because the script was written in dialect, and the actors were expected to take on this dialect). I brought many of the photos that Mike gave to me and my own photos from the mines (many of these are included in Chapter Six). I brought some of the actual fossils from the mines (also pictured in Chapter Six), and the cast handled them with care. I also brought Jimmy's scrapbook of his mother's death—the cast read through the book, carefully pouring over Cat's pictures inside and out of the mines. The artifacts generated many questions about mining, disability, and gender, and we discussed the

[75] "Gaea" means "Mother Earth." Scearce composed "Gaea's Lament" in response to the Exxon Valdese Oil Spill in 1988. Branyon collaborated with Scearce and myself on her adaptations of his work.

challenges of bringing these stories to an audience through our bodies. During the second half of the rehearsal we read through the script and discussed questions.

During this first meeting I scheduled an individual rehearsal with each cast member. Over the next two weeks, I met with each cast member to acquaint them with the people they would represent in our performance. We watched video archives of my interviews with the miner that cast member portrayed, handled and discussed the artifacts and keepsakes those miners had loaned me for the purposes of the performance, and I coached each performer in taking on the body and persona of these individual lives based on the given circumstances of each miner.

Individual meetings also offered an opportunity to begin to build relationships with each cast member and to talk with them about their desires, concerns, and interests in the project. This sense of community—between the actors and myself as a director, and between all of us as a cast—was crucial in developing the pieces we performed. Without the passion and commitment of this cast to the issues this performance raised, our work would not have been possible. The relationships we developed before and during this early conception of our rehearsals together created a synergy and momentum all its own, and that energy drove our creations. Collaboration means co-labor, working with and together—it requires a relationship; and relationships, good ones at least, breed trust; and trust breeds a space safe for experimentation and risk; and experimentation and risk breeds possibilities; and possibilities breed creation and change.

These initial meetings were a vital and useful first step in the rehearsal process. For example, Shannon told me at the beginning of our meeting that she had not had much formal acting training. Knowing this, I offered to lead her in some performance exercises that would help her embody Jimmy and Harley, the two male miners she played. I started our meeting with some vocal-physical warm-up exercises, and then taught her how to take her body to "zero," a technique that theater arts professor Doug Cummins taught to me as a method of recognizing the centers of the body and developing a performance character from a central point of the body[76]. The "center of the body" for a person is where that individual

[76] I have known other professors refer to the "center of the body" as the part of the body that "leads" the rest of the body in motion. I, however, believe this latter train of thought has the effect of making an actor put a characteristic or mannerism *onto* the character: an outside-in approach. Cummins's "centers of the body"

holds or centers their energy, generally: head, shoulders/chest, stomach, pelvis, and/or anus. Cummins's techniques were influenced by Eugenio Barba's work with "daily-" and "extra-daily balance" in addition to the yogic notion of chakras (Barba 34). The notion parallels the concept of "centering" in dance theory as well (Franklin 109-148). Through a series of relaxation techniques, the performer aligns her body and brings it to a state of energized balance. From this point, the performer is free of her own daily posture and may take on her character's center of the body. In my meeting with Shannon, we both took our bodies to "zero" and then experimented with various centers of the body, trying on these centers and paying attention to how gestures, posture, and direction of vision were all influenced by and drawn towards the various centers.

Immediately following this exercise, Shannon and I sat down by the TV and watched segments I had selected from the video archive of my interviews with Jimmy. I asked Shannon to take written and mental notes and to pay attention to Jimmy's posture, trying to note his center of the body (his chest), and how his gestures, posture, and even his focal points flowed from that center. Shannon took some time to experiment with this center of the body, paying particular attention to Jimmy's mannerisms when he interacted with the scrapbook of his mother's death. We did the same exercise with videos from my interviews with Harley, noting the difference between these two men in their body centers: where Jimmy sat erect with a chest-centered posture and minimal gestures towards the scrapbook, Harley was stomach-centered, with elbows in, hands gesturing liberally out in circular patterns, swinging his arms, and eyes focusing up and out. We discussed the circumstances in each man's life that contributed to his particular posture and mannerisms: the painful loss of Jimmy's mother contributed to the way he distanced himself from the notebook and maintained composure away from that object; and Harley's later examples of "duck walking" in the mines (crouching down, hunching and arching the back and walking low to the ground) influenced his seated posture, which was drawn into his stomach with gestures out but rarely up.

For each of the video clips, I located the coordinating written transcription I had made of our conversations. With these transcriptions as a temporary "script," Shannon and I

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exercise, rather, places the performing body in the given circumstances of a character in order to sense the center of the body out of which all other actions and mannerisms flow: an inside-out approach.

experimented with vocal intonation for these Appalachian men. As an accomplished singer and trained vocalist, Shannon adapted her voice to each man's mountain inflection carefully and quickly. I gave Shannon an audio tape of each man's voice and the full text of the transcribed interviews for her to look through and get a fuller sense of the context of our larger conversations which were condensed into the "final" script.

Our group rehearsals were often as multitextured as these individual meetings. We would often start rehearsals by watching videos from my fieldwork and some of the various mining training videos that Bill Buchanan had brought me. These videos trained us as actors in a similar way to how "red hats" are trained to become miners. We watched videos on: mining safety; how to run various pieces of equipment; the nature of the strata of rock above miners at all times; the patterns of air flow in the mines and the importance of keeping curtains up to circulate methane away from the face and avoid explosions; the effect of seasonal changes on rock and roof falls; and many other topics, including Donzil's video and a 1939 black-and-white film on silicosis.

The videos always generated questions and further explorations of how mining affects miners' bodies and shapes a way of life in intimate relationship to place. These videos were crucial in helping take the cast into the mines, as much as possible, and to give us a shared sense of experiencing the mines together: our collective gasps as we witnessed Donzil's body after his accident; our shared vocalized astonishment at the low ceilings of low-wall mining; and our shared silence as we watched a video showing a "fireball" shooting out of a mine after a methane explosion. These shared temporal experiences as we watched the films together gave us a space to discuss the risks, dangers, and excitement of mining in terms of our embodied performance. Our time with the fieldwork and training videos also offered a time to critique the mining industry's account of workers' experiences—Annissa and elizabeth drew us into a more focused discussion of Donzil's experiences in the mines and how the company attempted to transform his story of hope and moving forward into a story of tragedy and blame on the miner for not being more careful. Our critique of the company's editing and production of Donzil's story gave us fuel and a backstory for our performed scenes on horseplay, disability, and the struggle to gain compensation.

Coming into the performance space, I introduced warm-up exercises, opening questions, and exercises that could help us travel into mining and miners' bodies. Many

rehearsals centered on building stage pictures with our individual and collective bodies to represent and evoke the concepts and complex emotions within these miners' stories. I wanted to create a gestural language of movement through metaphoric staging, in which repeated gestures and movements would weave their own story threading throughout the performance. Our exercises were variations of Viola Spolin's "Creating the Stage Picture" exercise and rehearsal exercises I observed in Soyini Madison's direction of Is It a Human Being or a Girl? in the Spring of 2002 (Spolin 251). I invited the cast to critique my decisions, and collectively we came to decisions about what movements would be used in each scene, and which movements would serve as transitions between scenes.

For example, in one early rehearsal, I asked the cast to consider the embodied experience of "black lung." Their considerations were based on individual meetings and reflection as well as the videos, artifacts, and group conversations we had experienced together. I then gave each actor a long piece of fabric and asked them to create three movements or stage pictures that expressed the concept or experience of "black lung." After a few minutes of experimenting, we came together and each actor performed their three movements. We named each of these movements—some were incorporated into the scene we were choreographing at the time, and some were used later in other scenes. Annissa created one movement called "kneeling shroud," kneeling her body under a scrim of black chiffon to ghost her presence behind the film of black lung-lined breath and death. We decided to use a different movement to signify black lung—a standing movement where actors turned their bodies while wrapping legs, waist, torso, and then neck in black fabric (which we later replaced for more masculine and practically cooperative black rope). In later rehearsals, we adapted Annissa's "kneeling shroud" into a group movement where three bodies signified a mountain dropping down on Donald, who described rocks "dropping out" on top of him and other miners without warning. We removed the cumbersome fabric from over the kneeling shrouds, who fell on cue with Donald's descriptions of the mountain "dropping." As each body fell, the thud and smack of their hands against the ground punctuated Donald's descriptions beautifully, but we critiqued the overall movements as too distracting from Donald's story. As we rehearsed with the cellist, the noise of these "kneeling shrouds" was translated into a gap in the cellist's underscoring notes, so that each time Donald and other miners described the mines "dropping" the cellist lowered the note she

played and abruptly "dropped" the music out from behind the miners' words. Annissa's movement translated into a subtle underscoring of music and silence that hauntingly punctuated Donald's story without distracting from the power of his words.

I tried as much as possible to center our rehearsals on the questions the various scenes raised and to raise more questions through our rehearsals and discussions of the issues within each scene. Question-centered rehearsals trust in the collaborative nature of performance to generate "blocking" and "scenework" that exceeds the possibilities of completely pre-planned and pre-plotted choreography. I saw myself as an experienced explorer with the cast rather than director of their movements, recognizing performance as a space of group discovery. Collaborative staging and rehearsals recognize that, as Peter Brook notes in The Empty Space, "my pattern was much less interesting than this new pattern that was unfolding in front of me—rich in energy, full of personal variations, shaped by individual enthusiasiams…promising such different rhythms, opening so many unexpected possibilities" (Brook 107).

I changed as a director through this performance. The collaborative process taught me to trust the cast to create beautiful images and push critical issues beyond what I had or could have originally planned. It taught me to let go of the need to control the performance and let the performance control me. Becoming a black lung through movement, wrapping my body with ropes of coal, I now want to experiment even more with breath and movement, trusting gestural language to carry the performance rather than supplement spoken word.

IV. Staging Memory

Just as the winnowing process of choosing stories offered a challenge to my fieldwork, the themes from fieldwork offered challenges for performance. We used movement, live cello music, song, video, lighting, still images, body art, painting/installation art, and storytelling to translate embodied memory onto the stage. This section closely analyzes a selection of these scenes from our performance, the larger script for which is included in Appendix I. The DVD archive of our performance in Appendix II also supplements this section.

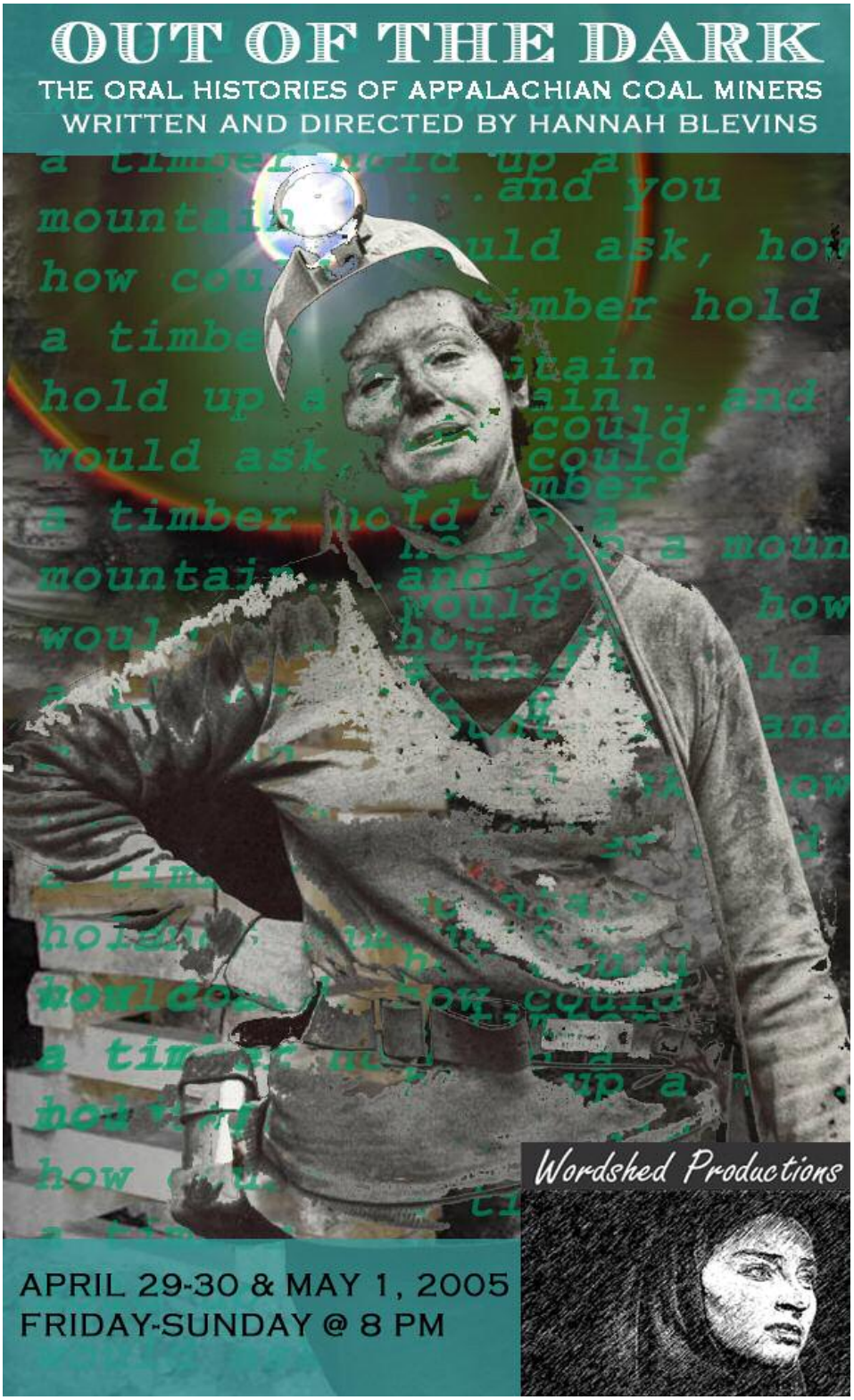

Figure 51 Poster image for <u>Out of the Dark</u>. The poster layers images of Cat Counts, timbers and cribs supporting a crumbling mine roof, and Earl's quote, "How could a timber hold up a mountain?" Poster image designed and created by SaRAH! Kocz.

Beginnings

I knew I wanted to introduce audience to mining place early on in the performance—this entirely other (and Othered) world of the mines-body is so central to miners' stories, so I wanted the audience to "get down there" as soon as possible. I also wanted the audience's experience of the performance space to mirror my journey into mining culture: through artifacts of material culture, stories, and immersion into mining space and place. Before I began meeting with the miners to hear their stories first-hand, my father had described my interest in mining to them. As a result, Donald brought many of his fossils to me at an informal meeting. When audience members approached the lamp-lit entrance to the performance area, the ticket desk was covered with black fossil-painted fabric and displayed a variety of these fossils Donald had loaned to me.

As audience members entered the performance space, they passed through a dark mining "tunnel"—walls of black visquine stretched from ceiling to floor and tightly directed each audience member forward. The close walls and low, jagged ceiling of the visquine tunnel forced each audience member to enter this space in single file, making this entrance a reflective and personal experience. The entrance also forced audience members to stoop as they passed beneath the visquine frame and into the seating area, contorting their bodies in a similar fashion to the miners' experience.

Audience members emerged onto the stage itself—they walked among tubs of coal and red dirt to take their seats, which angled around two sides of the triangular black box performance space. Three large screens of varying sizes and heights (all about six feet square in size) hung upstage, and piles of coal rubble skirted around the bottoms of these screens. The theater itself induced claustrophobia when all the audience banks filled with bodies, in addition to performers, crew, and a cellist who sat visible in the center of the audience. This venue was a conscious choice with the intent of mirroring the close quarters of the mines by bringing audience members in close proximity to each other, to the miner-actors, and to the *Hannah* character, who sat and moved among the audience during many scenes.

Gillian Welch's bluegrass song "Down in a Hole" had cycled through many former incarnations of this public performance, and I knew I wanted to incorporate it here as a way of introducing the audience to the miners who would bring them further into this new realm.

The song crystallized many miners' "theories of the flesh" (Madison "Possibility" 227). In our performance, lights faded to black, and the audience saw the silent projected video image of coal on a mining belt being taken out of the mines and poured from the tipple into trucks to be hauled out for use. *Hannah*—dressed in a pink long-sleeved shirt, khaki pants, and tennis shoes—entered alone and sings the first lines of the song acapella. She was almost immediately joined by the miners—their hair pulled or slicked back, dressed in gray coveralls, with thick belts with canvas-covered survival packs, and work boots—on the second and following lines. *Hannah* brought this song to the audience, but it was clear that she looked to the miners to teach her the notes and the words. *Hannah* and the miners looked to each other and out toward the Appalachian mines and mining towns as they sang:

Cristina: In the black dust towns
Of East Tennessee
All the work's about the same

Shannon: He may not go
To a job in the ground
But he'll learn the miner's refrain

All: I'm down in a hole
Down in a hole
Down in a deep dark hole

(*cello underscores this last chorus*)

All: I'm down in a hole
Down in a hole
Down in a deep dark hole

Like every other movement and stage picture in our performance, this beginning evolved over the course of several rehearsals and playful experiments. We choreographed the next movements of the scene many weeks into our rehearsal schedule, because I wanted the cast to have a good sense of their characters and all of us to experience inhabiting the coal miners' bodies before we attempted to piece together an introduction to these miners' lives. I also wanted this movement sequence to introduce the gestural language that we would use throughout the performance, including various movements that represented black lung, walking in the mines, and generations of miners following one another down in a hole.

These miners bodies are intertwined with my own in this performance—as Madison (2005) encourages, I have an ethical responsibility to critically acknowledge and self-reflexively integrate my presence as the ethnographer in relation to the story that was told to me and the story being told in this performance. From the start, I wanted the audience to understand that this story was about the politics and poetics of relational bodies: mine, the miners', and that of the place itself.

Susanna slid from the ending notes accompanying "Down in a Hole" through minor chords and into melancholy snippets of Scearce's "Gaea's Lament" as we actors moved to fill the space and looked directly into the audience. We shared the following lines, sounding in unison the words in bold and individually voicing the slash-divided phrases. The words came from a December 2004 fieldwork journal entry. Our adaptation of this journal entry told the story of miners teaching *Hannah* about their bodies and experiences. We showed *Hannah* joining this community of miners in the places and spaces of their everyday lives in order to better understand and empathize with mining culture. We moved together and apart, contorting our bodies to conform to the places we described—we as a company of women's bodies were relating this story of men and women miners to the audience, and the swirl of identities here mirrored the excess of my original swirling drawings and sketches above. We told this history, lament, and mission to each other, to ourselves, and to the audience:

> **This is a story of coal miners**. A story of place. Of a forgotten corner of Virginia—dirty / stupid / poor. **A story of a corner of Appalachia** / and all that Appalachia is to those outside / and inside its borders. A story of older / and younger / **disabled** miners / who remember the coal mines with love / longing / pain / and loss. This is a story of me—young, / white, / healthy, / heterosexual woman / growing up in another corner of Appalachia. A story of going away and coming back home to try to straighten out the perceived image of this place. This is a story that begins in the body—in the bodies of coal miners who work in spaces **no higher than a table**/ back arched and extended as they work with machines that carve, / drill, / and bolt the roof as they listen, / listen, / listen / **to the rock**. A story of women who became men to join this community of miners / of blackened bodies / **all** *<inhale>* / **breathing** *<inhale>* / **together** *<inhale>*

I wanted these first moments of the performance to introduce the audience into the issues of disability, black lung, compensation, coal towns, and a sense of these stories spanning and doubling through generations. At the beginning of this shared dialogue, all the miners and *Hannah* clustered tightly together. The group of "older / and younger / disabled

miners" and *Hannah* rippled their arms forward and twisted their backs slightly at the word "disabled" to echo the fact that, in the fieldwork and in this performance, I was attempting to experience disability with these miners and to learn their experiences from the inside of the body out. And yet, my experiences are not their own. I do not own their loss or bodies in this performance—my body is on a different line than theirs. Therefore, *Hannah* moved towards the audience on her line "this is a story of me," and the miners looked at her as they described the "young / white / healthy / heterosexual woman." *Hannah* then rejoined the miners' huddle at their unison line "no higher than a table." We all bent our heads to the side and dipped our bodies downward, then in a fluid unison movement began to contort and arch our backs in response to Shannon's description "arched and extended," mirroring the body position that Earl demonstrated for me in a mock mine he took me to at a mining museum in Benham, KY. Keeping this fluid motion, the miners peeled off from this formation one after the other, moving their ears closer to the imagined mine roof on their individual lines "listen / listen / listen," and finally all moved their heads closer "to the rock." They clustered even more tightly together as they visibly and audibly struggled to "all (*inhale*) / breath[e] (*inhale*) / together (*inhale*)." Starting here, labored breathing became a recurrent theme of its own in our performance.

I wanted to start aboveground, to give the audience a somewhat familiar sense of place from which to spring into the other world of underground mining. One of Steve's stories had haunted me ever since he narrated it to me in September of 2004: he described his grandmother's house lined with a film of black coal dust. Just as his own lungs are, and the lungs of his deceased grandfather were, lined with coal dust, so the homes in the town of Appalachia were and are coated with coal inside and out. I wanted to play with these images of a town and way of life centering on a single substance and that substance penetratingly marking the inside of homes and lungs. Steve's story was also chilling because of the hidden nature of the coal film in his grandmother's house: he literally had to break through a ceiling to discover this dirty film. His story mirrored the hidden nature of black lung as a disease found inside the lungs, and one that is denied by comp doctors such that miners "died with oxygen on [their faces] / and / never got a penny." Miners have had to break down many figurative walls and ceilings to expose the dirt in their lungs and the dirt of dirty comp

doctors and insurance companies. Sometimes they achieve exposure through lawyers, and sometimes by an autopsy, the ultimate turning inside-out.

> **elizabeth/Steve:** Even today / you can tear, a **wall**
> outa those houses [in the town of Appalachia, Virginia] / and you'll get [that] **black**…
> that there that **coal** dust'll get all over ye.
> Now and see I recently bought my grandmother's house. / She passed away.
> And / when I bought her house / I started workin on it.
> Well I, I found a **hole** up, in the ceiling and, and I got up in there and I looked I said, "Gah, man there's a whole nother house up **here."**
> And / it was, it was that **thick**
> **coal** dust in the attic up there. (*motions with fingers as ½ inch to an inch*)
> And / you know that / the people had to have bad health / you know…
> Now I watched my grandfather die of black lung / he died with oxygen on his face
>
> And / **never** got a penny / **never** got a penny.

To adapt the many layers and haunting imagery of this story, we experimented with creating many different stage pictures with single and multiple bodies to echo the notion of "black lung" and a coal-lined house—I imagined this as a "breathing house," the house itself as a giant breathing lung coated in coal behind closed doors. In performance, *Hannah* moved out from the clustered group "all breathing together" and into the audience, sitting on the nexus of the two front platforms of the audience bank. She was ready to listen to the miners' stories, and elizabeth (as *Steve*) moved downstage left to talk to *Hannah.* As *Steve* told *Hannah* his story, the other miners continued their labored breathing as they moved together to form an A-frame house structure. Shannon and I leaned forward towards each other with touching palms stretched above our heads, forming an A-frame. We breathed deeply and audibly, and we bowed our backs rhythmically in concave and convex arcs, in and out. I remember leaning so far forward towards Shannon that I struggled to remain upright as we breathed together. As the house breathed, Annissa kneeled beneath this frame and began to pull a thick black cord from above her head, symbolizing the coal lining the lung-walls of this organ-house. It felt as if she were pulling this coal out of my chest. The house-lung echoed Steve's words.

Figure 52 To the left, Shannon and Hannah create the A-frame of the "house-lung" as Annissa pulls a coal-rope out of its ceiling. To the right, elizabeth as *Steve* tells about the coal lining the attic of his grandmother's house. Images of present-day St. Charles appear on the screens in the background.

The structure morphed as Steve narrated "there's a whole nother house up here:" Shannon and I arced our arms and torsos into a low circle while Annissa emerged standing in this "attic" and began to wrap her chest with the coal-cord she just pulled from the house: "and / you know that / the people had to have bad health." Shannon and I then broke off diagonally to either side of the space as Annissa continued to wrap the cord tighter around her chest. As Steve's narrative ended, the lights dimmed to three single spheres illuminating the Annissa, Shannon, and myself. In this dim light, Shannon and I turned and echoed Annissa's chest-constricting lung-wrap with two more of the thick black ropes.

We repeated this chest-wrapping movement that stood for black lung throughout the performance to lend a sense of continuity and connective dis-ease to their stories. Miners' stories of their past-healthy bodies are always shaded by their present-disabled bodies. What

does it mean to watch someone suffocate in front of your eyes? Feeling suffocation and constriction is nightmarish—acting out this metaphor changed me. It made me conscious of each breath as precious and each unencumbered inhalation and pain-less expansion of my lungs as a gift. Watching suffocation, plainly—for this is the reality undergirding these disabled miners' somewhat romanticized stories about working in the mines—*changes* you. This knowledge, made visibly apparent through metaphoric movement, makes it impossible to return to a place of passive and unthinking ease. Metaphor illuminated in clear and embodied terms the human suffering that was so often ignored by those who watch their Appalachian miners' bodies: the performance threw into question the gaze of the company, the insurance agents, the comp doctors, the miners themselves, and this affluent and disconnected audience in Chapel Hill.

Into Your Blood: Wrapped Up In It

The next theme we addressed was the notion of bodies getting "wrapped up" in coal mining experience—the work and place is overwhelming, all-surrounding, and all-encompassing as coal gets "into your blood." As I described in Chapter Five, mining gets into their blood in multiple literal and symbolic ways: it gets in them as the scars of coal embedded into their skin and lungs; it births them into the world as miners through generational family narratives; and it wells up in their lives as the powerful desire for working in the mines. In fieldwork, mining wrapped me in itself: coal got "into my blood" through the space of co-constructed stories, and mining place enveloped me as I threw my own body into the mines. This theme of getting "wrapped up" in mining experience presented the challenge of showing these multiple metaphoric and literal interpretations of the phrase "into your blood" that persistently threaded through miners' personal narratives. Each interpretation of this theme is connected to the others, and this theme seemed to be at the core of many of their stories.

Because the blood was so central to other stories, I wanted whatever metaphor we chose for this coal-blood to thread throughout the entire performance. In the next scene, "Into Your Blood," *Hannah* introduced the audience to the individual miners, who began to describe what this underground work world was like. The scene moved from the one-on-one moment of the interview, with *Earl* and *Hannah* conversing downstage, into the mines themselves, where Earl was drawn through his story back to the community of other miners

who crouched under hundreds of feet of coal and earth above. The water of the mines, the sloppy coal-mud film on their bodies, and the smell of working in their own feces manifested first through their stories, then through cello music, and finally Hannah was pulled into this space and wrapped in ropes of coal—the same ropes that the miners previously wrapped around their lungs—in a first playful, then constrictingly frightening relationship with the mines. In the end, the water and mud imagery manifested in two buckets of water poured into two large black-painted galvanized tubs, one filled with deep-red clay dirt, the other filled with black coal (black dirt). The scene showed the excesses of fieldwork and the power of Earl's and other miners' narratives to explode beyond the seemingly neat and clean interview scenario. Their stories pulled me out of my comfortable and familiar surroundings and into a messy, unfamiliar, yet beloved (by the miners and, eventually, to an extent, by myself) space.

> *(10 second music transition. Annissa, Hannah, and Shannon continue to "breathe," fade to low light. Images of St. Charles, coal miners, sketches of miners outside of mine, etc. are projected on the center screen to the music. Miners move behind the right and left flanking screens, hidden from view. "Hannah" moves from the audience bank to stage center.)*
>
> **Hannah:** I have been listening to coal miners for over two years now. I grew up in a small mountain town in Tennessee, about 45 minutes away from these Virginia coal camps. In these mountains, state borders don't seem to matter as much as the mountain county you belong to—Lee, Wise—and for coal miners, mining identity is performed as a relationship with the inside of the mountains. So much of these miners' stories was wrapped up in the impossibility of understanding and re-membrering the mines. Earl was my first friend in mining—he is in his 60's, thin and tall, with a smile that seems to come straight from his heart. Through him and my father I met many others: Donald, Harley, Jimmy—and through Jimmy his mother, Cat—Palmer, Eddie, and Steve…
>
> (*As each name is said, miners enter from behind the screens and place objects and costume pieces on the perimeter of the performance space close to the audience. They touch and handle these objects on the ground that embody each of their characters' personas. Miners echo "Hannah"'s words in bold.*)
>
> Many were older, former miners whose bodies are "**still breathing in the mines**"—this story really begins here, in the body, because it is here that I came to understand Earl's passion for his work and his relationship with the mines as some*one* he knew, intimately. The miners say that **mining gets into your blood.** Coal dust literally lives in their bodies, shaping movement and breath. I asked them what that place was like.

(*"Hannah" sits near the audience bank but still onstage to listen to "Earl"'s story. Hannah as "Earl" tells "Hannah" about the mines from downstage left. Behind "Earl," other miners metaphorically illustrate and echo his words.)*

Figure 53 Out of the Dark*: Hannah* (sitting downstage) listens intently as miner *Earl* tells her about his father and grandfather's work in the same coal mines in which Earl worked. Other miners place their hands on each others' shoulders and breathe audibly, sinking lower as the weight of mining work is passed from generation to generation. Images of a mine entrance and the inside of mines play on the screens upstage. Photo by Angie Dyson.

H/Earl: I went in the deep mines where my father worked

Shannon (*in an overlapping echo*): (*rests her hand on an imaginary shoulder in front of her*) my father worked

Annissa *(echoing): (rests her hand on Shannon's shoulder)* my father worked

elizabeth (*echoing*)*: (rests her hand on Annissa's shoulder)* my father worked

H/Earl*:* And uh, / Hannah, that coal…that was only 26, sometimes 28 inches high…
Once at you, once at you start in[to the mines]…we had what you call
a man trip, this was the one that / go to the workers then…

(*Shannon, Annissa, and elizabeth lower their bodies and lay with stomachs to the ground, faces turned to the side. They lightly tap their hands on the ground and shake to mirror the jostling of the man trip.*)

You had these / [motorized] cars down here.
You did not set up in em. / You couldn't stand up nor nothin.
Once that you laid down you had to stay / on your stomach / and your head turned sideways.
And uh…I guess about the farthest that I've rode
in that position, is when I was in thE low coal / and that was about three and a half miles.

Annissa/Palmer: (*sitting up*) It's black.
Pitch black. It's, but, they's never, theys not a darkness / made / that's / that's any darker.
There's really not, cause / you could turn your light off and you can't see nothing.

Shannon/Albert: Not a thing.

Annissa/Palmer: Not a thing.
It's

ALL: pitch black.

H/Earl: (*sitting up, crouching low with head bent to the side*) But once you get in there
it uh, you ball up.
I always kept one foot / most a the time / and, under, my backside.
Or / you had to / be on ye knees all the time.
And uh / you say, "Did you get the head up?" —no!
You worked with ye head / sideways.
And where you would do that, / naturally, thE top of the roof / it was, damp and wet, dusty.
And coal would build up on ye head or / side of it or
water'd run down ye ear or down your clothes

(*Susanna plinks and plunks high notes on the cello a few times*)

And where it was so low / they was no way that you could keep ye back out a the top.
All the time, and where you were workin and movin
time, uh / the shift was over, you was drenched.
And uh…cause you've got lakes up above you / you've got, water all that water
drippin down…
It's, it's no, / **no dry place…**
Once that you get down underground
the temperature doesn't change, [it's about 55 degrees, constant].

Shannon/Harley: (*sitting up on knees, head bent to the side*) Yeah it's damp.
Kinda cool, you know it's not cold…
Have, have you ever went hiking like in a real deep holler and just kinda / that musty smell?

elizabeth/Papa: (*sitting up, head to side*) The smell, well—when you have to go to the bathroom you, just go to the bathroom down there.
You're not goin out again, it takes, half an hour or 45 minutes to get out.

Annissa/Palmer: (*standing, moving towards "Hannah," while miners behind echo words in bold*)
But, you know mining, **it gets in ye blood** though.
Now it does it, it's uh, / it's something that you *want* to do, you know like uh
(*turns to other miners behind him for help*)
Uh, how do I describe this?
You look forward to goin to work just like
people'd say, "No I wouldn't work in there," but / but we didn't think no more of it than, and them goin to a / factory you know and goin to work.
But, and you you just get / **wrapped up in it** and / you just enjoy it, but you don't realize

> the damage it's doin to ye health, you know, uh over the years. But
> but, normally you you / I enjoyed it, I still miss it

(30 second music transition underscores the next movements—the cello begins with light and high notes in a playful and fast-tempo, but quickly descends to deeper and more menacing slower-tempo notes. "Palmer" brings "Hannah" into the performance space, to where elizabeth and Shannon have outstretched a long black rope between them. elizabeth and Shannon represent the mining walls or "ribs" of coal, which can sometimes roll over onto miners and crush them. "Palmer" puts "Hannah" near the center of the rope, and "Hannah" loops the rope around her waist, playfully sliding and spinning with the rope still around her waist first to one side of the rope, then the next. Each time "Hannah" spins to one side of the rope, the actor holding the opposite end of the rope gathers up a foot or two of the rope, shortening it. In the end, "Hannah" is left frustratingly and frighteningly bound in a knot between the two close walls of bodies in her face. Her space has quickly grown claustrophobically tight. She is scared. She begins to spin downstage—elizabeth drops her end of the rope and the loop around "Hannah"'s waist slips off as she lands downstage in the mines, looking up and around at the mine ceiling and walls.

Into Your Blood: Written in Blood

Miners often told me that since the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969, mining laws were written in someone's blood. Similarly, each miner knows the mines and mining work through their enfleshed experience—their stories spoke of an intimate, body-to-body relationship with place. Coal lived in their blood, and in their stories they traced the figure and fleshy details of the mines-body through the authority of their own blood and experience. I wanted to play with this notion of blood writing a story—in the same way that the miners wrote out their descriptions of the coal mines through their drawings on paper during our conversations. I wanted the audience to see this place written in miners' coal-soaked blood.

To meet this challenge, we brought the vats of red and black mud onto our bodies and out into the performance space[77]. In the following scene, "Into Your Blood: Written in Blood," Annissa and I painted our arms in blood-red and coal-black mud (Fig. 54), clasped our slippery arms together to mix the two substances on our bodies, and began to draw with red and black coal on the ground of the performance space and onto the center screen. As

[77] I wanted to bring the mud into the audience's hands themselves—in the end, following the performance, I invited the audience to come onstage and interact with the mud and pieces our performance left behind in a form of installation. Few audience members actually touched the mud, but many did write responses and notes to the miners about the performance in a journal I provided.

Steve described to *Hannah* how the mines were organized by drawing out "little squares" on his pad, I drew out the same image on the screen behind them, only this drawing was penned with coal-and-blood ink. As *Steve* described the pillars of coal the miners left behind to hold the roof up as they pushed forward into the face of the mines, Annissa drew a line of blood-coal onto the ground, and Shannon pulled giant fabric-covered pillars out from the wall to meet the line Annissa had drawn. The idea was that the story, in the foreground, brought forth this other world that was written in blood and coal, and these drawings and stories brought forth a fuller world of actual coal pillars, which now flanked and enveloped the audience. My intent was to show the power of storytelling to bring forth a material reality in the space of story. The effect was that, by the end of *Steve*'s story, the audience had been transported from the interview environment into being literally surrounded with pillars of coal—*and* all the while, the frame of the interview was present, such that "immersion" in this world is always complicated by the fact that these stories are filtered through multiple contexts and bodies. Steve told me a story of knowledge derived of and through the blood; our staged performance of that story bled forth onto arms, canvas and floor.

Figure 54 <u>Out of the Dark</u>: Interpretive movement—a miner mixes a vat of dark black coal/mud and then watches the substance trickle down his arm—this movement is mirrored at stage right as another miner mixes a vat of red mud/blood and watches it trickle down his arm. These two miners join at stage center to join hands and blend coal into blood. This mixture serves as a paint with which the miners draw representations of the coal mines on screens.

The scene illustrated miners' relationship with this city-place in contrast to those who project the coal seams with instruments above-ground. Where above-ground knowledge stops at these drawings on paper, the miners literally *flesh*-out the understanding that "the map is not the territory" (Korzybski qtd. in Wood 86).

In this scene, Annissa, Shannon, and I began to work with/as the various machines and identities our characters described to me: a miner worked the mining machine (Shannon squared her hips, squatted a bit, and sharply swiped the face of the coal with her palms); and pinner men worked the roof bolter (Annissa and I squared our hips, squatted slightly, and twisted our hands and arms upwards in sharp, quick motions to drill into the roof of coal above). *Hannah* moved close to Annissa and tried—fumblingly at first, then with more confidence—to mirror the pinner man's drilling, feeling the coal above their heads. *Hannah*'s movement here mirrored the ethnographer's leap into the world of the mines and my own experiences trying out the mining machines when I went into Deep Mine 36.

Fossils, Learning the Mountains

Another theme we presented was that of the miners being explorers and archaeologists. Listening, learning, and feeling the mountains through their various jobs, many miners figured themselves as adventurers, going places no one had ever been before or ever would be again. The challenge of this theme was to bring the audience into a place they believed was both dangerous and exciting. The miners' stories were so moving in their own right that I didn't want to detract from the power of their singular voices. We decided to play with shadows in this scene to show the spectered, dark, and haunting quality of their work in combination with the shimmering and magical nature of finding treasures like fossils "hard and dark against the coal." I wanted to share part of my experiences in the mines as a rabbity explorer to serve as the audience's window into this chimeral and phantasmagorical place.

In this low-lit scene, *Hannah, Steve, and Donald* crouch in three dimly-lit spheres of light, and at *Ichabod*'s discovery of the fossil in the roof, the pillars of coal flanking the audience illuminate from behind to reveal large flower, vine, and tree figures painted onto the backs of the fabric, which resembled solid dark shadows behind and embedded within the coal pillars. Artist/dancer/scholar Pamela Sunstrum took some of the fossils from the mines

and sketched out their patterns, painting them on black chiffon. We layered the chiffon over silver lamé fabric and strung the pillar frames with this material. The effect was that the "fossils" were invisible when lit from the front, but when backlit the pillars sparkled—just as the coal itself sparkled in the mines—and fossil imprints shown from inside the coal walls (Fig. 55). Behind *Hannah* and the miners onstage, images of cribs holding up a crumbling rock-dust covered roof appear on the left and right screens. Within these images, Annissa and Shannon's shadowed figures feel the walls and crouch beneath this crumbling ceiling above them in the picture.

Figure 55 Close-up of fossil stencils painted onto double layers of chiffon and lame' fabric—the fabric was stretched across a frame and extended into the shape of two coal pillars flanking the audience.

Following *Hannah*'s account, two other miners (*Donald* and *Steve*) sat in chairs in isolated pools of light—as each spoke, the light swelled on him and dimmed on the other. As

they narrated about the fossils they saw, Annissa and Shannon's shadowed figures moved behind the center screen, which was illuminated from behind. They began to paint dark fossil patterns, similar to the ones in the pillars of coal beside the audience, onto the screen, echoing *Donald*'s line "it looked like someone had just painted them on there." As the painting continued, *Donald* and *Steve* described the language of the mines and the intimate need to understand the pops, cracks, and rips of the earth sounding its messages above and around them. Susanna punctuated these pieces of mines-body language with plunks, pings, and other experimental noises such as running a piece of crumpled paper against the lower part of the cello strings to bring this coal-voice into conversation with *Donald.*

In one interview, Harley demonstrated the sound of the roof coming apart and preparing to fall by taking a piece of paper and slowly ripping it in half—I had never noticed before the eerie, dry, heavy sound ripping paper made, and the thought of that sound amplified a hundredfold and representing death raining around my head in the mines chilled me. To echo this moment in our performance, as *Donald* described the mountain ripping and falling down when they "pulled pillars," Annissa and Shannon put down their paint and began to rip gaping holes in the middle screen they had just painted from behind. This was also the screen on which I previously had painted a grid pattern illustrating the mines in the scene "Into Your Blood: Written in Blood." The effect was twofold: the fossils layered and shadowed behind the grid outline of the mines gave artistic texture, curves, and wild swirling patterns to a once linear, structured, and well-organized drawing of place; and both layers of this image were ripped to shreds in the process of pillaring and roof falls, bringing down both the ordered plans and the extraordinary wild treasures of this place. The fossils represented another and more organic way of pushing through this space—the multilinear reach of these once-living shoots and leaves was cut through by the linear and plotted grid of mining operations. The installation artwork left behind at the end of the scene was a tattered, messy, painted screen highly charged with narrative and symbolic energy, showing the remnants of wild glittering treasure growing "right out of the ceiling" in the midst of seemingly ordered operations, and the ephemeral nature of mining spaces which are ripped to shreds during planned and unexpected moments when the mountain "sits down on top of ye."

(*Susanna plays a 10-15 second music transition, beginning at Earl's line "So you see…" to underscore these lines and an additional 4-second transition. Shannon and Annissa move behind two flanking screens and form shadows against photos of cribs holding up a crumbling mine ceiling—they look up at the ceiling and feel the cribs and mine walls with their shadowed hands as "Hannah" describes her journey into the mines. Hannah as "Earl" and Elizabeth as "Steve" crouch on the ground and visualize the mines around and above them. "Hannah" walks downstage center and looks up at "ceiling" above them.)*

Hannah: We walked into a place where there was "bad top"—the ceiling sagged in, buckling toward the middle as if we were on the underside of a mattress where someone had just sat down on the bed above. The ceiling, walls and floor were coated in a white powder called "rock dust." It felt like ash underneath my feet, like tiny pieces of glass on my hands and skin—they use it to keep the methane gas and coal dust from igniting. Like black lung, rock dust suffocates miners, you inhale and it feels like glass in your lungs. Several slices of the ceiling had cracked away, peeled off, fallen to the ground as we walked over what was once above our heads. Where the pieces of top had fallen off, they left holes where there was no white rock dust, creating a mottled look all over the ceiling and floor, like sickened skin. We shone our headlamps down the tunnel, and all you could see were timbers or poles lining the walls supporting the roof and wooden braces they call cribs on either side, some buckling under the weight.

H/Earl: And you'd say**, how could a timber hold up a mountain?**

Hannah: As we walked into this crumbling tunnel, Ichabod reached his hand up and began to loosen and tear out some of the flat and jagged-edged pieces of rock that were poking out from underneath the roof bolts. He grabbed a loose piece of rock and began to wiggle it free from underneath the roof bolt… brushing off the tender and crumbling pieces of the thin membrane separating the three of us from over 300 feet of mountain above our heads. When the rock came loose, he found a small starburst flower fossil. (*Pillars of coal illuminate from behind to reveal fossils.*) We all three looked up at it, staring at its perfectly defined edges, hard and dark against the gray coal. It was so beautiful. It seemed to smile sweetly down at us, as if it was growing from the ceiling and poking its head down to greet us.

(Low cello notes underscore following narratives. Shannon and Annissa begin to paint on backside of the center screen. Lights dim to black onstage. Shadowed outlines of Shannon and Annissa speak while they paint, while Hannah and elizabeth bring chairs upstage right and left. "Hannah" sits in the audience bank.)

Shannon/Donald: I mean [those fossils were] something to see…
To imagine, this whole wall right here on top bein nothing but a covered in fossils of ever type that you could see. / But they was so hard in the top.
And, I mean they'd be so beautiful.
I mean but they was just like you'd painted em on there.
I mean, we was the first ones, uh / the drill men to ever go into a—
I mean you're just like explorin all the time, you know.

Annissa/Palmer: Well / to me, and and / I've been somewhere where nobody else has been, you know.
When you take the coal out / they's never been a person walked on that ground…
I mean you, you, they walk on top of it / but they never walked, / in the middle, where where I was at.

(*Two spotlights come up on "Steve" and "Donald," seated. As they talk to "Hannah," lights swell and dim on each as they speak and are silent. Susanna softly underscores their words: she plays high, plunking notes for Earl's description of roof bolts speaking "Ka-ing! Ping!" and abruptly stops a long, low underscoring note when "Donald" describes the roof "dropping out" beside of him—the effect is a subtle and unobtrusive punctuation of their stories.)*

elizabeth/Steve: It takes a long time to learn, uh, the mountains / and uh…and in the summertime…
you have, uh, moisture in there…You can see it, hangin everwhere it's like little beads…
The like the whole ceiling was covered up with little rain drops?
Well, somebody'll walk over there, and somebody'll take a hammer (*Hannah laughs*)
and *slap* you know…And all that rain come down there.
Well you'd see a lot a that rain in the summertime…(*He draws another thick line on his pad to show air flow*)
Comin through in the wintertime, [that's cold air].
And it comes through and it dries all this stuff up it gathers up that moisture and takes it back out.
And / your rocks— / now, people might not think but a rock will get bigger. [It expands]
when it gets warm.
And when it gets cold, when it starts getting cold, when it first starts getting cold now
this rock, you may have a, this might be your roof, and this rock right here. (*draws on pad)*
Might be a layin up in there like that, and this might be a 40 ton rock I'm talking about.
Well / when it gets cold / this rock / is gonna turn loose because it shrinks.
And it's gonna fall outa there.

H/Donald: Uh, it wasn't nothing to see them things just in a second I know just (*snaps fingers*) drop out / and hit the floor.
And that's why they call em kill bottoms cause people, / they was very hard to detect.
And uh, when they dropped out it would make you wonder, you know I've had em drop out
would weigh half a ton / a ton, and / you, sit right down beside of ye, ye know, and you're sittin there thinking, whew! (*laughs*) / Lucky, you know.

Annissa/Palmer: But they can hear the rocks
cr-cracking you know, they hear the rocks cracking and then
as one fella told me this year sometime, / "You've got to learn to listen to the / rock."

Hannah/Earl: It happens so fast, Hannah, that uh / you'd get a warnin sometimes if it's gonna be
what you call a major fall, or something like that, you can hear it to rumble
a long time, it sound like thunder over here or something.
And then you can hear it get closer and closer and then
they's some of them that they's no warnin.
That you'd be there, and uh, / most times if you see a little / dribbling or, or we call it
a squirrel cuttin' like in a hickory oak tree?
You see this top start dribbling a little bit like at?
(*pause*)
That uh, / you, you'd better back up…
But the roof bolts / that's in a place, they'll start ka-ing! Ping! (*he slaps his knee with his*

hand)

elizabeth/Steve: Well on the way back out / you had these pillars.
Well / you're pullin these pillars.
And this is what, is holdin the mountain up…And [to get all the coal out] we would, like cut a cut a chunk out right there…And you would try / to get just as much a that as you could get.
Because if you didn't get as much of it as you could get [so that the mountain would take the weight and fall back on itself as you work your way back out a these tunnels you just dug]…
If these in here didn't fall in / you would get it on a ride it was, that's what we call it getting it on a ride a *squeeze* or whatever.
The mountain / instead a havin / weight, / instead a this fallin the way it's supposed to?
All ye weight would shift back here behind ye / and it would start mashin these pillars a coal out, squeezing em out.
Then the floor would, sometimes start movin up…
And you could get it on a ride real easy / if the miner men / didn't take enough coal out.

H/Donald: I was in the mines, I'd probably been there a year or two.
And / we had, we was a pillarin, it was all kinda laid uphill where we had pulled out.
And all you could see as far as your eye could see was timbers, stood and criss-crossed, bent, it was almost broke in two you know.
And this never did fall, this went on like a *month.*
The more we pillared, the more we pillared I mean it was / I'd say, you're talking several hundred football fields, back in there it was just nothing but just all the coal took out of it.
And / we was down there one day and I was on the drill, me and my buddy.
All of a sudden we heared this *noise.*
Sound like a big old, *hurricane* or something, just winds and stuff.
And we could see that this, all this had broke loose and started fallin…
In other words, if all of it'd just fallen and it just pushin the air and everthing that way.
I mean, you're talking break after break it'd just set down, you know the whole mountain set and you're talking / probably a hundred and some feet thick ye know just,
"Pccoch! Pccoch!" ! (*breathy noises*) / fall down…
(Performance Note: He was pointing in the air—he had created this space around us through the story and his words and now it was surrounding us in that room—"this" started falling.)
To tell ye the truth, / we broke out a there *runnin* just like the rest, if you didn't run you just still got out a there and I mean you'd leave—nobody had to tell you to get outa there.
(*Hannah laughs*)
But, as we took outa there / I can remember it so good, the drill cable, was laid, you know out behind ye, followed behind ye.
Well when I took off next thing I knew I tripped on the drill cable.
And all you could see was just white dust / go past ye, curtain / the bags / I mean just debris, it was just the awefulest wind, nobody could see nothing…
We're just uh, just movin just as hard as you can crawl just flying (*Hannah laughs*)…
I mean you'd leave out a there just as hard as you could go, but you couldn't get up.
If you got up every bit / you'd hit a roof bolt
and hit would cut you all the way down your back about like es [this] big old places that everbody'd see.
And I'd went to the beach one time and this woman asked me she said, "Buddy," she said, "I've gotta asked you a question." She said, "What in the world has happened to your back?"
And I said, "Lady, I, I work in low coal."
And I could sit there and explain to her, and you could look there, and she'd think *"That ain't a place to be!"* (*Hannah laughs, both laugh*)

Coping: Like a Family

I wanted to show the web of connections and relationships bound up in this single substance and the ways that miners lean on one another, literally, to survive. In rehearsal, we as a cast experimented with ropes to see the many playful configurations and movements, eventually finding inspiration from Madonna's music video "Human Nature" and other forms of rope bondage. The ropes served as highly malleable transformational objects. In this scene, we doubled the earlier image of *Hannah* playing in the mines with her single coal-rope to create a web that represented how mining "families" held each other together in relation to coal. The coal-cord web illustrated the way that family worked in the mines: as a safety net created under the earth; as tense cords tying otherwise unrelated individuals together; and as a belaying wire to support miners who plunge into life and death situations.

> *(Hannah, elizabeth, Shannon come onstage with two coal-ropes—elizabeth, Shannon, and Annissa wrap Hannah in these ropes, in the same way as "Hannah" wrapped herself in the single rope at the end of "Into Your Blood: Wrapped Up in It.")*
>
> **Hannah:** As I listened to their stories, they seemed to weave a dance between person and place, each shaping the other. Underground experience shaped miners' conceptions of their bodies and selves.
>
> (*The four miners hold the four ends of the two ropes, with Hannah in the center. In a form of playful bondage, Hannah spins and slides along the ropes towards whoever is speaking.)*
>
> **Annissa/Palmer:** You come as one when you go down in there just like / marriage I'd say.
> Cause, really you spend more people uh more time with them than you do with your,
> your family really. / You get close together and and
>
> **Shannon/Palmer:** and you watch over one another I mean it's just
> it's just natural to, take care a one another you know, keep em out a danger.
> That's mostly you know how you
>
> **elizabeth/Palmer**: You know you stay alive all these years. / A lot a people didn't make it.
>
> (*Miners let the ropes slacken, Hannah slips out of the coal-rope-web and falls offstage and behind the upstage left screen, dragging the coal-ropes with her. The remaining miners, having lost one of their company, gather closer together as they speak.)*
>
> But a lot, you know, that's how you / only stay alive, just
>
> **A/S/E/Palmer**: Just stick together and be close.

Coping: Nicknames and Horseplay

The next scene continued the theme of mining experience as something written in blood and mining being in the blood, connecting it now to the notion of mining names being stuck on miners, like an indelible stain. *Hannah*, too, got a new name in the process of fieldwork as miners painted nicknames on each other and on her bare skin. The name painted on *Hannah* was the name Buckwheat gave me in the mines: "Little Buckwheat." These names were written in the same symbolic mixture of coal-blood from the vats Hannah and Annissa mixed together in the opening scenes. By this moment in the show, following previous scenes including Donzil's video of living with loss and the symbolic loss of one miner in the preceding coal-web scene, both the show and the miners we portrayed needed a bit of levity. The humor of miners cutting up, telling jokes, and splashing around in the mud together at this moment of the show enacts the same break in tension that miners experience through horseplay in the mines. Laughter is subversive in mining space—I hoped that Albert's pain pill/Exlax joke would translate into this performance space. Annissa threw herself into the role of *Albert* with full gusto and commitment, and to my relief the joke was a laughter-filled success at each performance.

> *(Hannah enters from behind the screen stage left with a small tube of black paint. Hannah paints the name "Hop" on Annissa's bare arm as Annissa speaks as "Earl," then passes the paint tube to Annissa, who paints a name on Shannon, and the progression continues with Shannon to elizabeth.)*
>
> **Annissa/Earl**: Most coal miner, most coal miners / why, I can't give you an answer to this / they've got a nickname…Well, they called me Hop…
>
> **Hannah:** Why'd they call you that?
>
> **Shannon/Earl**: Well, this leg / this left leg, even then, I mean it, I didn't have to hop with it.
> But I'd have to drag it or sometimes it'd *(Hannah laughs along*)
> They'd say, "There comes old Hop…" / That's, that's something that just sticks…
>
> **Hannah:** Do you get those names pretty early on?
>
> **elizabeth/Earl:** You do. / Once that it's sewn on ye / that's it.
>
> (*elizabeth paints "LB" on "Hannah"'s arm for her name "Little Buckwheat" as "Hannah" speaks. During "Hannah"'s dialogue, Shannon and Hannah begin to push on one another, joking around and roughhousing.)*

Hannah: These new names were like entering into a family, one that you depend on, counting on one another for daily existence. Just like a family, they would joke with one another, "grease" each other—this play helped them forget about the dangers around them.

(*Annissa and elizabeth join in the roughhousing, and they all, including "Hannah," wind up in a pile seated on the ground, laughing and slightly out of breath.)*

Shannon/Jimmy: We would wrestle and stuff like at we'd get in a big water hole and wrestle and it was just constant and then it was fun ye know because ye did that to
it took ye mind off anything else.

Annissa/Palmer: But just uh / a buddy a mine, a doctor put him on antibiotics.
And, this one boy he come up there and he said,
"What're you takin Robert?" He, hey he said, "I'm takin some / uh / whatde call em / uh pain pills."
And he said, "Well I'd like to have some a these."
Robert said, "I don't have enough to do me to," said, "Tomorrow I'll bring ye some."
So, on the way to work me and him stopped down there and we got, uh, ExLax?
(*Hannah laughs*)
And we'd go up there, "Robert you bring my pill?" "*Yeah*, I brought ye pills," and he give him two of em.
And uh, later on about dinnertime he come up, he said, "Man," he said, "Them didn't help me a bit," he said, "You got anymore?" And we said, "Yeah," (*laughs, all laugh*)
And we give him two more! (*all laugh*)…
He was runnin the car that night / and he come by just a singin just as happy as he could be, but boy the next day he said, "Man I've been," he said, "Gahhh now!" *(all laugh*)

Figure 56 Out of the Dark: In the scene following "Coping: Nicknames and Horseplay," four actors embody the single character of Donald as he describes breaking in on "old works" which can flood mining passages and drown miners. The actors move from two separate spheres of white light at stage right and left into a blue light at center and look up warily toward the lakes above their heads while they work in the mines, audibly breathing with constricted gasps in this tight, low space. Photo by Angie Dyson.

Disability: Lessons from the Body

It was crucial to us that the performance should "connect personal problems and personal troubles to larger social, public issues" in order to promote change for these coal miners (Denzin Interpretive 37). I felt a deep ethical call to question and implicate the mining companies that cheat disabled coal miners out of compensation for their injuries and literally and figuratively leave these miners with no voice—the miners develop black lung and cannot breathe to work or live, and then companies literally "take their breath away" through dehumanizing procedures of attempting to "prove" their impairment to doctors who

are in bed with company owners. Many of the miners I interviewed are living close to or under the poverty line because they cannot work (they have black lung and cannot breathe) but they have been denied compensation. This forces many miners to tell their wives to "do an autopsy" when they die so that then their splayed bodies, silenced in life, may speak as muted corporeal proof of the former worker's qualification for black lung compensation.

This theme presented the challenge to performance of bringing out visibly into the stage what was largely invisible for miners. How do you stage "black lung?" How do you perform present suffering echoed by generations of past bodies all still "breathing in the mines?" Tattered lungs, coal-caked mucus…there were *so* many stories they told me—how can we respectfully honor all these bodies onstage in addition to the bodies of the past? How can we represent the multiple and confusing contexts of having to fight for the identity "disabled," and the sense of defeat in "winning" or "earning" this appellation?

This scene was again about stories exploding through the frame of the interview situation into other images, wider contexts, and multiple bodies. It was about a group of miners teaching *Hannah* about their bodies—and, with *Harley's* crucial line "No, you don't know," about the miners teaching *Hannah* (and through her, the audience) that her body was on a different line than their own. This scene studied the difference between their bodies and mine, all sitting together and looking seeming healthy. We asked: How do you translate invisible pain to another person? What language is this pain speaking, and how can we voice this language through our healthy bodies on this stage for this audience?

To transition into this scene, the miners huddled together in the blue water light breathed audibly in unison as the light faded overhead—behind them, still images of chest x-rays faded in and out on the tattered center screen in a slowly animated progression from first stage black lung to second and third stages.

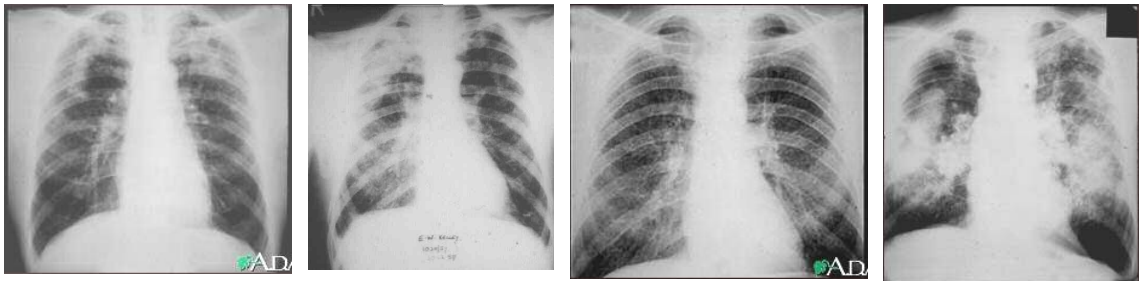

Figure 57 Stills of black lung x-rays used in the "Dis-Abled" scene in Out of the Dark.

When the onstage lights came up, the audience saw two miners, *Harley* and *Steve*, talking with *Hannah*, who sat again with the audience. *Harley* and *Steve* sat separately on chairs upstage center and downstage left. Behind them on the center screen, the last lung x-ray image remained, and Annissa and I shadowed our breathing bodies against this carbuncled lung as the ghosted presence of the past-dead and present living-dying lungs of other absent miners. We spoke to *Hannah* as a reinforcement of *Steve* and *Harley*'s specific experiences and their theories on what pulls miners into mining work against the wishes of their fathers. In the face of these living-dying fathers, young miners *become* those men they watched die by going into the mines. As one miner told me, "I don't care what those doctors say—no matter how many preventions you take, if you work more than 20 years in a coal mines, you're gonna get black lung." These snippet-narratives that *Harley* and *Steve* told to *Hannah* condensed the struggles of trying to keep compensation and "earn" the term "disabled" in the face of comp doctors who deny they are sick.

> *("Hannah" listens from the audience bank and interacts with Harley and Steve who sit in separate pools of light onstage. On the central screen, images of black lung x-rays are projected and two miners' shadows appear as ghosts projected onto the lung images—the shadows breathe with visible labor during Steve and Harley's narration and speak as ghost-lungs from behind the screens.)*
>
> **Steve**: But, if ye use your head / and get ye an education, that's what I tell my kids,
> I say, "Look I've done back breaking work.
> And I've had back surgery. I've had 2 knee surgeries.
> Uh, I've had my stomach, busted open, / and had to have it sowed back up."
>
> **Harley**: My neck was crushed.
>
> **Steve**: It's crippling / work, coal minin is.
> But, you just so hard headed, say, "Hey, I don't care I'm gonna / I'm gonna do that
> no matter if it kills me." And / and a lot of em's got that attitude.
>
> **Harley**: I hurt my lower back too.
> Sometimes it'll pinch down here on my lower back right here.
> And these both legs will go numb, / you know there.
> And that, hip right there my billfold's tryin to go in there?
> Like cause when I drive? / Sittin on it?
> It just like it'd go numb. / So, as long as I can keep goin like I have without risking surgery.
>
> **Hannah**:Yeah, / I know.
> —Well, I don't *know.* (*laughs nervously*)
>
> **ALL MINERS/Harley:** No, you don't know.

Steve: See at the time I, when I went in the mines I went in there for myself.
But I *stayed* / for my family / for my kids, and my wife.
And / I thought, well / I don't know anything else / so how could I / get out a here
by not knowin anything else how, what / how else could I support my family?
So I stayed.

Ghost-Lung Miner 1: I was an accountant with a college degree—I became a coal miner because the pay was so much / better.

Steve: And / I, I stayed for my family. / And then, I got out for them.
Because I said, "Hey man, / if I'd a got killed right here they wouldn't a, they would a gotten nothing in compensation."
Because…like two and a half years— / I got hurt September / of two thousand one—
and / they denied me / a, any kind of compensation checks.
They paid my doctor bills, / but they didn't want to pay me a wage.
Well, I was crippled up I mean my leg was, it was enormous…and I couldn't work.
And now you talk about drivin me crazy…

Ghost-Lung Miner 2: And they have these doctors around here / paid off…

Harley: I got black lung too but they turned me down…I had to have x-rays done.
They, they told me I had second stage rock dust.
Then when I went up there to Dr. Macawayne for that second test the company made me take?
"You ain't got nothing the matter with you"…
So I told my wife, / "Do an autopsy.
That's the only way you'll get that compensation money."
And I'm walkin still breathin it anyway.

Immediately after *Harley* told his story, the 1930's black and white video STOP SILICOSIS began to play on the upstage left screen. Blaring trumpets announced the modern answer to black lung and other diseases related to silicosis: caution and prevention through improved safety measures workers can take will save their working bodies[78]. Always in this video, the enlightenment model of efficiency and progress through productivity measured healthy/useful/worthy bodies against disabled/unclean/worthless bodies. A robust and confident male voice told us, almost excitedly, that in a lung with silicosis, "physical and chemical changes occur. Scar tissue forms." The body is dissected, flattened, and reduced to elementary drawings and outlines.

The modern, rational masculine voice told us about the "affected worker" with his "weak and emaciated" body which—and this is the god-like voice's point—was shamefully

[78] These precautions are always, of course, laid on the shoulders of the worker and are not the company's responsibility to provide for her—issues such as improved ventilation in the workplace are conveniently not addressed in these videos.

of no use to the company: "As a result [of exposure to tiny dust particles], the affected worker becomes so short of breath, he can no longer do his job." The voice assured us that, if we took precautions, we could be good, healthy, productive bodies for the company: "*This* worker has been employed in dusty trade for several years. [*Onscreen, there is a muscular man in his mid-20's being examined by his doctor—the worker is shirtless, and the doctor has on a clean white coat. Both smile.*] He is healthy, robust he can put in a full day of hard work. Notice his deep chest and good general appearance, despite years of his trade. He periodically visits his doctor, in whom he has complete confidence." The miners in our performance, who had obediently sat to watch an edited-down version of this video with growing unrest, finally laughed and threw coal rocks at the screen at this last line in frustrated disgust, turning their backs on this video as the onstage lights come up.

Women and Mining: Cat Counts

Retreating from this realization of the dangers and embodied reality of black lung, the miners in our performance began to pantomime horseplay. But my fieldwork brought up the difficult question of gendered relations in the mines—who is allowed to horseplay, and with whom, and with what consequences? What does a woman's gaze do to male-on-male horseplay in the mines—how does it change the performance, and with what effects? How do women negotiate gender and mining identity in their daily performances of the self in the mines?

For the performance, I decided to frame this discussion around Jimmy's account of his mother and her death in the mines. As we rehearsed, we as a cast felt that we needed more—more women's narratives, and more points of view from men miners. We also felt we could add more women's narratives in the middle of Jimmy's story to show Cat's life opening out to the multiple women's bodies for which her one character stood. I gave the cast many selections from other miners' stories. Over the course of four rehearsals we read, discussed, played with, and collectively scripted an additional introduction to Jimmy's story and re-scripted Jimmy's story in relation to the movements and stage pictures we developed in rehearsal based on Cat's story.

In this scene, the miners threw rocks at the screen showing the film STOP SILICOSIS and retreated into horseplay. Shannon and I wrestled around as the men miners we had played throughout the performance. In rehearsal, we had experimented with different

ways of wrestling around—I had not grown up with brothers, so I heavily relied on the rest of the cast to teach me how to play "like a man," or like a boy practicing to "be a man" someday. In the end, we chose a scenario where eventually Shannon "won" (with me on the ground laughingly defeated), but as she turned her back to walk away I regained strength and jumped onto her back to keep wrestling. The effect was entirely comical—Shannon has a good foot of height over me, so it was the mouse leaping onto the lion in a wrestling match.

All this fun was brought to a sudden halt when we both looked up into the face of another miner—a woman. While we wrestled, Annissa and elizabeth had donned red paisley work-scarves and tied them around their heads. In the face of elizabeth's eager and interested eyes (her intention was only of wanting to join in the play), these male miners realize their play could be taken for homosexual pleasure (I was on Shannon's back at this point). Indeed, the first time we rehearsed this scene after we choreographed it, and I looked into elizabeth's red-hatted face, I think I blushed a little. Up until that point, I had taken on the personas of *Earl* and *Donald* as men, but frankly, I hadn't fully felt the realization that my new male body had a penis, and that that *meant* something in this culture, and meant something *important* in relation to working women and men. I had, in performing these stories in the company of other "men," forgotten that my body is defined in this culture in relation to and distinction from other and different bodies, and my identity as Earl or Donald meant not confusing the roles of "men" and "women" in daily performances of the self.

> *(Video STOP SILICOSIS plays on upstage left screen. Shannon and Hannah fight and are broken up by Annissa first, then Elizabeth. Miners work for 3 seconds then freeze in working positions.)*

> **Hannah**: Most men were not at ease with women working in the mines, making women a dis-ease in this space. For fear of an accusation of sexual harassment, Earl would not engage in horseplay with women, breaking down a major coping mechanism for both. Many of the men who had "no problem" with women in the mines referred to their identity as "just like the men miners" or "just like regular miners." For many men to accept a female miner, women had to *become* men to become miners. Mining culture is defined down to excrement practices, where women have the option to either "have no respect for themselves" or "hold up the whole process," a catch-22 where there is literally "no place" for her to go in the mines:

(*Miners come out of working positions to say their lines to "Hannah" then freeze when their lines end.*)

Earl: [Now] when I say this I / that to a certain degree / I say it / disrespectfully
And try to be *respectfully* at the same time.
But / that's no place for a woman…
Not all of em / but most of those, uh ladies if ye call em a lady
that uh, they were pretty rough characters / and I mean…they was, cause I mean, mouth wise.

Harley: If I got a choice to take a lady or a man I'd pick the lady ever time.
You know what I mean / that woman worked harder than them men.
She can carry her— / well, she was kinda like me.

Earl: They're not at ease, they're not at ease / when, a woman is on the section.
You've got uh / you've got to be very careful
uh, what ye do. And you can say, "Now wait you's supposed to be a Christian."
I'm not sayin, Hannah, but we've had some that I personally know this:
they just wantin ye to open ye mouth or something come out a your mouth—
"Hey look, EEOC—" or whatever "—hey!"
And that's all they were there for! / And uh, you don't have to
Hannah you don't have to say very much to them.
Cause like I said that / I don't want to call names but I know one in particular,

(*Elizabeth mimes holding a pad and pen and walks closer to "Earl," observing him.*)

used to run around with a little pad / notebook pad.
And I'll tell you you didn't know what she was a writing, / what she's a doin.
She had the men at her mercy / and uh, section foreman was scared to death of her.

Harley: She was tough. / Yes she was. / Hey it didn't bother her, mud and water…

(*Annissa as "Pam" shovels around on the floor as "Harley" describes her.*)

Well it was in a low, place in the mines / and water'd gathered in there…
water and mud, about / about that deep you know (*holds hand up 2 feet*)…
Yeah, I used to get tickled at her, she had big boobies (*Hannah and Harley both laugh*)
so when she'd get them down in there and ever it was just all over. (*Both laugh, he mocks rubbing dirt all over his chest*)
She'd come out a there.
She'd get down you know, you're tryin your best to stay out of it,
but she get them ends down in there and stand up this right here'd be all black and muddy.
(*both laugh*)
Yeah oh, / but she / she uh / now like I said she [liked] to work…Her name was Pam.

Annissa/Pam: Well, for one thing
that they, if you go in there as a woman and they see you're gonna do your job, and not lay around expectin the man to, / most of em will respect ye.
And of course there's the sexual issue, you know.
Uh, you know, they're gonna try ye out see what / how far they [could go]…
Oh they'd just make little suggestions some of em but / you put em in their place right fast.

Introducing Jimmy and Cat also meant transitioning into the deep loss pervading Jimmy's narrative, a loss he stoically accepted and generously recounted to me during our conversations together. Jimmy's scrapbook was a touchstone for memories of Cat—and through Cat, other women miners. Ironically, this book was a touchstone he rarely ever *touched*—during our interview, he would lightly point with his pinkie finger to photographs, sometimes turning pages but more often than not waiting for me to bring us back to the contents of the book itself. It was as if this tangible legacy, pieced together by his wife, was too painful to interact with yet too important to ignore.

In our performance, as in my conversation with Jimmy, Cat's story began with a memory box *Jimmy* placed on a table between *Hannah* and himself. The cloth-covered box was similar in color to the cream binding of Jimmy's scrapbook. We mirrored Jimmy's tension between wanting to avoid the pain and yet never letting go of these memories of Cat through Shannon's interactions with the memory box. Throughout the performance, we used projected images of Cat inside and outside of the mines to form bookends around *Jimmy* and *Hannah* as they spoke to each other with a shared focal point while facing out toward the audience. *Jimmy* sat on a chair behind a three-foot box we used as a table, and *Hannah* sat cross-legged at the base of this box holding a photo of Cat. As *Jimmy's* story unfolded, Annissa and elizabeth stood beside the projected images of Cat and embodied the same postures as Cat did in her photos.

Figure 58 Blocking for the "Cat Counts" scene.

(Susanna plays a melancholy version of "Cat's Theme" as lights dim during this transition. Hannah and Cristina move a box downstage center, and elizabeth and Annissa move a chair for "Jimmy" to sit at the desk. As lights come up and the scene starts, Cristina pulls a photo of Cat out of Jimmy's memory box.)

Shannon/Jimmy: Yeah that's a picture of [my mother].
[Her name was Cat Counts, people called her Cat].

(*Photo of Cat Counts outside the mines appears on upstage right screen behind "Jimmy.")*

Hannah: She looks like Marilyn Monroe, she is gorgeous.

Shannon/Jimmy: Yeah, / yeah they / they had compared her to
Marilyn Monroe back, in her younger days.
She uh…she was like her own person…
But still women at that, at that time women didn't get the respect
you know from men that they should have…
Back in [the 1950's and 60's] / that they was, uh / considered, homebodies, you know that's
where women…she had a place and and the place was, you know, you waited on him
hand and foot…

[My dad died when I was young, but mom,] / like most of her, her husbands that she went through
they all understood, that she was strong willed, you know, they understood that
they knowed that, that uh / they really didn't have no control over her she, she did what she wanted to do and said what she wanted to say. (*Hannah laughs*)…
She was just outspoken, you know.
And really and that, I believe that was what everbody liked about her…
I thought that she was probably, uh
she was like a mother and a father to me which she was you know.
And uh / I didn't think they was any man that, that she probably couldn't a whipped
cause that was my impression of her, I thought she was that tough…
Uh, [she started mining when] she was almost 50, she was right at 50 or something before she went in …

(*Photo of Cat Counts in mining attire appears on upstage left screen behind "Jimmy.)*

She was on social security for a while / for us kids, cause, cause she raised us.
And then when I, when I turned 18
is when she went because of, you know social security was over for us, unless I went to school, like I went to school and she could have gone on for me.
But I didn't go on to college I just went straight into the mines

Hannah: You basically went in at the same time

Shannon/Jimmy: Right.
Uh / they was probably, my, my mother was one of the first [women] / to go in .
And / they wasn't but about 3 or 4 at that time…
There was very few could, that would, that could take it.
A lot of em couldn't handle / the pressure of the men…
If you didn't / like, go along with the men?
If you, if you bucked up against the system?
What they called the system, you know how men think, everthing's supposed / to be.
So, if you uh / didn't go along?
Then / they would find some way to get rid of ye.

(*Annissa steps into spotlight upstage right.)*

Annissa/Pam: Well (*laughs, both laugh*)
I just told em that I was in there for one thing and one thing only that was to make a livin like they was and / you know / that was it. / And they'd better just / *whatever*.
And most of em backed off and they / respected ye…
I mean, you had one or two that'd try / you know ever now and then'd say something or maybe reach out and grab ye or something and I turned around and hit one boy one night with my fist.

Hannah: Good for you! (*laughs*)

Annissa/Pam: And I did buddy, I (*laughs*)…
Well I figured I'd get fired if I hit him through the face.
And, you know, and uh,
but it was just flew all over and then it happened so fast I mean I hit him buddy I drawed back and I hit him on the shoulder and then I revved up again and I *hit him again.* (*both laugh*)

ALL/Cellist/Hannah: Good for you!

(*both laugh*)…

Annissa/Pam: But, like I say, some of em you just got to put in their place and most of em respected ye / [as a miner, not really as a woman or a lady, but as a miner]

(Susanna plays rumba version of "Cat's Theme," holding the last note for a long while and fading it out slowly—this music underscores "Hannah" words:)

Hannah: So who was Cat? This hyper-feminine body, Marilyn Monroe, refusing the gendered norms of male-owned mining space and creating her own form of horseplay out of men's sexual harassment and unwanted advances—she lived in a liminal zone between being both father and mother, miner and woman, dancing back and forth over this border. An excessive, slippery body, "normal" names and codes would not stick.

Shannon/Jimmy: But they woke me up, they come to my door, a friend a mine did
and uh, knocked on my door and woke me up it was kinda late at night and she worked night shift.
And come to the door and he said uh, / "There's been an explosion at the mines."
And I only lived like two miles from where the mine was at.
And the first thing I did was I looked uh—
well no she worked the evening shift and she got off at about 11 o'clock…
I looked at the clock and I said, / I said, "Well mom's probably done out by now,"
I said, "Ye know, it's already over," and he said, "No it happened earlier."
(This said fast and together—the hope is simultaneous with its rebuttal)
And then when he said that I said, "Oh Lord."
And uh / so I got ready and we all went down there.
And they didn't tell us nothing we sat there all night.
And / it was way up into the next day / before they finally told us / you know / that there wasn't none of em survived.

(Annissa and elizabeth move to the pile of coal/rock rubble at the base of the screens and begin to dig up the remains of Cat—a red heeled shoe, a black slip, a thermos, eventually taking off their red scarves. They bring each object slowly up to Jimmy and put them in his memory box or on the desk in front of him. Jimmy keeps his gaze up, not looking at the box or the objects as he narrates.)

Hannah: And you stayed up all night anxious.

Shannon/Jimmy: Yeah. / Yeah.
And they knowed, they knowed from the first / you know.
They just kept sayin it was too hot to get in there before they could, tell but they already knew…
It was the next day they finally got in / because it was still hot in there you know the gas
they's afraid a settin the gas back off cause a the / the fire had actually burnt itself out…
What had happened either the curtain, was down
Or the braddish was out, and they hadn't kept the braddish up or something
And [that gas] had come around and come back into the neutral area
And then the foreman was a comin up on a Jeep, and, that's on the rails?
So, / you get a lot a sparks

Hannah: From the rail

Shannon/Jimmy: From that, and / the gas had accumulated, on the / on the track itself.
And as he come up he set it off.
And once it set it off that followed, the
the gas, where it was comin in it followed it and come back around…
You know, everbody that was workin up / around the face and it killed the
The boss too…But that's what, that's what set it off
And they had a bunch of violations but none of em / you know / they couldn't account
that they was what caused / you know / caused it, but / who knows / you know, what was hid or covered up or whatever.
Because they was a big / law suit was filed and they had six or 7 big lawyers from way up in Washington DC that was / you know, fightin / against it.
But nothing ever come of it.
Some, something, something happened somewhere along the line to where they uh
uh, they said they wasn't no / responsibility ever responsibility wasn't, through the company?
Of what happened that it was just something that / you know could a happened / anyway and
and it wasn't nobody's fault.

(Annissa and elizabeth repack the patch of coal rubble, as if mounding dirt on top of a grave.)

Hannah: What did you think?

Shannon/Jimmy: I think they was responsible, I mean, you know, because of the
that's something, you know they had violations there was a lot a violations that was
you know / that was written up?
Through the inspectors.
But still yet / you can't / the big companies like at, you, you can't fight.
They've got more money than anybody else there, you're, you're not gonna beat a big company that's got money.
You know. / Even though you got lawyers / they find a way of getting around.
So they've pretty well got away / you know, with nothing / you know, I mean payin nothing Now / which, they should a been a lot more done / than what they was.

Remains: Mementos, Ghost Towns

The scrapbooked remains of Jimmy's mother's life seemed an appropriate transition to the other tangible remains that amassed in my hands during fieldwork. How do these disabled coal miners remember the past? What is at stake for a community such as St. Charles that seems to survive only by living in memory of its past, which Earl imagines into the present through his stories? *Hannah* remains seated at the end of the preceding scene, clutching the photo of Cat as she considers these many changes and questions circling around these tangible remains of a life and town. As she wonders about these remnants of the past and present, the miners behind her begin to pass a coal rope from one person to another, connecting their bodies through coal.

Figure 59 Annissa, elizabeth, Shannon, and Hannah crouch low in a zig-zag formation and pass the coal-rope to one another with tensed arms. Cristina as *Hannah* described coal miners' intertwining connections with coal, which literally holds these communities together. This scene symbolized the dual value of coal as a substance that connects miners together in their work; but the coal mines also can be a destructive force—only by tightly holding and controlling the coal rope that connects them can miners survive. Photo by Angie Dyson.

In our performance, it was important to move from the personal to the political—to connect these former coal miners' corporeal bodies and daily breathing in and out to a wider system of corruption and oppression that denies disabled miners compensation, as well as to connect the local corruption of doctors with the rising drug problem in these small towns in southwest Virginia, particular the massive sale of OxyContin (when properly used, a high-powered pain medication effective for miners' extreme daily pain from mining injuries) to local teenagers. Towns such as St. Charles have no active police force, just a sheriff who posts signs saying "DRIVE SLOWLY: THE SHERIFF CARES ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN" while drug sellers operate off front porches in broad daylight. The crippling poverty of so many mining families is linked to the ease of drug access through an interconnected system of corruption of local government, companies, and medical caregivers.

These towns are imploding on one another: people get high and regularly set fire to residences and public buildings, and this widespread and often unchecked arson discourages businesses from setting up residence or staying in these towns. Such a system has helped to create the ghost town that Earl Scott speaks of in his personal narrative.

To describe this evolution from boom town to ghost town, and the remnants of former objects left behind in the wake of companies pulling out of St. Charles as arson fires moved in, *Earl* sat in a chair downstage left to tell the story of St. Charles while *Jimmy* sat upstage right to follow up on his story about Cat. As *Earl* described St. Charles as the boom town it had been, we projected black and white photographs of homes in St. Charles from the 1920's and to the 1950's (copies of which hang in the waiting room of the St. Charles health clinic) on the screens at stage left and right. As *Earl* described the town, Annissa and elizabeth took the coal-blood mud and began to trace the outlines of these homes—the idea was that *Earl's* words painted these images into the landscape of St. Charles, outlining these places and literally calling them into being through his words. Ideally, Annissa and elizabeth would have transcribed *Earl's* words in the form of a traced outline of these projected house images, similar to the word art poem "Anatomy of a Landscape" (Fig. 9). But actual transcription took too long, and in the end we decided to simply outline the roofs and walls of the houses in black coal.

As *Earl's* story progressed into a narrative of loss due to arson fires, OxyContin, and corrupt local leadership, the projected images changed to color photos I took of St. Charles in the present day—the coal-outlined houses Annissa and elizabeth drew on the screens remained, ghosting the presence of once-standing buildings against the many charred and burnt-out homes St. Charles contains today (Fig. 60). As *Earl* and *Jimmy* described the shells that their hometowns have become, Annissa and elizabeth took the blood-red mud and begin to mark crimson dripping handprints on the screens, clearly contrasting then and now.

Figure 60 Above, two images of buildings in St. Charles: to the left, an older image of the main office of Blue Diamond Coal Company (circa 1920's-30's); to the right, a present-day home in St. Charles with its upper story charred from arson fires (circa 2005). In performance, these two images are projected onto a blank screen and fade into one another (left to right). On this projection screen, actors first trace the outline of "what was" (the coal company's main office) in black coal ink. With the image of "what is" (the charred home), they paint bloody handprints over the palimpsest tracing of the past. Below, the remains of the painted screen portraying "then" and "now" together. Two screens were painted in the performance (one at stage left and another stage right), and both remained onstage for the duration of the show.

Dreams, Haggie

Our lighting scheme had been purposefully low up until this point to mirror the dark and tight quarters inside the mines, and here I wanted to use lighting to mirror the sense of

isolation miners feel after they become disabled and leave the mines. I wanted to juxtapose miner's former circumstances when they were pushed together in tight spaces, with the present reality of being isolated from that mining community, brought back together now only in dreams.

As *Hannah* spoke to the audience, underscored by low, deep, plucked notes from "Gaea's Lament," the miners moved into the blue spotlight one final time, crowded together in their labor community. As each miner described a particular dream he had about being back in the mines, the actor moved into a separate and lonely sphere of light off to the perimeter of the stage, marking the transition from community to isolation. In the midst of so much isolation, I wanted to also show the audience what occasional chance meetings with other miners did for disabled miners. When *Earl* steps from this blue light, he recounts the moment when he saw Haggie in a local doctor's office. For Earl, seeing Haggie's body reconstituted his own identity and provided continuity with the past and into the future, when he might become more like the "crippled up" Haggie.

elizabeth/Eddie: When I got hurt…I really got depressed and bothered and
And I mean I even got to the point Hannah to where I don't go to the union meetings I haven't been to the union meetings in years and years and years.
Because I didn't want to be around / the guys that / put me
in memory of the job I loved so much you know what I'm sayin?
It bothered me so bad.
Because, I would go, to bed and have / nightmares, if you would, about the coal mines.
I would be in, in there runnin the miners and everything you know…
I'd dream I was runnin that equipment…
[With the] little remote, you had a remote control and…And wake up and be disappointed.

Annissa/Papa: They dream about it. You know, I've seen some guys off and on for 10 or 15 years.
And / I've started, always asking you know, "Do you still dream about going in—", "Oh yeah!
Workin' at, workin' right in there, healthy…"
A few years after I couldn't go to work I used to wake up / thinking I was late for work and…
and then I'd wake up / and you'd um, / be at home you know.
Just like about now I know like when I was in Vietnam I'd
dream about bein home and / you know be talking and right in my livin room I mean I could see everthing / coffee table and / family in there, and then you wake up / and realize and, / gosh / yeah.

Shannon/Jimmy[E]: I've seen myself there with men that I've worked with just like
that, a lot a times I was still runnin the boltin machine?
That's putting, roof bolts to the top there to support it
and everthing…
Now I don't know why / but you always something happens you don't, completely
I don't feel get the dream out but you wake up or something and I said, now that was awful strange.

H/Earl: I ran into / first time I seen / one a my old buddies / I ran into him in a doctors' office.
Uh / it's been less than a month ago.
And he was one a the older / miners?
And Hannah I'm telling you the truth I would have rather, have sat / and talked—
his name is Haggie Barnette— / and I would have rather sat right there just like you and I
and talked to him. Not that I didn't need to see the *doctor* / or need medication or anything?
But that time right there was precious to me.
Because I had not seen that man in 11 years.
And when I sat and looked at him / I said, "There was one a the older coal miners
that took me under his wing, / that," I said, "and I learned a lot a things from."
And I said, "You set and you look at him now / and," I said uh,
"he's not the same, ner everthing," because he had aged / quite a bit, he was crippled up.
Not like me, braces on his legs.
And, that's when ye / it's special time but that's when ye heart bleeds too.
And uh, / I just got to thinking that, / that man, I said, "How *could* a *coal miner*
have affected me," and it's not just me, / in the manner that they have Hannah.
It's like I told ye, I might be prejudiced, but to me, they're special.
They're so special.

Endings, Openings

If our performance was to make one statement or plea to the audience, it was that they recognize the dangerous and hard work that Appalachian men and women perform in order that "city folk," who often imagine themselves culturally above and more advanced than these "hicks," may have light and electricity. The challenge of ending on this point was not to be so didactic that the performance turned into a flat lecture at the finale, doing a disservice to the complex and multitextured narratives these miners shared and our performance endeavored to honor. The ending image is about the only scene that remained relatively unchanged in all the scripting and rehearsal processes—it came from a conversation I had with Ichabod and Mike the end of my visit to Deep Mine 36.

The lights came to a full wash in this final scene. The miners, clustered together at center stage as if "on break" during a day of work, had a question for *Hannah.* Following their exchange, as the cast sang the final chorus of Gillian Welch's "Down in a Hole," *Hannah* took the end of a bright orange extension chord, which was wrapped and twisted around the arms, backs, and legs of the entire front row of chairs in the audience. Wrapped thusly, the power cord represented the entanglements of energy and electricity webbing through the lives of the audience members in addition to the constructs of this performance itself. *Hannah* brought the plug-end of the power cord over to elizabeth, who kneeled and extended the end of one of the coal-ropes. As they sang, the miner tied the coal rope and *Hannah's* power cord together. Meanwhile, Annissa and I returned to the vats of coal slush

and blood-red mud, bent down, and coated our chins and faces in this substance, showing that this interchange of energy, economy, and power between *Hannah* and the miner comes at the expense of coal-and-blood-stained bodies. *Hannah* traced this power cord with her eyes and extended finger, looking at the way it threaded through the audience's seats. She eventually picked up the cord where it emerged from the arm of one audience member's seat and, holding the cord, followed where it lead her: out the door of the sole entrance where the audience also must leave. The implication was that we are all bound up in coal, and in leaving this performance space we follow a power cord of electricity that winds inevitably back here, in the coal mines, tied to miners' blackened bodies and tattered lungs.

Annissa/Mike: Have you learned anything?

Hannah: I've learned a lot.
It's hard work.

H/Mike: Yeah most people don't think it is.

Hannah: Mm hmm, it is, it is.

Shannon/Mike: Ain't too warm either.

Hannah: And important too.
I'm hopin that's, what / writing this project will, show other people.

Annissa/Mike: Nah. / Most people think just flippin a light switch is all it is. (*laughs*)

Shannon/Mike: Especially up around the cities and all of that

Hannah: What do you think of that attitude?

H/Mike: They call us rednecks and stupid don't they?
They ort to come down here.
They think we're overpaid most a the time, "Yeah, coal miners are overpaid yeah."

elizabeth/Ichabod: I told [my son]…
he ort a get [a different job] but he still wants to [work in the mines].
Aah, whatever he wants to do, I'll help him if I can you know but
it's just a rough way to make a livin.

Shannon/Ichabod: You know the conditions, dust and cold, water, / yeah.
You can you can use ye head or you can use ye back.
We're usin our backs. / Some kids use their heads. / You know.

Annissa/Ichabod: But that's just the way the world is.
I mean you'll be, somebody's gotta do it.
If you don't these poor old people won't have no electricity! (*both laugh*)
To run them computers to use their head wouldn't they! (*both laugh*)
That's the way I look at it

So really our job's pretty important.

(Susanna plays "Down in a Hole" through one chorus of solid notes while elizabeth ties the coal cord to "Hannah"'s power cord. Accompaniment continues until the final chorus. Annissa and Hannah go to vats and cover faces with blood-mud and coal-slush. Once the power and coal cords are tied, "Hannah" begins to trace the power cord, wrapped around the audience's seats, with her eyes—she picks up the cord and follows it out the door as they sing the final chorus.)

Shannon (*singing*): There's something good
In a worried song
For the trouble in your soul

Cristina (*singing*): Cause a worried man's
Been a long way down
Down in a deep dark hole

All sing: I'm down in a hole
Down in a hole
Down in a deep dark hole

All acapella: I'm down in a hole
Down in a hole
Down in a deep dark hole

(*Lights fade to black, then up with house lights for curtain call.)*

V. The Moment of Performance

I am performing *Earl* in the final moments of our show. This final night of our performance, I can see the steam coming off the audience as the lights rise on my body—this is the final moment that I can get his message across. Earl means so much to me—I cast myself as Earl because he is so close to my heart, my first friend in mining…I want to make you proud, Earl. To make this audience feel what you made me feel in those moments of interaction with you, all the poignancy of that moment when you told me about seeing Haggie for the first time in 11 years.

The lights rise. Out of the corners of my eye, under the glare of the single light, I can see the audience, all these people I do not know, as well as my friends and family, all gathered in this single hot, sweaty room to hear this story, tonight. We turned off the air conditioners tonight because the noise of the fans is so distracting during performances—after nearly an hour on this stage, I only now notice the effect this has had on the room. As

the lights rise now, I see a fog hovering above the audience as I begin to speak, "First time I seen, one a my old buddies…" The heat intensifies my focus, making me aware that all our bodies in this room are feeling the same heat—just as the miners felt that same constant temperature, huddled close together as we are in this dark, small room. I visualize Haggie in front of me—I see his frail body, his stooped shoulders, his hobbled legs in braces. I have never actually met this man—only through Earl's stories do I know him. But I know him so well, and I know Earl through Haggie, this crippled man I imagine before my eyes as the words I know by heart come tumbling out of my mouth: "Hannah, I'm a telling you the truth…I would rather have sat and talked…not that I didn't need to go to the doctor, ner need medication or anything, but that time right there was precious to me." There are tears in my eyes. I want *Hannah* to know—for me to know, and Cristina, and the audience, to know how much these miners mean to me, how precious their time has been to me.

It is difficult to breathe in here—my body is crouched, my weight is seated almost wholly on my left leg, and I hop forward with urgency as I tell *Hannah* that "they're special, they're so special." Hovering this way, my chest contorted over onto itself, I wonder if it's just me who cannot breathe. My lines for this scene are over—somehow I've said all I and Earl needed to say, and the lights brighten around me. In this moment, as I walk over to the vat of coal-slush and coat my chin in its grit, I feel the sloppy ooze of dirt covering my body for the last time in this performance. I can go home after this. I can wash my face, cleanse it of this dirt. But their stories are embedded in my soul. I listen to the hum of the dimming leko and fresnel lights overhead as they fade to black—they, like the lights that will burn in my bathroom when I go to wash my face tonight, are shining because of some miner buried deep in a hole collecting coal to burn for electricity.

Performing Earl in this moment turned my body towards the melancholic state of anticipating death and further loss through the site/sight of Haggie before me. This turn re-turns me to Min's analysis of Sameshima and Vo's installation work as full of hopeful possibilities, figuring melancholia as an anticipation of loss that "can transform from an immobile and static condition into a production of becoming" (Min 247). I also think of Smith's landscape photographs of the *remains* of Appalachian bodies suspend us temporarily in this melancholy, where we are intersubjectively pulled into the "drama…unfolded" with/in the image as a state of "becoming" (239, 247).

This performance pushed me into a similarly tensive state. My body was so many things in this single moment: I gathered my body into Earl's circumstances to emerge as the body these circumstances put forth to perform *Earl*; as Earl seeing Haggie, I saw what "I" (myself, and Earl, and all of us) will become through old age; I experienced a sliver of the unique loss and dread Earl must feel in seeing where his disability (black lung) and crippling body will lead (manifesting in the knot in my stomach the moment I visualized Haggie); I performed him in the moment of translating this experience to Hannah, young and inexperienced in physical pain; and I performed *Earl* trying to tell *Hannah* and an audience of complete strangers what this intimate moment of seeing Haggie meant to him, and to me (the actor/ethnographer). The moment of performance, for me, offered a way to *work through* all of these multiple identities and experiences. Working through, I came to a felt sense of Earl's experiences that "cut" into me—indeed, that cut me open and re-sutured my lived experience together in such a way that I walk, breathe, and see differently than I did before this single performance moment (Eisner 106). My marrow knows more and differently about coal mining now. Live performance offered a temporal space in which seemingly fixed identities of dis-abled and healthy could be temporarily suspended from their borders, pushed into play, moved into conversation and questioning in the site of my single performing body.

I "became" something new, located somewhere in the middle of Earl and myself. My new "becoming" self emerged in the moment of live performance. The vulnerability of letting go into performance, into its power and the power of embodying these narratives without any grasp of ownership on them, changed me. This vulnerable, emerging self—forged in the re-creation of Earl's story and my own before this live audience—intervenes on my previous reality to alter my conception of my body and myself. Performance moves me to realize that my every breath is contingent upon context.

VI. Responses

Denzin cites the critical ethnographic performance work of D. Soyini Madison (1997) to illustrate the political power and affective force of performance to affect subjects, audiences, and actors (Denzin Performance 19). Many audience members at Out of the Dark said that they could not breathe as we actors gasped for air as miners onstage—audience members said to us after the performance that they felt their lungs physically constrict as we

actors wrapped our chests slowly with black ropes. Through various interpretive movements we embodied the suffocating pain of those miners who slowly die of black lung disease. Embodied performance has the unique capacity to powerfully and co-temporally communicate affective presence.

The Raleigh News and Observer wrote a preview article on our performance and on these Virginia coal miners and placed it on the front cover of their Lifestyles section—the printed article included a photo of Cat Counts, Jimmy's mother. The interview included responses from Wordshed's co-artistic director Matt Spangler, performance studies scholar/artist/activist D. Soyini Madison, and myself. The online version read as follows:

Raleigh News and Observer
Friday, April 28, 2005

True to the miners' words

Performance aims to capture Appalachian workers' language

By ORLA SWIFT, Staff Writer

Hannah Blevins is used to shaping theatrical characters from the real people she interviews for her doctoral thesis in performance ethnography.

But "Out of the Dark: The Oral Histories of Appalachian Coal Miners" presented a new challenge. The miners spoke of their mountain as a familiar friend, one that embraced them and spoke to them, Blevins says. Can that mountain speak to an audience?

"It's a relationship like no other," says Blevins, 26, who spent six months in southwestern Virginia, interviewing miners and others in their communities. "I'm trying to get at what is this body that they interact with and form a relationship with."

"Out of the Dark" premieres tonight and runs through Sunday at Bingham Hall at UNC-Chapel Hill, where Blevins is a doctoral candidate. The all-female cast, including Blevins, will bring to life male and female miners, including Mary K. "Cat" Counts, the first woman miner in Virginia to die in a mine explosion. The performance weaves storytelling with movement, song and cello music.

Blevins says she was struck with the human terms the workers used for the mines. You approach the "face" of the mountain, she says, enter the "drift

mouth," pass through the walls, or "ribs," and move underneath a ceiling that "bellies down" on the miners.

"They describe it as a body-to-body relationship with the earth," says Blevins, who spent time in a mine during her research. "You have to learn the language of the mines. That place speaks to you through cracks in the ceiling and through sounds that the ceiling will make as it's getting ready to fall."

Blevins grew up in northeastern Tennessee, close to the Virginia border. She has studied the region for two years. She says she hates the stereotypes many people have about Appalachia.

"It's one of the last places that you can kind of make fun of in polite society," she says. "A lot of times, coal miners are painted as dirty and backward. We're trying to lend some dignity that has been sucked away from them."

Chapel Hill-based Wordshed Productions has presented several of Blevins' works, including "Appalachian Stories in Coming Home: Memories from the Heart of Appalachia," which focused on Blevins' grandfather's life in the Tennessee mountains. Matthew Spangler, Wordshed's founder and departing artistic director, says Blevins has a gift for conveying her subjects' lives.

"Her work does not come off as patronizing or condescending, which I think sometimes this type of work can," Spangler says. "It's a very difficult line to walk, but I think she does it well. She's got such compassion for her subject that it's not -- the way many Southern plays are -- a sendup."

Blevins says she was inspired by the work that her adviser, D. Soyini Madison, has done in Ghana. Madison, too, has translated her research to the stage.

"What happens when the ethnographer goes beyond these borders of smaller communities that are sometimes hidden in plain sight is you feel in blood and flesh and breath what's going on because you're with them," Madison says. "And you say, 'There's something so important here that in this very small universe, I want to make it public. I want to put it on stage.'"

As a result of this and other preview articles, many former coal miners came to see the performance. One was an 80-year-old former mining engineer from Harlan County, KY who currently lives in Raleigh read the article and he had his son and daughter bring him. He waited so patiently to talk with me after one performance as a regional arts reviewer talked on and on with me about his family's history with coal mining. The miner grabbed me

with a trembling arm (he was so touch-oriented—it reminded me so much of the miners I interviewed). I remember his face—his thin cheeks sagged with deepened wrinkles, and his blue eyes sparkled. He was thin, taller than me, frail—I felt as if I was holding him up. His voice was hoarse, and he said in whispered tones that we had captured the spirit of the work he had done for so many years. He said that what we were doing was so important. His daughter looked at me hard and said that the performance had brought their family closer together and allowed her to see the work her father had done for so many years. Perhaps even more powerfully, the daughter was able to watch others in the audience watch an enactment of the work her father had lived for over 30 years. She witnessed an enactment of her father's life, and she witnessed others witnessing these often-silenced stories with her.

One woman living in Cary, NC saw the photo of Cat Counts in the N&O article and immediately recognized her—the woman had grown up in Nora, VA (where Cat and Jimmy lived) and was on the hillside the day that Cat was buried in Nora. She told me she immediately called her sister and said, "You're never going to believe this—Cat Counts is on the cover of the N&O!" The sisters told me that the performance was an important work because these stories are not told elsewhere; moreover, the predominant image of Appalachians is that of the most ignorant and worthless of all people.

Another husband and wife from Chapel Hill who had grown up in northeast Tennessee came and after the performance said that this work was so important because they/we *are* looked on as hillbillies—the wife said that when she moved from Appalachia she stopped listening to country music and tried to change her accent in order to separate herself from her stigmatized homeplace. She said that the performance gave her a pride in her home that she had abandoned so long ago.

Still others came from some of the smaller towns in VA I had visited during my research, and two audience members approached me with offers to fund a tour of the performance in Virginia to take this research back to the miners and mining communities out of which they first came, engaging in the hermeneutics of interpretive interactionism and ethnographic performance (Denzin Interpretive 74). One workmen's compensation lawyer and activist drove from Raleigh to see the performance and offered to fund a performance of Out of the Dark for compensation doctors and lawyers in North Carolina.

Many audience members said that they could not breathe during our performance as we were gasping for air—that they felt constricted (part of which I'm sure was the stifling heat of that non-air conditioned room!). How does embodied performance communicate affective presence to audience members? Was there a "negative" communitas in that room between these breaths of air, as perhaps everyone (facilitated by the actors) struggled to breathe in those moments?

The show informed and changed others' attitudes about Appalachians as well. After the performance, I asked audience members to write their responses to the performance in a notebook which I later gave to the coal miners whose stories we included in the performance. I asked them to address their responses to the miners themselves in order to further the dialogic nature of the work (14). Here are a few of their responses:

> This play is a powerful testament to authentic lives who matter greatly—in their small towns, hollers, farms, and hills. This play is folklore transformed into art—living history. We owe much to these miners. –Catherine, Chapel Hill
>
> I never knew the back breaking labor or disabling illness that people suffer even though I know many people who work in the mines. I have a much greater appreciation of their sacrifices after watching this work. Thank you for putting this play together. It's a great remembrance. –R. A.
>
> Not enough people have the opportunity to sit and actually listen to these real words and experiences. We appreciate your work, words, and all your experience. Thank you for sharing! —Cheri and Shane
>
> Thank you for opening my eyes to your lives, your contributions and your sacrifice. –MDB
>
> I write as an 83 year old disabled veteran of World War II. One of my fondest memories is of a devoted and loyal fellow soldier who was a coal miner from West Virginia. –Billy B. Olive
>
> Hannah—a story well told. Thank you for bringing this to life for us. Dear Miners—Thank you for the work you do and have done so that we may turn the lights on. Your lives have become real for us this evening. –Neve Olive
>
> This performance was astounding, not just for its content, and not just for its artful and creative composition, but also for its overwhelming physical presence. This temporary powerful space that Hannah opened up—I am so grateful that I got this chance to participate in this thing that is already fleeting. These stories—what a gift—thank you. –SDS

The performance sold and over-sold out every night. At the last two performances, audience members offered to sit on the ledge of the bottom tier of seats to watch. Two reviewers published their impressions and opinions of the work. In a four-star review, Byron Woods of The Independent Magazine wrote:

Down, home: Scripts in rags and coal dust
Theater's long-running poverty conundrum

BY BYRON WOODS

Deeply ambivalent about the folks down home? You're not alone: So is the theater. In the last two weeks, major regional and collegiate shows have greeted the people, the places, the history--and even in a couple of instances, the present--back home with everything from curatorial reverence to a dead bead with a loaded gun. Productions with roughly equivalent degrees of earnestness have celebrated the work of prairie women from a century and a half ago, and trailed present-day Virginia coal workers down into the mines. One has lampooned that sacred small-town institution, the beauty pageant, while another has all but stooped to the torture of small animals in its open mockery of--what's that colorful phrase again?--*poor white trash* caught in a Darwinian cul-de-sac just outside Dallas.

May 4, 2005

BYRON WOODS

Despite their good (or ill) intent, none of these visions entirely lacks acuity--or limit, for that matter…

...when script and production difficulties render its passages unconvincing, too often *Quilters* seems more a didactic, medicinal public education presentation than a credible work of drama.

By contrast, playwright/ethnographer Hannah Blevins arguably does her subjects and her audience the greatest good in her new work, *Out of the Dark,* by putting both in the same workplace. Imagine a crawlspace smaller than the average office table, 26-28 inches high. Make it a tunnel, one running several *hundred* football fields in length.

Now place it three miles beneath a mountain.

In the little light available here, introduce the black coal dust that ultimately coats all surfaces, including the interior of your lungs. Bring the damp and the condensation, drop by drop, from the rivers, lakes and aquifers that lie above you. Cover the roof with a gray-white powder that reduces the threat of an explosion--but causes silicosis in its place. Silicosis, which makes you feel like you've inhaled a bunch of small glass needles that stick your ribcage every single time you breathe.

Got all that? Good. Now, don't imagine working there for eight hours.

Imagine 30 years instead.

You can't convince me that Blevins doesn't know her subjects--a group of injured, retired and still-continuing third-generation coal workers in present-day Wise and Lee counties in southwest Virginia. They emerge unambiguously in the interviews she's conducted.

And you can't convince me that her subjects don't know--intimately--the minute changes in sound, air and feel that signal the difference between a "safe" work space and a mountain of rock about to descend. A miner who is not constantly, literally in touch with the changing thing he is inside is not a likely candidate for long-term survival.

One described touching rock to distinguish different levels of stress "like reading Braille."

I believe him: He has gone into the underworld. He has emerged from it again. But he has been physically changed in the process.

It's odd that I know all this, without doubt, when I have never actually met or seen these people in person. Instead, I've seen three actors playing them--with unimpeachable authority--in the company of a strong ensemble.

A remarkable performance by Elizabeth Nelson gave austere dignity to Steve Austin, a minor too injured to continue work. Blevins herself convincingly enacted Earl Scott, a kindly but direct elder miner trying to explain to an outsider what's what two miles below, while Shannon O'Neill had Jimmy Castle relive the death of her mother, "Cat" Counts, the first woman miner to be killed in a mine explosion in Virginia.

In each case, under Blevins' direction, the actors characterized their subjects in interviews without melodrama or fuss. Together they demonstrated that the miners who live longest neither disregard nor overstate the constant subtexts of danger and loss. Instead they address them, squarely, honestly, and move on. At least, for as long as they can.

Over the years I've harbored fundamental doubts about the ethics involved in performance ethnography and the collection of oral history. Too often, the role of researcher or collector has been granted an assumed intellectual, aesthetic or moral superiority in comparison to their subjects--an elevation more befitting curators in entomology than any branch of the humanities.

By contrast, Blevins depicts in this performance a researcher who is clearly being schooled. Her performance makes the point, repeatedly, that the bodies of the miners,

and the "body" of the mine itself, are places where there is terrible--and expensive--information that is unobtainable through other sources.

As the miners' stories unfold, it is clear that a world beyond the researcher's imagining is opening up as well. As she draws nearer to the closest of home truths, she enables us to draw closer to them as well. This, for a group of people routinely dismissed as the most backward of Americans, does a service to them and us both.

But even with all its disclosure, Blevins' work ultimately stops short of activism in a way that raises an ethical concern.

By the end of *Out of the Dark*, Blevins has convinced me that, since 55 percent of electricity in the United States comes from coal, my direct relationship with these miners is reinforced every time I hit a light switch, use my computer, cook or watch TV.

The testimony is clear. Each day they work in conditions that challenge the conscience even more than they challenge the imagination. What the miners breathe in ultimately disables and kills far too many of them. Some of the most significant dangers they face can be avoided.

So I'm troubled when a production manages to comment on the liminality, gender norms and performance of identity that graduate performance work is heir to without once mentioning any possible avenues for activism, protest, intervention or aid for the subjects whose physical pain she vividly dramatizes.

Is anyone striving to change working conditions that are hazardous to fatal over the long term? How might we intervene to effect change in damaged miners' bodies? Are these questions truly less pressing, less important than those that parse out their postmodernity?

Normally, the observation part of a critic's work closes at the end of a performance. However, it's hard not to conclude that the final evaluation of this artist's work actually begins now, at the close of three performances to a choir of performance studies scholars in Chapel Hill.

Did they change the world? Has the vividly depicted suffering ceased?

If not, what is now ethically required?

What does an artist--for Blevins clearly is one--owe her subjects, and when is that debt paid in full? The miners have had their weekend. Are we now excused?

For generations, a group of people--kept well out of the public eye--have offered their bodies as something akin to a living sacrifice to a disastrous long-term energy policy. *Out of the Dark* could change the way a number of Americans view those people.

For that to happen, they have to see it first. I wonder if they ever will. (Woods "Scripts")

Robert McDowell of the online arts review Classical Voice of North Carolina wrote:

Classical Voice of North Carolina
Robert's Reviews
Monday, May 2, 2005

REVIEW: Wordshed Productions: *Out of the Dark* Takes the Audience Deep into the Dusty Coal Mines of Appalachia:

by Robert W. McDowell

Out of the Dark: The Oral Histories of Appalachian Coal Miners, a new play written and directed by University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Ph.D. candidate and instructor in Performance Studies Hannah Blevins and performed by Wordshed Productions April 29-May 1 in the Martha Nell Hardy Theater in Bingham Hall at UNC, is a harrowing, claustrophobic trip into the deep, dark, damp, dusty, and ever-dangerous coal mines that honeycomb the Appalachian mountains.

The miners enter the mines lying down on a mantrip for a 3½-mile journey. Once at their workstations, they must work stooped over or crawling on their knees. Coal miners work in the damp at a cool 55 degrees. They breathe rock dust and coal dust, and they brave cave-ins that will bury them alive under tons of rock. They fear hitting pockets of bad air that will kill them where they stand, explosive pockets of methane gas that will blow them to kingdom come, and underground reservoirs of water that can drown them before they have a chance to flee.

For this supremely risky occupation, they are paid more than they can make in other jobs that require a maximum of muscle and a minimum of education mental acuity. They brave the stigma of being considered dirty and stupid. They grow old young; and way too many of them die a slow, painful death from Black Lung (a.k.a. coal workers' pneumoconiosis and silicosis), gasping out their last moments on earth.

It is southwest Virginia miners' stories that Hannah Blevins sets out to tell, but the tale is universal. Blevins transforms a recent series of "ethnographic interviews," which she conducted, into a powerful performance piece for five women and a cellist. Cristina Garcia plays Hannah the interviewer who must coax and prod her subjects into revealing their deepest fears and hurts and secrets. Hannah Blevins herself plays a couple of feisty coal miners named Earl and Donald, with just the right slump in her backbone (miners work in a space only 26-28 inches high) and just the right grit in her craw.

> Annissa Clarke (Palmer, Pam), Elizabeth Nelson (Steve, Woman Miner), and Shannon O'Neill (Harley, Jimmy) likewise bare the souls of their coal-mining characters, while composer J. Mark Scearce and cellist Susanna Branyon play snippets of songs about life underground and provide poignant instrumental accompaniment throughout. Their music punctuates this deeply moving performance about the forgotten but all-important men and women who slave underground in the most appalling conditions to help meet this nation's energy needs.
>
> There is humor as well as pathos here, thanks to Hannah Blevins' skill as a playwright and director. *Out of the Dark*, which turns the spotlight on the struggles of the body and triumphs of the spirit of coal miners everywhere, is a passionate performance piece that skillfully combines storytelling, movement, and the mournful tones of the cello to shed new light on an important subject. *Out of the Dark*, with its sometimes humorous and always deeply moving testimonies of mostly retired miners, many of whom are still "breathing" like they were still working deep in the mines, is haunting — a beautiful tribute to a heretofore neglected segment of society. (McDowell)

Out of the Dark won three year-end awards from Independent Magazine for being among the four best new scripts of 2005, for containing three of the best lead actors of 2005, and as the third best performance of the year. Byron Woods ranked our performance and actors among other professional theater productions in Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill as follows:

> **Best Original Scripts**
>
> ***Falling in Like,*** *Jerry Sipp, Temple Theatre, January*
>
> ***Out of the Dark,*** *Hannah Blevins, Wordshed Productions, Bingham Hall, April*
>
> ***Control-Alt-Delete,*** *Rus Hames, Joe Brack, Anthony Hughes, Stella Duffy, Richard Foreman, Blue Monday Productions, Common Ground Theater, November*
>
> ***Piece-meal,*** *Cheryl Chamblee and Tamara Kissane, both hands theater, Manbites Dog Theater, December*
>
> *This year's nominees truly reflect the diversity of work being created in the region. Jerry Sipp's conventional, backstage romantic comedy had heart--and the knocks from a lifelong love affair with theater. Hannah Blevins brought the testimony out of the Earth--and out of the sometimes ruined bodies of Appalachian coal miners--in her moving April valedictory. Blue Monday's contingent went way out there with a Frankensteinian script about the ethics of transferring psychopathology onto artificial intelligences. And once again, the both hands crew used language games to reveal games sometimes much less amusing in human interactions.* (Woods "Just")
>
> **Best Lead Performances**

- Marcia Edmundson as Winnie, *Happy Days*, Little Green Pig, and Mary, *A Skull in Connemara*, Wordshed/Ghost & Spice and various roles, *White People*, Streetsigns Center
- Jordan Smith as Inspector Goole, *An Inspector Calls*, Peace Theater, and Harpagon, *The Miser*
- Sylvia Dante and Jan Daub Morgan as Frume and Chana, *Woman's Minyan*
- Nick Barnes as Petruchio, *Taming of the Shrew*
- Ira David Wood III and Lynda Clark as Henry II and Eleanor, *The Lion in Winter*, Theatre in the Park
- Elizabeth Nelson, Hannah Blevins and Shannon O'Neill, *Out of the Dark*, Wordshed Productions
- Lamont Wade as Big Daddy, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*
- Kathryn Hunter Williams and Sam Wellington, *Yellowman*, Playmakers
- Todd Weeks as Heisenberg, *Copenhagen*, Playmakers

Best Productions
8. *The Man Who*, Manbites Dog Theater
7. *Control-Alt-Delete*, Blue Monday Productions
6. *Suddenly Last Summer*, Peace Theater
5. *The Front Page*, Playmakers
4. *Copenhagen*, Playmakers
3. *Out of the Dark*, Wordshed Productions
2. *Angels in America I*, Duke Theater Studies
1. *Yellowman*, Playmakers (Woods "Part 2")

VII. Reflections

There are so many bodies pressed against my own in this project, so many body parts pressed into my hands and against my flesh—Earl's blackened lungs, Donzil's severed arms, the breath between our bodies as I walk with these people in performance. I touch these narratives and bodies and they become a part of my flesh in the performative re-telling and the public enactment of these stories. These are weighty stories, double-wounding. I carry their narratives with me everywhere I go now—while I'm shopping for groceries, driving in the car, teaching my classes. Their stories and bodies are here now, in me, and I am changed by their living presence. Their stories tested my "inward ease," and in these conversations and in my writing and performance I attempted to mark the ways that each of these stories "made me uncomfortable, each moved me to ecstasy. I made myself, as much as possible, vulnerable to being moved" as the miners told these stories to me, and in performance I made my body "vulnerable to being moved" literally as I embodied these stories in my own flesh, conjoining my physical movements and accent with these miners' (Pollock Telling 23).

I hope that our performance presents an alternative to the "dirty and dumb" prevailing view of Appalachia so succinctly summarized by coal miner Bill Buchanan's argument: "they think we're stupid, but I tell them, we were operating these coal mining machines with

remotes before you were even playing with remote controlled cars as a child[79]." Public performance has the power to contest dominant ideologies and transform consciousness, working outward from the biographies and locations of specific individuals to advocate for social justice and change. Our performance closely studied the narratives of coal miners as they describe a place-as-body (the mines-body), a place that Earl re-members with longing, pain, and loss as he travels in St. Charles and sits with Haggie in the local clinic. The mines are a complex space where gender is enacted with punitive repercussions for those (such as Pam and Cat) who perform outside the masculine norm. Ethnographic performance offers a means to humbly re-present and—through kinesis—break and remake these narratives into embodied enactments that give voice to voiceless and indeed *breath-less* miners. Our performance complicated images of hillbillies as "simple" and dumb, characters either out of Disney's The Country Bear Jamboree show or the film Deliverance. Out of the Dark provided a malleable scaffolding onto which a growing dialogue is being built already between former audiences, actors, the miners, and now you—a hermeneutic cycle of interpretation in which you and I are caught up and still spinning, together.

Byron Woods's review in The Independent praised us in clearly, artfully, and unromantically achieving all four of my initial goals: to fight the common stereotypes of Appalachians as either "dirty and dangerous" or "simple and stupid;" to show miners' complex relationship with earth; to convey the hardships of dealing with and "proving" disability; and to show the relevance of coal to daily life for those living in cities and urban spaces outside of Appalachia. From the additional responses I received from other audience members—including some former miners, relatives of Cat, and residents of the towns we represented—and from the cast, I believe our work honored these miners' lives and fulfilled my goals for this first performance.

Woods's critique beyond these achievements anticipated the future steps I had already planned for this initial performance: to take this performance outside "the choir" (a

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[79] Bill *turns* the dominant logic of scientism in his favor through a de Certeauian tactic *using the master's weapons against him* (de Certeau 37). Coal miners participate in this logics of exclusion as a tactic in order to *turn* the binary on its head, to flip the supplement into the dominant position through their narratives—and the performative power of narrative *does* this, it enacts what it says, meaning and self-authority *are* created in these moments of narration and embodied storytelling between teller and listener, miner and myself, such that agency is created through the act of storytelling between us. It happens through a *turn* of phrase—Cat Counts would *turn* the men's jokes back onto them, so that the literal surface of her body could not be inscribed or marked on—in Phelan's terms (1993), through her *turn* she disallowed them to *re-mark* her body with sexual innuendo.

term which, given the popular attendance and response of non-university affiliated audience members who traveled from Raleigh and Cary, NC, seems a bit off the mark) and back to the mining communities from which they came. Kuftinec discussed "theater as a site to re-member the pieces. We envisioned re-membering as a form of historiography: an original performance piece, developed through historical re-membering, could momentarily 'put together' Mostar…using an outdoor site…the site and performance would then haunt each others' meanings" (Kuftinec 90). What would be the impact of performing Out of the Dark in St. Charles, at that in-filled mine site—to witness a wound in the site/sight of this gap/wound in St. Charles's landscape? The next steps for this performance are to bring it back to the miners in Virginia. Woods anticipated my future hopes in his review, and plans are underway to host a reception for the miners this summer at The University of Virginia at Wise and there give a public screening of the video of the performance we gave in Chapel Hill. It is my hope that this reception will inspire dialogue between and among miners and the public outside of their immediate community. With the miners' feedback and critiques from this performance, I plan to rescript, rehearse, and reperform Out of the Dark for the miners and other audiences outside of southwest Virginia within the next school year (2006-7).

As a final note, however, I would call what the performance we gave in Chapel Hill a sincere and powerful form of activism. We sought, among other goals, to change damaging and pervasive stereotypes about Appalachia and its people. If we made even one person question the way Appalachians are characterized as dirty and dumb, and if even one audience member considers the relevance of these miners' work to their daily lives where they did not question it before, we have succeeded. We did not give the audience a direction to which they might throw their money or a phone number for local representatives or congressmen[80]. Looking back, I wish we had done more along this vein to channel the surprisingly large interest and energy of audiences who witnessed our event. Quite frankly, I never anticipated the wide press coverage and large audiences literally pilgrimaging to see our relatively small

[80] Wordshed is a 501-C3 not for profit organization, and we openly accept donations for future performances. Following our show, many audience members donated generously towards future performances in Virginia and beyond. I considered offering a bin for donations towards building the long-term drug rehabilitation facility in St. Charles I discussed in Chapter Five, but this idea is hotly debated within the St. Charles community. I didn't think it ethical to use our performance to further one side of the debate without fully discussing the arguments of those for and against the facility (we only allude to the persistent drug problem and do not discuss the community controversy over a potential long-term rehabilitation facility in this performance).

performance on UNC campus—at every performance the seats filled to over-capacity, packing the house with nearly 60 bodies (some sitting on the floor) per night and turning away at least 10 others each night. I never expected such a turnout, or the whirlwind of interest that followed in the form of activist lawyers interested in sponsoring future performances; a documentary photographer/professor from Elon University doing fieldwork in Jonesville, VA who wants to collaborate on future productions; and the groundswell of local displaced miners living in the Triangle area bringing their families to witness what they lived through.

I didn't push audiences outward toward writing their state representatives or starting a fund to help injured miners pay the inevitable doctors' and lawyers' fees to fight comp doctors—the main reason for this choice is that I wanted audiences to focus on change in themselves first. The primary change I wanted to enact with this performance lay in smaller levels, in the homes and dinner tables and daily lives of the audience members themselves—in everyday jokes, derogatory speech, and lack of knowledge or appreciation about this region and culture. In these small and seemingly invisible everyday performances lies great power—the power to bend a particular image of a people, mask the process of manipulation, and make that "dirty" image unquestionable truth.

In these small, everyday performances also lies the potential for debate, respect and change at the most profound level—in the level of ordinary speech and everyday life. It is at the dinner table and at the parent's knee that we first learn to be selectively ignorant and willfully hurtful—and it is here that we communally encourage and approve these actions through shared laughter and jokes. These spaces, and what happens in them, are important. It is in these spaces that we teach each other how and who to be in relation to others, and how to Other others, and who these Other others are. For many audience members who came to experience Out of the Dark, Appalachians are not so Other(ed) anymore.

Min evaluates Sameshima and Vo's installations as "contemporary spatial apprehensions of the loss of home and nation" in order to complicate notions of melancholia as absolute loss—the installations are incomplete, unfinished, and thus open to a world of becoming "something new, something different" (qtd. in Eng Kazanjian 21). Vo's ambivalent landscape of floor and found objects covered in packing tape refuses to purge the history of Vietnam and its refugees of ambivalence (resisting an assimilation model). I hope

that in a similar way this show was not an act of purging or completion but an excursion into unending, moving towards the tattered edges of lives lived on the borderlands of life and death; disability and "ability;" "not a lady" and not quite a miner either; and urban and rural sensibilities.

The end of our final performance felt very much like a beginning for me. With growing positive support and momentum from public audiences and from the miners, and with audience members recently writing back to me with comments about their deeply felt connections with the current mining incidents in West Virginia and Mexico, all because of our performance, I excitedly look toward the future incarnations of this performance for many more and diverse audiences.

CHAPTER 10: BEGINNINGS

Dear Earl,

You speak with such humble honesty. I can and cannot imagine what you went through in the mines, and yet I *must*. Steve said "no, you don't know" in an interview, and he was right—my body is on a different line than yours. But going into the mines helped me to visualize and understand this experience by going and being there, and being *with* (with other miners, with your ghosted presence walking beside me), in that space. I could see you working there, Earl—I could see your frail body bent over ear to ceiling and imagined your face pressed against it—the rocks were so slick and sharp-edged in places that you would have cut your ear or face on it. You said "it's no dry place," and you were right—it's also no soft place either—there are cushioning muddy piles of crushed coal, rock dust, and water to wade through, but the walls and ceiling are hard, dangerous—I didn't want to go near these surfaces, the liminal membrane separating my flesh from thousands of pounds of stone. How did you do it?

I entered this project with the question, "how do miners cope with the dangers of daily work in the mines?" The more important question, you taught me, was "how do miners deal with separation from this place?" You taught me about mining as an intimate relationship with place, beyond personification of the land—listening, feeling, sensing, smelling, knowing and being known by this body. Inhaling place, your lungs became coated with coal dust that eventually killed your father and grandfather, and, as I painfully recognize, is at this very moment slowly killing you.

How does a person re-member himself in this place, where re-membering is a literal corporal stitching together of limbs and lungs and breath and movement and of a way of life your body now denies you? Your love of and relationship with the mines touches me, pricks my skin. Jettisoned out of this community your father warned you not to join, you only left when the doctors "pulled" you out of the mines in an effort to save your body from what was simultaneously killing and re-making you.

Re-membering the art and craft of mining means reconstituting a family connected through generations by coal-filled blood. Re-membering creates a sense of continuity with generations past and present. In your daily actions, you doubled and exceeded the presence of your father, grandfather, great-grandfather… You entered into a community constituted in the labor and *doing* of mining. You took me to the "P & P" mines as a gravesite, a holy place that was a source of healing through pain—you taught me that witnessing means understanding that some things are beyond understanding, and some losses too great to comprehend. You just share the burden and move on, together, with loss.

Today I find myself at an ending that feels very much like a beginning. When you took me to your hometown, I kept asking the question of those living in St. Charles—and even as I said it I felt foolish, "so what is the answer?" as if one answer "held it all" and one phrase could wrap together all the tangled ends of this community into a neat bow. Life is not neat. Memory is not clean with sharply defined edges. Communities are not solid (as you said to me, motioning to the burned-out hulls of buildings on St. Charles's Main Street, "all this used to be *solid*," but now there are huge "gaps" in the landscape)—*and never were*.

"What is the answer?" As if the bounds of this excessive place could be held in one vessel. These towns are mutable places. In southwest Virginia, as you told me, coal "spills" over political borders from Harlan County into St. Charles, eddying in a pool of coal-miner blood that wells up new life in the community and dies as soon as coal companies (in Postcolonial fashion) retreat from these neighborhoods and spaces, leaving behind communities that had become dependent on coal and coal camps as a way of life and economic viability, depending on these companies as the heart-pumping access to the "lifeblood" of the community. After these mines shut down, the relationship between miners and the mines-body is severed: the bloodline is cut; the pulse slows; and the blood lies stagnant, rotting into the ground.

But, like Donzil's story, you took me beyond these scenes of intense loss and into a space of hope, compassion, and life. You took me into your memory. You took me to your church, introduced me to your family, embraced me in the exuberance of your passionate faith and daily zeal for the life and the good purposes you have been given this day and every day your coal-coated lungs allow you breath. You inspire me as a human being and as a

friend. Your stories live in me, so deeply embedded that, like the coal stains in your body, I "*can't* get 'em out, *can't* get 'em out, *can't* get 'em out."

I end up with unlearning—a decolonization of the mind figured as unlearning[81]. I don't end up with new or final knowledge, but instead I am finding new ways to unlearn the inscriptions on the body, new ways to empathetically witness disability, and new ways to "unmonster" the monster into which our Appalachian home and its people has been made. I don't have conclusions. I really don't want them. Because this is not an ending, a conclusion, or anything near a "final say" on your life or these other miners' experiences. What I am so thankful to you for, and what I want to continue sharing with others, are these excursions into unlearning on which you have taken me.

I hope that you feel our project has honored you. I hope in some small way it answers back to the great gift of story that you and all the other miners gave to me over the past few years.

I hope we have been responsible witnesses.

I look forward to bringing our show to you this summer. I'm sure you'll have lots to say.

Love,

Hannah

[81] Diana Taylor discusses this "decolonization of the mind" through unlearning in Disappearing Acts.

APPENDIX I: Out of the Dark Script

Out of the Dark: The Oral Histories of Appalachian Coal Miners

Hannah – Earl, Donald, Papa, Ichabod
Elizabeth – Steve, Eddie, Woman
Annissa – Palmer, Bill, Pinner, Cat, Mike
Shannon – Harley, Jimmy, Miner
Cristina -- 'Hannah'

Beginnings

Cristina: In the black dust towns / Of East Tennessee / All the work's about the same

Shannon: He may not go / To a job in the ground / But he'll learn the miner's refrain

All: I'm down in a hole / Down in a hole / Down in a deep dark hole

(*cello underscores this last chorus*)

All: I'm down in a hole / Down in a hole / Down in a deep dark hole

This is a story of coal miners. A story of place. Of a forgotten corner of Virginia—dirty / stupid / poor. **A story of a corner of Appalachia** / and all that Appalachia is to those outside / and inside its borders. A story of older / and younger / **disabled** miners / who remember the coal mines with love / longing / pain / and loss. This is a story of me—young, / white, / healthy, / heterosexual woman / growing up in another corner of Appalachia. A story of going away and coming back home to try to straighten out the perceived image of this place. This is a story that begins in the body—in the bodies of coal miners who work in spaces **no higher than a table**/ back arched and extended as they work with machines that carve, / drill, / and bolt the roof as they listen, / listen, / listen / **to the rock**. A story of women who became men to join this community of miners / of blackened bodies / **all** <*inhale*> / **breathing** <*inhale*> / **together** <*inhale*>

(Hannah moves to audience. Miners form 2 breathing houses, then Elizabeth to DL to talk to Hannah. Images of St. Charles appear on screen behind. Miners perform breathing house structure and echo words in bold.)

elizabeth/Steve: Even today / you can tear, a **wall** / outa those houses [in the town of Appalachia, Virginia] / and you'll get [that] **black**…that there that **coal** dust'll get all over ye.
Now and see I recently bought my grandmother's house. / She passed away.
And / when I bought her house / I started workin on it. / Well I, I found a **hole** up, in the ceiling and, and I got up in there and I looked I said, "Gah, / man there's a whole nother house up **here."** / And / it was, it was that **thick** / **coal** dust in the attic up there. (*motions with fingers as ½ inch to an inch*) / And / you know that / the people had to have bad health / you know…
Now I watched my grandfather die of black lung / he died with oxygen on his face (*pause*)
And / **never** got a penny / **never** got a penny.

Into Your Blood: Wrapped Up In It

(10 second music transition. Annissa, Hannah, and Shannon continues to "breathe," fade to low light. Images of St. Charles, coal miners, sketch of miners outside of mine, etc. are projected on the center screen to the music. Miners move behind the right and left flanking screens, hidden from view. "Hannah" moves from the audience bank to stage center.)

Hannah: I have been listening to coal miners for over two years now. I grew up in a small mountain town in Tennessee, about 45 minutes away from these Virginia coal camps. In these mountains, state borders don't seem to matter as much as the mountain county you belong to—Lee, Wise—and for coal miners, mining identity is performed as a relationship with the inside of the mountains. So much of these miners' stories was wrapped up in the impossibility of understanding and re-membrering the mines. Earl was my first friend in mining—he is in his 60's, thin and tall, with a smile that seems to come straight from his heart. Through him and my father I met many others: Donald, Harley, Jimmy—and through Jimmy his mother, Cat—Palmer, Eddie, and Steve…

(*As each name is said, miners enter from behind the screens and place objects and costume pieces on the perimeter of the performance space close to the audience. They touch and handle these objects on the ground that embody each of their characters' personas. Miners echo "Hannah"'s words in bold.*)

Many were older, former miners whose bodies are "**still breathing in the mines**"—this story really begins here, in the body, because it is here that I came to understand Earl's passion for his work and his relationship with the mines as some*one* he knew, intimately. The miners say that **mining gets into your blood.** Coal dust literally lives in their bodies, shaping movement and breath. I asked them what that place was like.

(*"Hannah" sits near the audience bank but still onstage to listen to "Earl"'s story. Hannah as "Earl" tells "Hannah" about the mines from downstage left. Behind "Earl," other miners metaphorically illustrate and echo his words.)*

H/Earl: I went in the deep mines where my father worked

Shannon (*in an overlapping echo*): (*rests her hand on an imaginary shoulder in front of her*) my father worked

Annissa *(echoing): (rests her hand on Shannon's shoulder)* my father worked

elizabeth (*echoing*)*: (rests her hand on Annissa's shoulder)* my father worked

H/Earl*:* And uh / Hannah, that coal…that was only 26, sometimes 28 inches high…Once at you, once at you start in[to the mines]…we had what you call / a man trip, this was the one that go to the workers then…

(*Shannon, Annissa, and elizabeth lower their bodies and lay with stomachs to the ground, faces turned to the side. They lightly tap their hands on the ground and shake to mirror the jostling of the man trip*.)

You had these / [motorized] cars down here. / You did not set up in em. / You couldn't stand up nor nothin. / Once that you laid down you had to stay / on your stomach / and your head turned sideways. / And uh…I guess about the farthest that I've rode in that position, is when I was in thE low coal / and that was about three and a half miles.

Annissa/Palmer: (*sitting up*) It's black. / Pitch black. It's, but, they's never, theys not a darkness made / that's / that's any darker. / There's really not, cause / you could turn your light off and you can't see nothing.

Shannon/Albert: Not a thing

Annissa/Palmer: Not a thing
It's

ALL: pitch black

H/Earl: (*sitting up, crouching low with head bent to the side*) But once you get in there / it uh, you ball up. / I always kept one foot / most a the time / and, under, my backside.
Or / you had to / be on ye knees all the time. / And uh / you say, "Did you get the head up?" —no! / You worked with ye head / sideways. / And where you would do that, / naturally, thE top of the roof / it was, damp and wet, dusty. / And coal would build up on ye head or / side of it or / water'd run down ye ear or down your clothes

(*Susanna plinks and plunks high notes on the cello a few times*)

And where it was so low / they was no way that you could keep ye back out a the top.
All the time, and where you were workin and movin / time, uh / the shift was over, you was drenched. / And uh…cause you've got lakes up above you / you've got, water all that water / drippin down…It's, it's no / **No dry place…**Once that you get down underground / the temperature doesn't change, [it's about 55 degrees, constant].

Shannon/Harley: (*sitting up on knees, head bent to the side*) Yeah it's damp. / Kinda cool, you know it's not cold…Have, have you ever went hiking like in a real deep holler and just kinda that musty smell?

elizabeth/Papa: (*sitting up, head to side*) The smell, well—when you have to go to the bathroom you, just go to the bathroom down there.
You're not goin out again, it takes, half an hour or 45 minutes to get out.

Annissa/Palmer: (*standing, moving towards "Hannah," while miners behind echo words in bold*)
But, you know mining, **it gets in ye blood** though. / Now it does it, it's uh, / it's something that you *want* to do, you know like uh (*turns to other miners behind him for help*)
Uh, how do I describe this? / **You look forward to goin to work** just like / people'd say, "No I wouldn't work in there," but / but we didn't think no more of it than, and them goin to a / factory you know and goin to work. / But, and you you just get **wrapped up in it** and / you just enjoy it, but you don't realize / the damage it's doin to ye health, you know, uh over the years. But / but, normally you you / I enjoyed it, I still miss it

(30 second music transition underscores the next movements—the cello begins with light and high notes in a playful and fast-tempo, but quickly descends to deeper and more menacing slower-tempo notes. "Palmer" brings "Hannah" into the performance space, to where elizabeth and Shannon have outstretched a long black rope between them. elizabeth and Shannon represent the mining walls or "ribs" of coal, which can sometimes roll over onto miners and crush them. "Palmer" puts "Hannah" near the center of the rope, and "Hannah" loops the rope around her waist, playfully sliding and spinning with the rope still around her waist first to one side of the rope, then the next. Each time "Hannah" spins to one side of the rope, the actor holding the opposite end of the rope gathers up a foot or two of the rope, shortening it. In the end, "Hannah" is left frustratingly and frighteningly bound in a knot between the two close walls of bodies in her face. Her space has quickly grown claustrophobically tight. She is scared. She begins to spin downstage—elizabeth drops her end of the rope and the loop around "Hannah"'s waist slips off as she lands downstage in the mines, looking up and around at the mine ceiling and walls.

Beside the two flanking screens, Hannah (upstage left beside a tub of black coal dust) and Annissa (upstage right beside a tub of blood-red dirt) pick up two clear acrylic buckets of water, lift them high, and pour them into the tubs. Kneeling beside these tubs, they stir the water and coal/dirt with their hands and arms, making a swooshing gravelly sound as they stir.

Shannon and elizabeth, still as the mine "ribs" position themselves upstage right and left, holding the ropes in a triangular formation beneath their two feet and between their hands stretched above their heads. These "ribs" of coal sway back and forth, similar to the house-lung's rhythmically breathing walls, as "Hannah" narrates.)

Into Your Blood: Written in Blood

Hannah: Donald and his friends Buckwheat and Ichabod took me into the mines. We went in through an opening in the mountain they called a "drift mouth," passed between tunnel walls called "ribs" (which can sometimes break off and roll over onto you), underneath a ceiling that would "belly down" on top of you and sag, and we approached a "face" where they worked. This is a place—a *body*—that they interact with, that they listen to, that they speak with, work *with*. This was relational, dialogic space created between person and place, a relationship embedded into their skin, pulsing through veins.

(Susanna plays a low, rhythmic single-noted "bum-bum, bum-bum" to underscore the "pulse" of blood. Annissa and Hannah raise their arms hand first out of the vats of coal/mud they have been stirring—red and black mud drips and slides down their arms as they stand. It looks like blood and coal running down their arms.)

Annissa/Palmer: I still go back and say it gets in ye blood? / It has to they ain't no way you [could do it otherwise]. / Cause ever, coal miner you'll talk to you know that that's, that's worked any amount a time in the coal mines…Even though you know it's dangerous / they enjoy it / and and / [Even the ones who've been hurt]… And even me I mean I I'd go back today if I could / I'd go right back down there.

Hannah: Embedded into their skin, taken into the lungs. Almost imperceptibly, this place crawls into flesh--

(Susanna plays an 6-8 second music transition building from her 'pulse' notes. elizabeth sits in a chair downstage right—she has a yellow legal pad and pen, and she draws on the pad to illustrate her verbal descriptions. Behind her, Hannah and Annissa move in front of the center screen and clasp mud-covered hands, mixing the blood-red mud and coal-black mud into a single substance between their arms. Hannah turns to the middle screen and begins to paint large black squares in a grid pattern—her designs follow elizabeth/"Steve"'s narration. Annissa moves to the sides of the two audience banks and draws a line of coal/blood on the ground beside each audience bank. Shannon follows after Annissa and pulls "pillars" of coal out of the wall. They flank and surround the audience.)

elizabeth/Steve: The coal mines / they / just sorta looks like little squares [like city blocks]…

(*Hannah draws squares in coal-blood mixture on the center canvas*)

But say this up here / is a solid block a coal

("*Steve" draws heavy on the pad, Hannah simultaneously draws the thick face of coal at the top of the canvas*)

And / all these are / pillars…

(*Shannon and Annissa continue to pull out the two pillars of coal flanking the audience*)

See as you go up you leave all these little squares [of coal] we call them pillars [to support the roof]. / You would travel [and carve out tunnels], these would be like 20 feet wide… The continuous miner [machine] he'd be over here.

(*Hannah draws a dot on the screen where the continuous miner machine would work, near the face of the coal. Shannon at stage center "mines" coal, and "Hannah" enters the performance space and mimics Shannon's motions, learning.)*

Shannon/Miner (Steve): Now see this is called we're a, drivin / or advancing. / You're all the time you're always goin this way [drilling through the face to make tunnels].

elizabeth/Steve: The pinner roof bolter, he would be over in this place

(*Hannah draws another dot on the screen where the pinner machines would follow the miner machines. Annissa, upstage left, works as a "pinner man." "Hannah" moves closer to her and mirrors the pinner man's work.)*

Annissa/Pinner (Steve): All this is roof bolted…Well I done that for / 18 years, put roof bolts in. And what it is you drill a hole up in there. / You stick a bolt up in there [with a stick a rosin glue]. / [And what it'd do, this glue supposedly / that uh, any cracks in the top see it'd spread out just like water] / and tie [the mountain] together [above ye].

elizabeth/Steve: And for, most a the time the belt / came out the center [tunnel to carry the coal out a the mines] / Well they would set em a fan, on the outside / over here a great big fan

(*Hannah draws the belt, fan, and air flow.)*

Ichabod:See to get the air to ventilation to ye miners and stuff
[and ye hang curtains up to keep the air flowing in and out]
…cause you want it to go to the face first
[that's where most a the methane gas builds up].

(*Hannah leaves the center screen and stands upstage right and works as "Earl," another "pinner man." Again, "Hannah" mirrors these movements, with more confidence this time.)*

H/"Earl": Ye see the pinner man, if he's experienced, he can feel the bands of rock above ye—shale, sandstone, sand, or if there's a pocket of gas trapped above and of there's any gap or separation in the rock, ye got to keep on drillin and feed that bolt through. / Otherwise that roof will fall. / So you see the pinner man's responsible really for the lives of all the other miners, and he can feel as he drills and if the drill jumps or jerks—they's a separation. / [He can listen and feel and read the mountain, like reading Braille.]

<u>Fossils, Learning the Mountains</u>

(*Susanna plays a 10-15 second music transition, beginning at Earl's line 'So you see...' to underscore these lines and an additional 4-second transition. Shannon and Annissa move behind two flanking screens and form shadows against photos of cribs holding up a crumbling mine ceiling—they look up at the ceiling and feel the cribs and mine walls with their shadowed hands as "Hannah" describes her journey into the mines. Hannah as "Earl" and Elizabeth as "Steve" crouch on the ground and visualize the mines around and above them. "Hannah" walks downstage center looks up at "ceiling" above them.)*

Hannah: We walked into a place where there was "bad top"—the ceiling sagged in, buckling toward the middle as if we were on the underside of a mattress where someone had just sat down on the bed above. The ceiling, walls and floor were coated in a white powder called "rock dust." It felt like ash underneath my feet, like tiny pieces of glass on my hands and skin—they use it to keep the methane gas and coal dust from igniting. Like black lung, rock dust suffocates miners, you inhale and it feels like glass in your lungs. Several slices of the ceiling had cracked away, peeled off, fallen to the ground as we walked over what was once above our heads. Where the pieces of top had fallen off, they left holes where there was no white rock dust, creating a mottled look all over the ceiling and floor, like sickened skin. We shone our headlamps down the tunnel, and all you could see were timbers or poles lining the walls supporting the roof and wooden braces they call cribs on either side, some buckling under the weight.

H/Earl: And you'd say**, how could a timber hold up a mountain?**

Hannah: As we walked into this crumbling tunnel, Ichabod reached his hand up and began to loosten and tear out some of the flat and jagged-edged pieces of rock that were poking out from underneath the roof bolts. He grabbed a loose piece of rock and began to wiggle it free from underneath the roof bolt… brushing off the tender and crumbling pieces of the thin membrane separating the three of us from over 300 feet of mountain above our heads. When the rock came loose, he found a small starburst flower fossil. (*Pillars of coal illuminate from behind to reveal fossils.*) We all three looked up at it, staring at its perfectly defined edges, hard and dark against the gray coal. It was so beautiful. It seemed to smile sweetly down at us, as if it was growing from the ceiling and poking its head down to greet us.

(Low cello notes underscore following narratives. Shannon and Annissa begin to paint on backside of the center screen Lights dim to black onstage. Aas shadowed Shannon and Annissa speak while they paint, Hannah and elizabeth bring chairs upstage right and left. "Hannah" sits in the audience bank.)

Shannon/Donald: I mean [those fossils were] something to see…To imagine, this whole wall right here on top bein nothing but a covered in fossils of ever type that you could see.
But they was so hard in the top. / And, I mean they'd be so beautiful. / I mean but they was just like you'd painted em on there. / I mean, we was the first ones, uh / the drill men to ever go into a, / I mean you're just like explorin all the time, you know.

Annissa/Palmer: Well / to me, and and / I've been somewhere where nobody else has been, you know. / When you take the coal out / they's never been a person walked on that ground… I mean you, you, they walk on top of it / but they never walked, / in the middle, where where I was at.

(*Two spotlights come up on "Steve" and "Donald," seated. As they talk to "Hannah," lights swell and dim on each as they speak and are silent. Susanna softly underscores their words: she plays high, plunking notes for Earl's description of roof bolts speaking "Ka-ing! Ping!" and abruptly stops a long, low underscoring note when "Donald" describes the roof "dropping out" beside of him—the effect is a subtle and unobtrusive punctuation of their stories.)*

elizabeth/Steve: It takes a long time to learn, uh, the mountains / and uh…and in the summertime… you have, uh, moisture in there…You can see it, hangin everwhere it's like little beads… The like the whole ceiling was covered up with little rain drops? / Well, somebody'll walk over there, and somebody'll take a hammer (*Hannah laughs*) / and *slap* you know… And all that rain come down there. / Well you'd see a lot a that rain in the summertime… (*He draws another thick line on his pad to show air flow*) / Comin through in the wintertime, [that's cold air]. / And it comes through and it dries all this stuff up it gathers up that moisture and takes it back / out. / And / your rocks— / now, people might not think but a rock will get bigger. [It expands] / when it gets warm.
And when it gets cold, when it starts getting cold, when it first starts getting cold now this rock, you may have a, this might be your roof, and this rock right here. (*draws on pad)* Might be a layin up in there like that, and this might be a 40 ton rock I'm talking about. Well / when it gets cold / this rock / is gonna turn loose because it shrinks. / And it's gonna fall outa there.

H/Donald: Uh, it wasn't nothing to see them things just in a second I know just (*snaps fingers*) drop out / and hit the floor. / And that's why they call em kill bottoms cause people, they was very hard to detect. / And uh, when they dropped out it would make you wonder, you know I've had em drop out would weigh half a ton / a ton, and / you, sit right down beside of ye, ye know, and you're sittin there thinking, whew! (*laughs*) Lucky, you know.

Annissa/Palmer: But they can hear the rocks / cr-cracking you know, they hear the rocks cracking and then / as one fella told me this year sometime, / "You've got to learn to listen to the rock."

Hannah/Earl: It happens so fast, Hannah, that uh / you'd get a warnin sometimes if it's gonna be what you call a major fall, or something like that, you can hear it to rumble / a long time, it sounds like thunder over here or something. / And then you can hear it get closer and closer and then / they's some of them that they's no warnin. / That you'd be there, and uh. Most times if you see a little / dribbling or, or we call it / a squirrel cuttin' like in a hickory oak tree? / You see this top start dribbling a little bit like at? (*pause*)
That uh, / you, you'd better back up…But the roof bolts / that's in a place, they'll start ka-ing! Ping! (*he slaps his knee with his hand*)

elizabeth/Steve: Well on the way back out / you had these pillars. / Well / you're pullin these pillars. And this is what, is holdin the mountain up…And [to get all the coal out] we would, like cut a cut a chunk out right there…And you would try / to get just as much a that as you could get. Because if you didn't get as much of it as you could get [so that the mountain would take the weight and fall back on itself as you work your way back out a these tunnels you just dug]…If these in here didn't fall in / you would get it on a ride it was, that's what we call it getting it on a ride a *squeeze* or whatever.
The mountain / instead a havin / weight, / instead a this fallin the way it's supposed to?
All ye weight would shift back here behind ye / and it would start mashin these / pillars a coal out, squeezing em out. / Then the floor would, sometimes start movin up…
And you could get it on a ride real easy / if the miner men / didn't take enough coal out.

H/Donald: I was in the mines, I'd probably been there a year or two. / And / we had, we was a pillarin, it was all kinda laid uphill where we had pulled out. / And all you could see as far as your eye could see was timbers, stood and / criss-crossed, bent, it was almost broke in two you know. / And this never did fall, this went on like a *month.*
The more we pillared, the more we pillared I mean it was / I'd say, you're talking several hundred football fields, back in there it was just nothing but just all the coal took out of it. / And / we was down there one day and I was on the drill, me and my buddy.
All of a sudden we heared this *noise.* / Sound like a big old, *hurricane* or something, just winds and stuff. / And we could see that this, all this had broke loose and started fallin…In other words, if all of it'd just fallen and it just pushin the air and everthing that way.
I mean, you're talking break after break it'd just set down, you know the whole mountain set and you're talking / probably a hundred and some feet thick ye know just, / "Pccoch! Pccoch!" ! (*breathy noises*) / fall down…
(Performance Note: He was pointing in the air—he had created this space around us through the story and his words and now it was surrounding us in that room—"this" started falling.)
To tell ye the truth, / we broke out a there *runnin* just like the rest, if you didn't run you just still got out a there and I mean you'd leave—nobody had to tell you to get outa there. (*Hannah laughs*) But, as we took outa there / I can remember it so good, the drill cable, was laid, you know out behind ye, followed behind ye. / Well when I took off next thing I knew I tripped on the drill cable. / And all you could see was just white dust / go past ye, curtain the bags / I mean just debris, it was just the awefulest wind, nobody could see nothing…
We're just uh, just movin just as hard as you can crawl just flying (*Hannah laughs*)…
I mean you'd leave out a there just as hard as you could go, but you couldn't get up.
If you got up every bit / you'd hit a roof bolt / and hit would cut you all the way down your back about like es [this] big old places and everbody you'd see. / And I'd went to the beach one time and this woman asked me she said, "Buddy," she said, "I've gotta asked you a question." She said, "What in the world has happened to your back?"
And I said, "Lady, I, I work in low coal." / And I could sit there and explain to her, and you could look there, and she'd think, / *"That ain't a place to be!"* (*Hannah laughs, both laugh*)

Instructions for Disability: Donzil and the Company Line

(Susanna plays a 10 second music transition. Donzil's video—edited down to 8 minutes—plays on the upstage right screen. The miners sit on the audience bank to obediently watch this ordered analysis of what happened to Donzil. Following the video, "Bill" responds to the video.)

Annissa/"Bill": You know miners cut up and carry on and horseplay is one a the main things
they say that uh, you don't horseplay you know. / And a lot a times you, you don't want to
horseplay because it will throw you in danger. / But the reason they's so much
a that goes on / that helps you / cope / with the, severity of the danger that you're always in.
Somebody makin a joke or somebody aggravatin ye a little bit that was just like that…
But that, young boys where they's throwin them rocks at him? / See they was playin with him
to get him used to not bein afraid, / you know. / They didn't have a, they didn't have
a clue that that much rock was gonna fall or they wouldn't a done that.
And what they was getting him used to was don't be afraid when this happens to you.
You know pay attention, but don' t be afraid.

Coping: Like a Family

(Hannah, elizabeth, Shannon come onstage with two coal-ropes—elizabeth, Shannon, and Annissa wrap Hannah in these ropes, in the same way as "Hannah" wrapped herself in the single rope at the end of "Into Your Blood: Wrapped Up in It.")

Hannah: As I listened to their stories, they seemed to weave a dance between person and place, each shaping the other. Underground experience shaped miners' conceptions of their bodies and selves.

(*The four miners hold the four ends of the two ropes, with Hannah in the center. In a form of playful bondage, Hannah spins and slides along the ropes towards whoever is speaking.)*

Annissa/Palmer: You come as one when you go down in there just like / marriage I'd say.
Cause, really you spend more people uh more time with them than you do with your
your family really. / You get close together and and

Shannon/Palmer: and you watch over one another I mean it's just
it's just natural to, take care a one another you know, keep em out a danger.
That's mostly you know how you

elizabeth/Palmer: You know you stay alive all these years. / A lot a people didn't make it.

(*Miners let the ropes slacken, Hannah slips out of the coal-rope-web and falls offstage and behind the upstage left screen, dragging the coal-ropes with her. The remaining miners, having lost one of their company, gather closer together as they speak.)*

But a lot, you know, that's how you / only stay alive, just

A/S/E/Palmer: Just stick together and be close.

Coping: Nicknames and Horseplay

(Hannah enters from behind the screen stage left with a small tube of black paint. Hannah paints the name "Hop" on Annissa's bare arm as Annissa speaks as "Earl," then passes the paint tube to Annissa, who paints a name on Shannon, and the progression continues with Shannon to Elizabeth.)

Annissa/Earl: Most coal miner, most coal miners / why, I can't give you an answer to this
they've got a nickname…Well, they called me Hop…

Hannah: Why'd they call you that?

Shannon/Earl: Well, this leg / this left leg, even then, I mean it, I didn't have to hop with it.
But I'd have to drag it or sometimes it'd *(Hannah laughs along*) / They'd say, "There comes old Hop…" / That's, that's something that just sticks…

Hannah: Do you get those names pretty early on?

elizabeth/Earl: You do. / Once that it's sewn on ye / that's it.

(*elizabeth paints "LB" on "Hannah"'s arm for her name "Little Buckwheat" as "Hannah" speaks. During "Hannah"'s dialogue, Shannon and Hannah begin to push on one another, joking around and roughhousing.)*

Hannah: These new names were like entering into a family, one that you depend on, counting on one another for daily existence. Just like a family, they would joke with one another, "grease" each other—this play helped them forget about the dangers around them.

(*Annissa and elizabeth join in the roughhousing, and they all, including "Hannah," wind up in a pile seated on the ground, laughing and slightly out of breath.)*

Shannon/Jimmy: We would wrestle and stuff like at we'd get in a big water hole and wrestle and it was just constant and then it was fun ye know because ye did that to / **it took ye mind off anything else.**

Annissa/Palmer: But just uh / a buddy a mine, a doctor put him on antibiotics.
And, this one boy he come up there and he said, / "What're you takin Robert?" He, hey he said, "I'm takin some / uh / whatde call em / uh / pain pills."
And he said, "Well I'd like to have some a these." / Robert said, "I don't have enough to do me to," said, "Tomorrow I'll bring ye some." / So, on the way to work me and him stopped down there and we got, uh, ExLax? (*Hannah laughs*)
And we'd go up there, "Robert you bring my pill?" "*Yeah*, I brought ye pills," and he give him two of em. / And uh, later on about dinnertime he come up, he said, "Man," he said, "Them didn't help me a bit," he said, "You got anymore?" And we said, "Yeah," (*laughs, all laugh*) / And we give him two more! (*all laugh*)…
He was runnin the car that night / and he come by just a singin just as happy as he could be, but boy the next day he said, "Man I've been," he said, "Gahhh now!" *(all laugh*)

<u>Old Works and Outlawing</u>

Hannah: Miners became complicit in the denial of the dangers of this place—the sudden dangers of rock falls, and the imperceptible slow creeping of rock dust and black lung entering into their bodies. This is something many of them grew up with as third generation miners. The miners' stories seemed to coalesce into a narrative of generations of miners defying their father's desires in order to become their fathers—they became the men they grew up watching die, slowly suffocating on front porches as they strain to breathe in the night air.

H/Earl: Dad always told me, Hannah, he didn't want me to go in the coal mines
And, I respected my dad and I tried to / to do what he asked, and I knowed it was a rough life…Well, / and I knowed what my dad had told me / and uh,
I didn't want to go against him, and I had watched his life, I'd watched
his, health and by the way my dad died / four days before he was 49 year old

Hannah: Oh, I'm so sorry. / What did he die of?

H/Earl: Coal workers, that, I ain't gonna say that word, I can't, "pue-oh"— / It was black lung.

Hannah: Black lung.

H/Earl: Dad, dad couldn't go from here / at that age, Hannah / from here back to the front part of the building, I mean he was so short winded and everthing.
And it was so sad, / and / at that age there, you come back / you come back and I can say, see where my dad's a comin from more so every day. / At dad's age
at dad's age he had 30 years, his whole life what you'd say, in the coal mines.

Hannah: Wow. / That was his life.

H/Earl: It was. / 30 years and him 48 years old, four days before his 49th birthday / he had a massive heart attack. / That's what happened.
And then, you can say, "Well why didn't you learn and why didn't you listen," I could think about my dad, like I said I had a great deal of respect. / And uh / and I hesitated and I hesitated,…[and] / the night that my dad was / corpse laid at the funeral home [Dad's old boss he] said, "Earl" / he said, "I know you talked to your dad several, several times." / But he said, "I'll tell you something." / He said, "Earl if you want to go inside / a coal mine," he said, "I'm gonna, I'll give you a job."
[And you'd ask why did I do it, but if you had a family, you'd go in there. / It's good money, the best work around]

(Susanna plays melody for "Down in a Hole" as Annissa moves stage left and the other miners stage right, coming into two separate spheres of white light.)

Hannah: Many times, miners stumble into what they call "old works," the mines their grandfathers worked in and had been later sealed up, filling with water and with what they called "black damp," poisonous air.

(*Miners press towards each other with tensed arms and hands, as if trying to press through the coal separating "old" miners and "young/current" miners. At the line "break in on it," blue light fills stage center and white spheres left and right fade. Miners move into blue light, hunch/crouch, and look towards the dripping ceiling.)*

All/Donald:
Annissa: They'd come in here / knowin this, you know they was on somebody else's property. / Well just rob a little bit in here cause we're gonna pillar and it's gonna fall and who's gonna know it?
elizabeth: Well, in all these years this is what we've been comin back to / you might go in, and it not even be, be projected on [our] map.
Shannon: [and if dead air has built up in old works, and you break in on it / you've only got a few seconds before that black damp will kill you]
H: And we have cut into a place, and hit warshed / I'm talking a thousand pound tool boxes WSHEW! Right down through there. / Cut through on a big old wall a water?
Annissa: …and that's what scares the worst in the world
H: And then especially and they tell ye they say, "Look, / you're, you're talking millions a gallons a water above ye and if it happens to break loose just right?"
elizabeth: Nobody can get outa here cause you're all in a hole…..
Shannon: When that roof would fall? You could hear it rip for hundreds of feet up in there. And you just sittin there wonderin
Annissa: Are you gonna be next?
H: And they ain't no way to get out under that water you know.

(Shannon plays 3-4 seconds of "Down In a Hole" bagpipe/droning version as blue light fades.)

Disability: Lessons from the Body

("Hannah" listens from the audience bank and interacts with Harley and Steve who sit in separate pools of light onstage. On the central screen, images of black lung x-rays are projected and two miners' shadows appear as ghosts, their shadows projected onto the lung images—the shadows breathe with visible labor during Steve and Harley's narration and speak as ghost-lungs from behind the screens.)

Steve: But, if ye use your head / and get ye an education, that's what I tell my kids,
I say, "Look I've done back breaking work. / And I've had back surgery. I've had 2 knee surgeries. / Uh, I've had my stomach, busted open, / and had to have it sowed back up."

Harley: My neck was crushed.

Steve: It's crippling / work, coal minin is. / But, you just so hard headed, say, "Hey, I don't care I'm gonna / I'm gonna do that / no matter if it kills me." And / and a lot of em's got that attitude.

Harley: I hurt my lower back too. / Sometimes it'll pinch down here on my lower back right here.
And these both legs will go numb, / you know there.
And that, hip right there my billfold's tryin to go in there? / Like cause when I drive?
Sittin on it? / It just like it'd go numb.
So, as long as I can keep goin like I have without risking surgery.

Hannah:Yeah, / I know. / —Well, I don't *know.* (*laughs nervously*)

ALL MINERS/Harley: No, you don't know.

Steve: See at the time I, when I went in the mines I went in there for myself. / But I *stayed* for my family / for my kids, and my wife. / And / I thought, well / I don't know anything else so how could I / get out a here / by not knowin anything else how, what / how else could I support my family? / So I stayed.

Ghost-Lung Miner 1: I was an accountant with a college degree—I became a coal miner because the pay was so much / better.

Steve: And / I, I stayed for my family. / And then, I got out for them. / Because I said, "Hey man, if I'd a got killed right here they wouldn't a, they would a gotten nothing in compensation." Because…like two and a half years— / I got hurt September / of two thousand one— / and they denied me / a, any kind of compensation checks. / They paid my doctor bills, but they didn't want to pay me a wage. / Well, I was crippled up I mean my leg was, it was enormous…and I couldn't work. / And now you talk about drivin me crazy…

Ghost-Lung Miner 2: And they have these doctors around here / paid off…

Harley: I got black lung too but they turned me down…I had to have x-rays done.
They, they told me I had second stage rock dust. / Then when I went up there to Dr. Macawayne for that second test the company made me take? / "You ain't got nothing the matter with you"…So I told my wife, / "Do an autopsy.
That's the only way you'll get that compensation money."
And I'm walkin still breathin it anyway.

Women and Mining: Cat Counts

(Video STOP SILICOSIS plays on upstage left screen. Shannon and Hannah fight and are broken up by Annissa first, then Elizabeth. Miners work for 3 seconds then freeze in working positions.)

Hannah: Most men were not at ease with women working in the mines, making women a dis-ease in this space. For fear of an accusation of sexual harassment, Earl would not engage in horseplay with women, breaking down a major coping mechanism for both. Many of the men who had "no problem" with women in the mines referred to their identity as "just like the men miners" or "just like regular miners." For many men to accept a female miner, women had to *become* men to become miners. Mining culture is defined down to excrement practices, where women have the option to either "have no respect for themselves" or "hold up the whole process," a catch-22 where there is literally "no place" for her to go in the mines:

(*Miners come out of working positions to say their lines to "Hannah" then freeze when their lines end.*)

Earl: [Now] when I say this I / that to a certain degree / I say it / disrespectfully
And try to be *respectfully* at the same time. / But, / that's no place for a woman…
Not all of em / but most of those, uh ladies if ye call em a lady
that uh, they were pretty rough characters / and I mean…they was cause I mean mouth wise.

Harley: If I got a choice to take a lady or a man I'd pick the lady ever time. / You know what I mean that woman worked harder than them men. / She can carry her— / she was kinda like me.

Earl: They're not at ease, they're not at ease / when, a woman is on the section.
You've got uh / you've got to be very careful / uh, what ye do. And you can say, "Now wait you's supposed to be a Christian." / I'm not sayin, Hannah, but we've had some that I personally know this: / they just wantin ye to open ye mouth or something come out a your mouth— / "Hey look, EEOC—" or whatever "—hey!"
And that's all they were there for! / And uh, you don't have to / Hannah you don't have to say very much to them. / Cause like I said that / I don't want to call names but I know one in particular,

(*Elizabeth mimes holding a pad and pen and walks closer to "Earl," observing him.*)

used to run around with a little pad / notebook pad. / And I'll tell you you didn't know what she was a writing, / what she's a doin. / She had the men at her mercy
and uh, section foreman was scared to death of her.

Harley: She was tough. / Yes she was. / Hey it didn't bother her, mud and water…

(*Annissa as "Pam" shovels around on the floor as "Harley" describes her.*)

Well it was in a low, place in the mines / and water'd gathered in there…water and mud, about / about that deep you know (*holds hand up 2 feet*)…
Yeah, I used to get tickled at her, she had big boobies (*Hannah and Harley both laugh*)
so when she'd get them down in there and ever it was just all over.
(*Both laugh, he mocks rubbing dirt all over his chest*)
She'd come out a there. / She'd get down you know, you're tryin your best to stay out of it, but she get them ends down in there and stand up this right here'd be all black and muddy.
(*both laugh*)
Yeah oh, / but she / she uh / now like I said she [liked] to work…Her name was Pam.

Annissa/Pam: Well, for one thing / that they, if you go in there as a woman and they see you're

gonna do your job, and not lay / around expectin the man to, / most of em will respect ye. / And of course there's the sexual issue, you know.
Uh, you know, they're gonna try ye out see what / how far they [could go]…
Oh they'd just make little suggestions some of em but / you put em in their place right fast.

(Susanna plays a melancholy version of "Cat's Theme" as lights dim during this transition. Hannah and Cristina move a box downstage center, elizabeth and Annissa move a chair for "Jimmy" to sit at the desk. As lights come up and the scene starts, Cristina pulls a photo of Cat out of Jimmy's memory box.)

Shannon/Jimmy: Yeah that's a picture of [my mother]. / [Her name was Cat Counts, people called her Cat].

(*Photo of Cat Counts outside the mines appears on upstage right screen behind "Jimmy.")*

Hannah: She looks like Marilyn Monroe, she is gorgeous.

Shannon/Jimmy: Yeah, / yeah they / they had compared her to
Marilyn Monroe back, in her younger days. / She uh…she was like her own person…
But still women at that, at that time women didn't get the respect / you know from men that they should have…Back in [the 1950's and 60's] / that they was, uh
considered, homebodies, you know that's where women…She had a place and and the place was, you know, you waited on him hand and foot…[My dad died when I was young, but mom,] / like most of her, her husbands that she went through
they all understood, that she was strong willed, you know, they understood that
they knowed that, that uh / they really didn't have no control over her she, she did what she wanted to do and said what she wanted to say. (*Hannah laughs*)…She was just outspoken, you know. / And really and that, I believe that was what everbody liked about her…I thought that she was probably, uh
she was like a mother and a father to me which she was you know.
And uh / I didn't think they was any man that, that she probably couldn't a whipped
cause that was my impression of her, I thought she was that tough…Uh, [she started mining when] she was almost 50, she was right at 50 or something before she went in …

(*Photo of Cat Counts in mining attire appears on upstage left screen behind "Jimmy.)*

She was on social security for a while / for us kids, cause, cause she raised us.
And then when I, when I turned 18 / is when she went because of, you know social security
was over for us, unless I went to school, like I went to school and she could have gone on for me. / But I didn't go on to college I just went straight into the mines

Hannah: You basically went in at the same time

Shannon/Jimmy: Right. / Uh / they was probably, my, my mother was one of the first [women] / to go in . / And / they wasn't but about 3 or 4 at that time…
There was very few could, that would, that could take it. / A lot of em couldn't handle
the pressure of the men…If you didn't / like, go along with the men? / If you, if you bucked up against the system? / What they called the system, you know how men think, everthing's supposed to be. / So, if you uh / didn't go along? / Then / they would find some way to get rid of ye.

(*Annissa steps into spotlight upstage right.)*

Annissa/Pam: Well (*laughs*) / I just told em that I was in there for one thing and one thing only that was to make a livin like they was and / you know / that was it. / And they'd better just / *whatever*. / And most of em backed off and they / respected ye…
I mean, you had one or two that'd try / you know ever now and then'd say something or

maybe reach out and grab ye or something and I turned around and hit one boy one night with my fist.

Hannah: Good for you! (*laughs*)

Annissa/Pam: And I did buddy, I (*laughs*)…Well I figured I'd get fired if I hit him through the face. / And, you know, and uh, / but it was just flew all over and then it happened so fast I mean I hit him buddy I drawed back and I hit him on the shoulder and then I revved up again and I *hit him again.* (*both laugh*)

ALL/Cellist/Hannah: Good for you! (*both laugh*) …

Annissa/Pam: But, like I say, some of em you just got to put in their place and most of em respected ye / [as a miner, not really as a woman or a lady, but as a miner]

(Susanna plays rumba version of "Cat's Theme," holding the last note for a long while and fading it out slowly—this music underscores "Hannah" words:)

Hannah: So who was Cat? This hyper-feminine body, Marilyn Monroe, refusing the gendered norms of male-owned mining space and creating her own form of horseplay out of men's sexual harassment and unwanted advances—she lived in a liminal zone between being both father and mother, miner and woman, dancing back and forth over this border. An excessive, slippery body, "normal" names and codes would not stick.

Shannon/Jimmy: But they woke me up, they come to my door, a friend a mine did
and uh, knocked on my door and woke me up it was kinda late at night and she worked night shift. / And come to the door and he said uh, / "There's been an explosion at the mines." / And I only lived like two miles from where the mine was at.
And the first thing I did was I looked uh— / well no she worked the evening shift and she got off at about 11 o'clock…I looked at the clock and I said,
I said, "Well mom's probably done out by now," / I said, "Ye know, it's already over," and he said, "No it happened earlier." *(This said fast and together—the hope is simultaneous with its rebuttal)*
And then when he said that I said, "Oh Lord." / And uh / so I got ready and we all went down there. / And they didn't tell us nothing we sat there all night.
And / it was way up into the next day / before they finally told us / you know / that there wasn't none of em survived.

(Annissa and elizabeth move to the pile of coal/rock rubble at the base of the screens and begin to dig up the remains of Cat—a red heeled shoe, a black slip, a thermos, eventually taking off their red scarves. They bring each object slowly up to Jimmy and put them in his memory box or on the desk in front of him. Jimmy keeps his gaze up, not looking at the box or the objects as he narrates.)

Hannah: And you stayed up all night anxious.

Shannon/Jimmy: Yeah. / Yeah. / And they knowed, they knowed from the first
you know. / They just kept sayin it was too hot to get in there before they could, tell but they already knew…It was the next day they finally got in / because it was still hot in there you know the gas / they's afraid a settin the gas back off cause a the / the fire had actually burnt itself out…What had happened either the curtain, was down
Or the braddish was out, and they hadn't kept the braddish up or something
And [that gas] had come around and come back into the neutral area. / And then the foreman was a comin up on a Jeep, and, that's on the rails? / So, / you get a lot a sparks

Hannah: From the rail

Shannon/Jimmy: From that, and / the gas had accumulated, on the / on the track itself. And as he come up he set it off. / And once it set it off that followed, the the gas, where it was comin in it followed it and come back around… You know, everbody that was workin up/ around the face and it killed the The boss too…But that's what, that's what set it off And they had a bunch of violations but none of em / you know / they couldn't account that they was what caused / you know / caused it, but / who knows / you know, what was hid or covered up or whatever. / Because they was a big / law suit was filed and they had six or 7 big lawyers from way up in Washington DC that was / you know, fightin against it. / But nothing ever come of it. / Some, something, something happened somewhere along the line to where they uh / uh, they said they wasn't no responsibility ever responsibility wasn't, through the company? / Of what happened that it was just something that / you know could a happened / anyway and / and it wasn't nobody's fault.

(Annissa and elizabeth repack the patch of coal rubble, as if mounding dirt on top of a grave.)

Hannah: What did you think?

Shannon/Jimmy: I think they was responsible, I mean, you know, because of the that's something, you know they had violations there was a lot a violations that was you know / that was written up? / Through the inspectors. / But still yet / you can't the big companies like at, you, you can't fight. / They've got more money than anybody else there, you're, you're not gonna beat a big company that's got money. / You know. Even though you got lawyers / they find a way of getting around. / So they've pretty well got Away / you know, with nothing / you know, I mean payin nothing now which, they should a been a lot more done / than what they was.

Remains: Mementos, Ghost Towns

(Susanna plays melancholy version of "Cat's Theme," blending into "Gaea's Lament" in its original rhythm, holding the last notes. Meanwhile, Annissa and elizabeth move the table/box, Shannon moves chair. Hannah enters.)

Hannah: The remains of a life—black and white pictures of Cat's gravesite, taken with cat's own camera and unexposed film, her death certificate, newspaper articles from the New York Times—stories packed into objects charged with narrative power and energy. Jimmy gave me the scrapbook for a while so I could have time to look through it. Her pictures haunted me. Over the summer there were other objects: a carbide lamp that belonged to Donald's grandfather, who passed it on to his uncle, who then passed it to Donald. Donald's mining hat with the coal etched into its scored top. Eddie brought me one of his 5 boxes of mining stickers that were keepsake collectables, objects that he and other miners traded when they worked in the mines.

(Miners bring these objects to the researcher, sometimes handing them from one to the other in stylized motions to pass objects through the generations. The researcher holds these things in her hands, they spill over, she handles each carefully, but they all seem to overpower her. When she cannot take any more, miners fill the table in front of her with the remaining objects.)

Hannah: These precious keepsakes amassed in my hands, each one charged with the order to *tell*, to *remember*, to never forget, even as the fragile tin rim of Donald's carbide lamp threatened to cave in under my touch. *Lights focus on these objects as others dim*. These gaps between the past and the present, the loss Jimmy felt over his mother, the stubborn resistance of Cat's image to the cracks in the photograph edges, mirrored the images Earl created through his stories when we went to his

hometown. We drove down what was once the main street of St. Charles, and he filled in the gaps of the landscape with his words…

(Picture of St. Charles now shows on screen behind them, and words fill in the landscape—E and A mark outline from coal dust from a bin.)

H/Earl: Where that town / was a boom town, as you can call it / I, as, as coal mining started to thrive / in thE 30's…And one time / they had twenty-two / that's the most I could remember / taxi cabs. / They was even a bus / that they ran / up and down / the holler…But they were / just crowded with homes. / And then / like I said these uh these coal camp areas, or the town / Saint Charles was / approximately at yer farthest point, three and a half miles / from *five major coal companies*…But [you] would say, "Good Lord New York's not got a thing on Saint Charles except the tall buildings" Really, it / I think, uh / when the coal mining started to / slip a little bit, / that was part of it, which happened in the / 50's, mid-50's. / But, I think / I think when it got real, real bad in our area / it wasn't up until, approximately in the mid-70's or somethin' like at. Most of those people there, that's all they'd ever done, only company that they'd ever worked for. / And when they's just like the old sayin, the rug was pulled out, / "We're closin' this down and we're a layin out we're goin to Colorodo—" / That devastated those people in Wise county, Lee county, even over in here [in Tennessee]I'm sure.

Hannah: What would you do when it closed? / Would people leave?

H/Earl: Part of em. / Part of em were fortunate enough, [they could stay]. / Not in the union mines, Paramount coal company hired part of em. / And two or three other / smaller outfits. / [Theys still a lot a miners, you just have to travel an hour to get to the mines that are still open].

Shannon/Jimmy: [A lot a mines that are hot mines, like where my mom worked, they had to shut that mine down, but] / they're talking about goin back in and opening it back up / and startin in. But they're gonna lease it under a different name, so

Hannah: Does that mean it won't be union?

Shannon/Jimmy: Uh, that's the reason they changed it to another name… see that's how they, got away from the union they just put it in a different name? Actually the same place owns it they put it in a different name and they come back so they're / they know the ways, around / around all the stuff. / Aah (*he sighs deeply*).

H/Earl: Some of em has come over here and gone to work [in Kingsport]. Some of em was fortunate enough that they'd made enough that they started some kind of a small business of their own. / Some of em just like I did when I got out a school. / They went north where they had relatives. [But new businesses won't come in here, with all the vandalism and burning.]

(*elizabeth, Annissa, Shannon take red paint and handprint down over the skyline created).*

I just don't understand it, there are good people here.]

Hannah: Residents of St. Charles live in between what is and what was—a liminal state of existence where neighbors who sell OxyContin for $100 a pill live incommensurably present with the ghosted memories of streets elbow-to-elbow with people who took pride in their town.

H/Earl: A lot of officials are turning their head or / or getting / getting a, big percent.

Dreams, Haggie

Hannah: Earl's wounds from mining are largely imperceptible, invisible—black lung and rock dust have "eaten up his lungs" and when he was recommended for a heart transplant he told his doctors that his body would reject it. He now faces coping with the present, living in a body that is "**still breathing in the mines**."

(Susanna underscores these stories with high breathy notes, abruptly stopping these notes as each miner "wakes up." Miners walk out from blue light and into isolated white spheres of light on the perimeter of the stage on their lines.)

elizabeth/Eddie: When I got hurt…I really got depressed and bothered and
And I mean I even got to the point Hannah to where I don't go to the union meetings I haven't been to the union meetings in years and years and years. / Because I didn't want to be around the guys that / put me / in memory of the job I loved so much you know what I'm sayin?
It bothered me so bad. / Because, I would go, to bed and have / nightmares if you would about the coal mines. / I would be in, in there runnin the miners and everything you know…I'd dream I was runnin that equipment…
[With the] little remote, you had a remote control and…And wake up and be disappointed.

Annissa/Papa: They dream about it. / You know, I've seen some guys off and on for 10 or 15 years And / I've started, always asking you know, "Do you still dream about geing a—", "Oh yeah! / Workin' at, workin' right in there, healthy…" A few years after I coultn't go to work I used to wake up / thinking I was late for work and…and then I'd wake up / and you'd um, / be at home you know.
Just like about now I know like when I was in Vietnam I'd / dream about bein home and you know be talking and right in my livin room I mean I could see everthing / coffee table and family in there, and then you wake up / and realize and, / gosh / yeah.

Shannon/Jimmy[E]: I've seen myself there with men that I've worked with just like that, a lot a times I was still runnin the boltin machine? / That's putting, roof bolts to the top there to support it / and everthing…Now I don't know why / but you always something happens you don't, completely / I don't feel get the dream out but you wake up or something and I said, now that was aweful strange.

H/Earl: I ran into / first time I seen / one a my old buddies / I ran into him in a doctors' office.
Uh / it's been less than a month ago. / And he was one a the older / miners?
And Hannah I'm telling you the truth I would have rather, have sat / and talked—
his name is Haggie Barnette— / and I would have rather sat right there just like you and I and talked to him. Not that I didn't need to see the *doctor*? / or need medication or anything?
But that time right there was precious to me. / Because I had not seen that man in 11 years.
And when I sat and looked at him / I said, "There was one a the older coal miners that took me under his wing, / that," I said, "and I learned a lot a things from."
And I said, "You set and you look at him now / and," I said uh, / "he's not the same, ner everthing," because he had aged / quite a bit, he was crippled up. / Not like me, braces on his legs. / And, that's when ye / it's special time but that's when ye heart bleeds too. / And uh, / I just got to thinking that, / that man, I said, "How *could* a *coal miner* / have affected me," and it's not just me, / in the manner that they have Hannah. / It's like I told ye, I might be prejudiced, but to me, they're special.
They're so special.

Endings, Openings

Annissa/Mike: Have you learned anything?

Hannah: I've learned a lot. / It's hard work.

H/Mike: Yeah most people don't think it is.

Hannah: Mm hmm, it is, it is.

Shannon/Mike: Ain't too warm either.

Hannah: And important too. / I'm hopin that's, what / writing this project will, show other people.

Annissa/Mike: Nah. / Most people think just flippin a light switch is all it is. (*laughs*)

Shannon/Mike: Especially up around the cities and all of that

Hannah: What do you think of that attitude?

H/Mike: They call us rednecks and stupid don't they? / They ort to come down here. They think we're overpaid most a the time / "Yeah, coal miners are overpaid yeah."

elizabeth/Ichabod: I told [my son]…he ort a get [a different job] but he still wants to [work in the mines]. / Aah, whatever he wants to do, I'll help him if I can you know but it's just a rough way to make a livin.

Shannon/Ichabod: You know the conditions, dust and cold, water, / yeah. You can you can use ye head or you can use ye back. / We're usin our backs. Some kids use their heads. / You know.

Annissa/Ichabod: But that's just the way the world is. / I mean you'll be, somebody's gotta do it. If you don't these poor old people won't have no electricity! (*both laugh*) To run them computers to use their head wouldn't they! (*both laugh*) That's the way I look at it. / So really our job's pretty important.

(Susanna plays "Down in a Hole" through one chorus of solid notes while elizabeth ties the coal cord to "Hannah"'s power cord. Accompaniment continues until the final chorus. Annissa and Hannah go to vats and cover faces with blood-mud and coal-slush. Once the power and coal cords are tied, "Hannah" begins to trace the power cord, wrapped around the audience's seats, with her eyes—she picks up the cord and follows it out the door as they sing the final chorus.)

Shannon (*singing*): There's something good / In a worried song / For the trouble in your soul

Cristina (*singing*): Cause a worried man's / Been a long way down / Down in a deep dark hole

All sing: I'm down in a hole / Down in a hole / Down in a deep dark hole

All acapella: I'm down in a hole / Down in a hole / Down in a deep dark hole

(*Lights fade to black, then up with house lights for curtain call.)*

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