CHRONOTOPIC FIGURATIONS OF COAL MINING AT BLAIR MOUNTAIN

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASA: Appalachia Studies Association

CRMR: Coal River Mountain Rally

MTR: Mountaintop Removal
ABSTRACT

Blair Mountain, West Virginia, site of both the largest labor insurrection since the Civil War and, more recently, contested terrain for mountaintop removal mining, is an exemplar of Appalachia coal mining’s uniquely American tropes. In 1921, roughly 8,000 miners were held up at Blair as they marched south to Logan to protest labor conditions and petition for the right to unionize southern coalfields. Currently, citizens of Blair are fighting to protect the mountain from a coal extraction process commonly known as mountaintop removal mining (MTR). In 1921, striking miners, having returned from World War I, displayed an oft-told story about American labor strife and the struggle for unionization. Current activists engage in a less publicly understood environmental dispute with coal corporations and government officials over the risks associated with mining methods. While the present debate has shifted paradigmatically from that of the past (i.e., from a labor to an environmental dispute), the cultural and social milieu in Appalachia has not. For West Virginians invested in the future of Blair Mountain, its cultural and political histories have been “thrust back into remembrance” (Nida and Adkins 14). For opponents of MTR, Blair Mountain’s history is simultaneously present and dangerously close to extinction.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Blair Mountain, West Virginia, site of both the largest labor insurrection since the Civil War and, more recently, contested terrain for mountaintop removal mining, is an exemplar of Appalachia\(^1\) coal mining’s uniquely American tropes. In 1921, roughly 8,000 miners were held up at Blair as they marched south to Logan to protest labor conditions and petition for the right to unionize southern coalfields. Currently, citizens of Blair are fighting to protect the mountain from a coal extraction process commonly known as mountaintop removal mining (MTR). In 1921, striking miners, having returned from World War I, displayed an oft-told story about American labor strife and the struggle for unionization. In contrast, current activists engage in a less publicly understood environmental dispute with coal corporations and government officials over the risks associated with mining methods. While the present debate has shifted paradigmatically from that of the past (\textit{i.e.}, from a labor to an environmental dispute), the cultural and social milieu in Appalachia has not. For West Virginians invested in the future of Blair Mountain, the pathetic rhetoric of exploitation in the coalfields in the early 20\(^{th}\) century has been “thrust back into remembrance” (Nida and Adkins 14). For opponents of MTR, Blair Mountain’s history – be it factual or cultural – is simultaneously present and dangerously close to extinction.

This project isolates a collection of artifacts from both 1921 and today to explore the rhetorical foundations of discursive life in the American southern coalfields. Blair

\(^1\) Appalachia is treated in this study in terms of place – that is, the mountainous region in the eastern U.S. spanning from Alabama and Mississippi to southern New York. However, Appalachia may also represent the culture and history of the “Appalachians” (Evans) – individuals living in the many cities and locales throughout the mountains in Appalachia. Conflation is widespread in both academic and popular references to the area and its histories.
Mountain is one site in which we can see both historical narratives of confrontation and current debates about strip mining in the figurative language of public discourse. In particular, this paper highlights several speeches by Mother Jones in 1920 and 1921, the marching songs, “We’re gonna hang Don Chafin to a sour apple tree” and “Every little river,” and several speeches by Judy Bonds from 2007 to 2009. Debates about MTR hearken to Blair Mountain’s history and recall labor rhetorics from the turn of the twentieth century. Anti-MTR activists are currently lobbying for Blair Mountain to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, which would protect the site from future surface mining operations and provide the opportunity to receive archival research funding.

In order to explore the rhetorical functions of these artifacts, this project indicates metaphorical and tropological figurations in the texts to highlight the assertions and values they espouse. Of Burke’s four master tropes, metaphor is perspectival: it “brings out the thisness of a that, or the thatness of a this” (421). In this way, metaphor redefines lived experience. Metaphors operate in particular ways across time for texts at Blair; light-dark metaphors (Osborn) and familial metaphors (Adams) are two of the most commonly used. This paper attempts to show connections between tropological figurations used in 1921 and those used today in order to portray the historical complexities underpinning current struggles.

Of course, both the miners’ march in 1921 and current debate about MTR are distinct moments in time separated by nearly a century of historical and technological change. However, many see present strife as unambiguously tied to the past. Perhaps such looking back is indicative of nostalgia for a bygone era, or maybe the “battleground”
serves as a useful rhetorical agent for publicizing MTR. Whatever the case, current discourse at, and about, Blair emphasizes its labor history. The two moments interact spatially and temporally, or as Bakhtin indicates, “chronotopically,” which for him defines space-time relationships of continuity and change within novelistic discourse. In this way, narratives told about Blair Mountain (e.g., Nida and Adkins) broadly conflate the complexity of the site’s historical agonism such that time seems to stand still. Thus, this paper attempts to show how emergent folk tropes are characterized by chronotopic understandings of environment and place at Blair Mountain.

First, I explain the project’s import for rhetoric and discuss the need for scholarly work about Blair Mountain and MTR. I ground several commonly held historical generalizations about coal camps and indicate issues associated with MTR. I argue that rhetorical study is well-suited to engage in and learn from the cultural history of coal mining.

RATIONALE

Few scholars have dealt with the interaction between the bituminous coal industry and folk life from a cultural communication perspective. However, there is a breadth of work on the diversity of issues this paper presents [e.g., protest rhetoric and social movement theory (Browne), rhetoric of song (Branham and Hartnett), coal laborlore (Korson), and MTR (Shnayerson)]. The United States has depended on coal since before the first major mining operations beginning in 1840, and its dependency raises concerns today as the country pushes toward more environmentally friendly and renewable resources. The current climate regarding MTR is fraught with uncertainty about the
future of Appalachian jobs and communities. In other words, conflicts at Blair Mountain provide the rhetorical critic examples of exigencies, or “imperfections marked by urgency” (Bitzer 6). The ways in which Blair Mountain and surrounding communities have faced and continue to face such situational exigencies invite investigation.

Coal camps in bituminous and anthracite regions throughout the United States at the turn of the century shared many characteristics [e.g., “isolation, squalor, substandard housing, primitive sanitation, and an impoverished population” (Korson 30)]. Coal companies operated camp stores, schools, housing, and utilities, and enforced rules and regulations about individual travel and community activity. Miners worked long hours and earned scrip, or camp money, based on the amount of coal they extracted and hours they worked. Miners were goaded into signing yellow-dog contracts, stipulating “no tolerance” policies regarding union activity. Coal companies generally perceived unions as bad for business, and discouraged unionization at all costs. In Appalachia, miners were generally first- or second-generation immigrants from England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, as well as mountaineers, or farmers, who sought employment in increasing numbers during World War I. Before and after the war, coal companies radically transformed Appalachian topography with mining operations throughout Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Virginia.

Unionization was discouraged by corporations, and miners struggled for decades to garner grassroots support. In fact, it was not until 1932 and 1933, with the signing of the Norris-LaGuardia Act and the National Industrial Recovery Act, that the southern Appalachian coalfields gained federal union rights. For mining communities throughout the U.S., the fight for unionization is a shared exigence, made obvious by the wealth of
localized rhetoric chronicling the need for organization. Through song, speech, and protest, mining communities voiced their needs eloquently and, at times, violently. Moreover, the diasporic nature of coal towns imbued the rhetoric of coal with a diversity of intonations and parochialisms.

Not only did miners speak out for unionization, they recounted mining conditions and disasters. Mary Harris “Mother” Jones, the “miner’s angel” and a figurehead for union activity in labor struggles nationwide, publicly narrated disputes and disasters at mines as impetus for increased national attention on coal towns. Moreover, ballads and songs were composed to retain an oral history and give visibility to coal mining conditions. Nineteenth-century songs such as “He’s Only a Miner Killed in the Ground” speak to tragedies in the mines, while songs like “The Yablonski Murder” and “The Ludlow Massacre” recall bloody disputes common to strikes and protests. Marching songs, appropriating Civil War song melodies and functionally similar to Civil Rights protest songs, fueled miners’ grassroots activism, dissolving individuals’ fears and uniting them around shared grievances. In the time predating radio, television, and the internet, song and anecdote were a practical form of “visibility,” vessels for broadcasting labor issues nationally (Green 76).

Currently, debates about mountaintop removal and surface mining reprise themes similar to some of the issues already addressed. Companies in the U.S. continue underground mining practices that are often unsafe due to disasters and air quality (e.g., the Upper Big Branch explosion killing 29 miners in 2009), which endanger miners and mining communities just as they did more than a century ago. MTR, a process by which workers set explosives to the top 500 feet of mountains and sift out bituminous coal, has
divided communities. Individuals and companies in communities near MTR sites disagree about issues such as job creation, water quality, air pollution, the future of natural biodiversity, as well as unionization and mineral rights. Environmentalists and archaeologists are concerned especially about the devastating effects of coal slurries, which are man-made basins of liquid runoff from washed coal near MTR sites, and the resulting water contamination. Local residents near MTR sites discuss the prevalence of ash and dust. Because of documents like the broad-form deed, which stipulates that individuals do not own the rights to minerals on their private lands, many have sold their homes or moved for the production of new mining operations.

Activists have emerged to voice dissent regarding these issues. In particular, Judy Bonds has been a formidable public figure in voicing concerns about the destructive practice of MTR. Organization like the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition and Appalachia Rising are examples of groups working to stop MTR practices in the Appalachian Mountains. Meanwhile, artistic enterprises like the film Coal Country (2009), which depicts grassroots activism to stop MTR, and Coal River (2008), a non-fiction account of MTR at Coal River Valley, have received widespread attention. In September 2010, Appalachia Rising, in collaboration with the Beehive Collective and others, held a civil disobedience protest in Washington, D.C., where over 100 people were arrested.

The rhetorical functions of speech, song, and localized protest in the MTR debate have gained attention in the past few years, but division in West Virginian coal mining communities is not new. Themes concerning disadvantaged workers, poor living conditions, and disputes between local communities and multinational corporations have
riddled the coalfields for over a century. In this way, the rhetoric of coal is rich and nuanced, and displays historical and cultural complexity worthy of serious investigation.

Next, I establish a working history of conflict at Blair in the 1920s and now. I set up that history by extending a rationale for this project’s artifacts. I explore the nature of protest in terms of public address and song.

LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Trope and Metaphor

This project theorizes both trope and the chronotope as essential to cultural expression at Blair. While these theoretical underpinnings are simultaneously significant, they are not mutually exclusive. More specifically, I observe autobiographical and folkloric chronotopes in emergent tropes from cultural artifacts authored at Blair both in 1921 and today. Both trope and the chronotope have extant applications in communication scholarship. I begin with trope, accentuating its foundations in human symbolic action.

Trope naturally occurs in language at the same time that we craft tropes for the creation of new meanings. Burke’s “Four Master Tropes” emphasizes metaphor as foundational to derivative tropic forms, such as synecdoche, metonymy, and irony. Metaphor is the association of one idea with another, an artistic collision that is at once both inductively and deductively reasoned. Aune’s reading of Burke through Harold Bloom situates more clearly linguistic impetus for the use of metaphor. Reading Bloom, Aune makes a case for a feeling of “belatedness” as a precursor to the rhetorical-metaphorical act. He asserts that rhetors wrestle with the stifling feeling that everything
has already been said and in response they attempt to say something new. Of course, metaphor also has roots in literature, in the composition and analysis of poetic language.

Beardsley, a literary theorist, positions metaphor on level with device, while keeping in mind both its production and reception. He explains that metaphor invokes a linguistic phenomenon *vis-a-vis* the collision of two ideas that simultaneously clarify and obscure each other. In this way, he says, metaphor “transforms a *property* (actual or attributed) into a *sense*” (Beardsley 302). Yet, how the metaphor functions stylistically is not enough for Fritch and Leeper, who question Burkean tropology for its capacity to adequately assess “metaphorical claims of truth” (190). The authors presuppose that some metaphors may, in fact, be incorrect. They assert that metaphors are epistemological as much as aesthetic, and therefore can be understood collectively as “an argumentative form” (Fritch and Leeper 191). This claim bridges metaphoric criticism to rhetoric, which itself has a breadth of theory regarding trope.

Rhetoric deals with metaphor epistemologically and stylistically, often in terms of “archetypal” and “root” metaphors. Osborn’s piece on archetypal metaphors, in particular, is the basis for many metaphoric analyses in the field. Osborn asserts the potential for universal tropes, for instance light-dark metaphors and cyclic nature metaphors. Whether they are universalizing agents in discourse, metaphors, for Osborn, reframe language in ways that accentuate shared human experience and speak to values about deliberative decision-making. He asserts that the metaphoric combination induces conversion toward deliberative rhetoric through its “controversial assertions concerning the inevitability of a particular process with a general, unquestionably determined cycle of nature” (Osborn 119). Many scholars have relied on archetypal frameworks for their
scholarship; in fact, several authors conceptualize other archetypes in symbolic action than those seen in Osborn’s work. For instance, Adams investigates notions of family, or the “familial image,” implicit in symbolic action. Family, according to Adams, is universally comprehended. He asserts, “to be related in family is the archetypal emphasis of humanity” (Adams 56). Moreover, Adams emphasizes that archetypes bond auditors in collectivities and familiarize them to “meet political exigencies” (Adams 60). Rice, on the other hand, explains distinctly American archetypal metaphors circa the Revolutionary period. Artifacts such as the Federalist Papers, exemplify for him the emergence of human relations to nature and governmental caretaking as archetypes threaded throughout early American rhetoric. Metaphors need not, however, be aimed toward universals for them to effectively familiarize their audience and instruct about policy. They can also be acknowledged systems inherent to particulars and to place, ideologies characteristic of nations or regions.

Farrell and Goodnight make a strong case for the particulars of “root metaphors.” In their piece on “accidental rhetoric,” the authors illustrate the implicit functioning of root metaphors at Three Mile Island in the early 1980s. They explore the ways in which metaphors underscore modes of public address and decisions about policy-making in the context of crises. Rather than proffer their findings as archetypal or universal, the authors establish emergent metaphors as rooted in ideological and economic systems (e.g., energy, ecology, and industry). In this way, they illustrate how root metaphors explain particular arguments’ perceived (in)effectiveness.

I assert that both archetypal and root metaphors emerge in rhetorical and cultural artifacts at Blair Mountain. Light-dark, cyclic nature, industrial and familial metaphors
occur in the symbolic actions in both 1921 and today. Next, I discuss the chronotope as essential to Blair Mountain’s rhetorical exigence.

The Chronotope

The chronotope functions specifically in cultural artifacts’ figurations of coal life at Blair. More broadly, the chronotope asserts the nature of these artifacts’ existence; that is, that place, in part, orients simultaneous timeless and time-bound figurations. Two scholars working at Blair Mountain put it this way: “The impact of MTR on Appalachian life and culture is one of the most important aspects of the MTR issue. There is a strong tie of Appalachian people to the land – the mountains are the backbone of our culture” (Nida and Adkins 13). I read this sentiment as a foreboding call to protect the future of the mountains because their “destruction” implies the loss of indigenous Appalachian cultural expression. In this way, Bakhtin’s chronotope helps clarify the continuity and singularity of time-place relations at Blair.

With the term “chronotope,” literally time-space, Bakhtin defines a quality essential to novelistic form and style. Simply, the chronotope is a term for the “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (Bakhtin 84). Bakhtin shows how the chronotope operates in different genres of narrative, relying heavily on Greek drama as a foundation for narrative ever since. In those early works, he says, “time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history” (Bakhtin 84). He conceptualizes the chronotope in reference to Einstein’s theory of relativity. Brandao emphasizes the importance of a mere metaphor
connection between the two authors’ terms because both seek to challenge the human
determination of knowledge by subverting factual notions of history. Therefore, the
chronotope highlights a special relationship between time and space, a relationship that
changes depending on literary genre.

Scholars have shown that the chronotope is a useful theoretical tool for literary
analysis (e.g., Bratton; Magistrale and Dickerson; Mutnick). In particular, Bratton
applies the chronotope to Jeanette Winsterson’s work, emphasizing Bakhtin’s concept of
the hero. Similarly, Magistrale and Dickerson focus on the literary chronotope in The
Great Gatsby, arguing that the book employs unique suspense conventions articulated
through symbolic gestures and clocks. They show, also, how the interplay between time
and space in the novel evokes “real time historical consciousnesses” (Magistrale and
Dickerson 125). Not only is the chronotope useful for analysis, according to Mutnick, it
also serves a pedagogical function for composition studies. Looking at students’ work,
Mutnick raises seeing outside one’s lived experience as imperative to polyphonic writing
and chronotopic thinking (i.e., broadened understanding of history in relation to space
and time). However, the chronotope also has proved useful outside literary-bound
analysis.

In particular, scholars have theorized the chronotope’s emergence in folklore and
argument (e.g., Kinser; Jack; Dent; Hoy; Ingemark; Cloran). Kinser, for instance,
couples a biographical sketch of Bakhtin’s life with his works, highlighting oral folkloric
cultural expression as foundational to Bakhtin’s theories about doubled-voicedness and
dialogism. In so doing, Kinser argues for the functioning of Bakhtinian theory in
autographed literature as well as in oral artistic discourse. Hoy, specifically, describes
how the chronotope functions within other categories of novelistic discourse, arguing that even “musical lyrics or advertisement logos, to Bakhtin represent important forms of novelization” (766). Novelization, in this sense, refers to a broader theory of voice and dialogue central to Bakhtinian thought. Thus, it is clear to scholars that the chronotope has import for artifacts outside the purview of literature.

For example, Jack relates the chronotope to corporate argumentation in the field of genetic engineering, emphasizing dominant time-place relationships proffered as implicit evidence for policy-making. She opines that rhetorical texts value certain time-place relations over others, and moreover, she questions the potential for presupposed connections between types of chronotope and genres of rhetoric (i.e., forensic, deliberative, and epideictic), offering no distinct conclusions. Dealing more with the artistic, Dent and Ingemark respectively link the folkloric chronotope to real time oral folklore. Dent observes Brazilian musical duets, describing how figurations like “brotherhood” and “country” interact in performance such that cultural values emerge about an idealized past “to criticize a degraded present” (458). Ingemark looks to “narratives of enchantment” in Finland as suggestive of human being’s connectedness to the cycles of nature. These authors’ chronotopic analyses recall archetypal figurations. Especially for Dent and Ingemark, trope emerges in relation to artistic co-ordinates of the chronotope. Therefore, this project looks specifically to Bakhtin’s autobiographical and folkloric chronotopes as foundational to figurations of coal mining at Blair Mountain.

In defining the autobiographical chronotope, Bakhtin looks to Greek memoir and public address, emphasizing their insistence on personal history and anecdote within civic rhetorical acts. Bakhtin explains that most important to the autobiographical chronotope
is not necessarily the writer’s “internal chronotope (i.e., the time-space of their represented life),” but rather, “that exterior real-life chronotope in which the representation of one’s own or someone else’s life is realized either as verbal praise of a civic-political act or as an account of the self” (131). In this sense, representations of life, perhaps in the form of representative anecdotes perform two tasks for the rhetor: they allow for identification with auditors and establish idealized conceptions of character and civic act. Such idealization of the past grounds the autobiographical chronotope. Bakhtin asserts, “A thing that could and in fact must only be realized exclusively in the future is here portrayed as something out of the past, a thing that is in no sense part of the past’s reality, but a thing that is in its essence a purpose, an obligation” (147). Applied to Blair, public address and song suggest autobiographical time-space relations which idealize a bucolic past.

Folkloric constructions of time and place also inhere in figurations of coal mining at Blair. Because coal mining remains a rare form of manual labor, mining communities have a unique relationship with the land. This relationship, in essence, displays Bakhtin’s folkloric chronotope:

Time here [within the folkloric chronotope] is sunk deeply in the earth, implanted in it and ripening in it. Time in its course binds together the earth and the laboring hands of man; man creates this course, perceives it, smells it (the changing odors of growth and ripening), sees it. Such time is fleshed-out, irreversible within the limits of the cycle, realistic. (Bakhtin 208)
Autobiographical and folkloric chronotopes emerge in figurations of coal-mining at Blair Mountain. Through cultural artifacts produced in 1921 and today, the mountain displays a time-space unto itself, a timeless and yet time-bound metaphoric struggle with coal wrested from its hilltops and from within. Next, I outline the narrative of Blair Mountain, through which I highlight significant speech, song, civic protest, and other cultural artifacts.

LITERATURE REVIEW: CULTURAL ARTIFACTS

Speeches of Mother Jones

The march on Logan, West Virginia by roughly 8,000 striking miners in 1921 represents the largest labor insurrection on American soil since the Civil War (Blizzard; Savage; Shogan). Not until Warren Harding issued orders for 6,000 U.S. troops under martial law to disband the miners did the ten-day march come to a halt. The miners, who were themselves recently returned from World War I, would not fight their countrymen still serving in the military and therefore, in response to the arrival of troops and plane attacks, stopped their resistance. The march proved largely inconsequential for gaining union rights in the southern coalfields, but miners held that its purpose was well-served. They argued that not only did the strike foster visibility about an exploited labor force, but it displayed the miners’ disruptive, collective capacity to voice dissent.

The march was reactionary. Sid Hatfield, who had battled Baldwin-Felts detectives at the Matewan Massacre in 1920, was murdered on the county courthouse steps in Welch, West Virginia. Three men, C. Lively, Bill Salter, and Buster Pence were the culprits; they shot and killed Hatfield unexpectedly prior to his court hearing on 1
August 1921. In response, thousands of armed miners clad in overalls and red bandanas planned a grassroots march to Mingo County. Trainloads of workers from mining towns streamed into Charleston and Lens Creek, where they set up camp. Charleston journalists reported developments as many towns awaited news of the miners’ plans. Mother Jones, keeping an eye on disputes in the southern coalfields, traveled to Lens Creek to bolster the miners’ efforts. However, prior to their full-fledged march on Mingo, Jones changed her mind about the necessity of the march, foreseeing an inevitable loss for the miners, and publicly read a letter she had fabricated from President Harding requesting the miners disband immediately. After two grassroots leaders, C. F. Keeney and Fred Mooney, realized the falsity of the letter and confronted Jones, she left West Virginia. The event marked Jones’ last public engagement in West Virginia (Savage).

Lon Savage’s retelling of events leading up to the battle at Blair Mountain is perhaps the most widely read of the three book-length pieces about Blair (i.e., Savage’s Thunder in the Mountains; Robert Shogan’s The Battle at Blair Mountain; and Bill Blizzard’s When Miners March). His archival work is extensive, but like Shogan, Savage bemoans the lack of writing about the battle and questions why his book is one of the first extended pieces chronicling the struggle. Blizzard penned When Miners March in the 1940s, but the book was not published until 2010. Wess Harris, who produced the book, argues it offers the most honest and unbiased account of the battle, especially for accentuating the grassroots activism central to the struggle at the time. Shogan and Savage speculate that Blizzard was a makeshift general for the marching miners in 1921; When Miners March verifies this fact.
Though history overflows with revolutionary and confrontational acts, scholars often underemphasize the rhetorical struggle implicit in violent or enacted dissent. Confrontation, as Scott and Smith point out, often results because of unresolved misunderstanding or hegemonic influence. Sometimes, civil disobedience or violence marks a last resort for dissent. However, they suggest that, “through [confrontation] the radical acts out his drama of self-assertion and writes in smeary, wordless language all over the establishment, ‘we know you for what you are. And you know that we know’” (Scott and Smith 31).

The miners’ strike turned violent along their route to Logan. Skirmishes arose between roaming Baldwin-Felts detectives and packs of miners who were perched above roads. Miners used code phrases like “I come creepin’” and “On to Mingo” to acknowledge each other, calling their collective resistance the “redneck army,” an early iteration of the term “redneck” in American parlance. Korson discusses the violent inclinations of coal camp life, such as public fights between neighboring towns; however, the violence at Blair exemplifies an embittered workforce who took up arms as a bold statement to mining corporations and policy-makers. The strike signified a sincere push for unionization, which meant the opportunity for pay raises, safer working conditions, heightened educational standards, and improved housing, among other developments. Korson explains, “there was balm in the thought that the union was like heaven. The union loomed as tomorrow’s compensation for today’s suffering; a reward for faith in the ultimate triumph of right over operators’ might” (286). Unionization surfaced in many domains of coal life [e.g., in local union meetings, “the coal-region version of the traditional New England town meeting” (Korson 44)], in the Miner’s Journal, and at
UMWA conventions. Korson suggests that the UMWA conventions served cross-cultural purposes for attendants, who shared local ballads, stories, and recipes during meetings in midwestern and southern cities. The conventions commonly featured public addresses from the UMWA president, local figures, and labor organizers, such as Mother Jones.

Mother Jones was a key figure in mobilizing mining communities to fight for unionization. Tonn and Kuhn write that Jones captivated audiences with stories and highlight her use of a speech device, the relational act of “co-constructed oratory.” The result was an interactive audience format coupled with avant-garde performances and displays, where Jones “fashioned props, used visual aids, and orchestrated dramatic stunts for rhetorical effect” (Tonn 2). Her “motherly” persona, moreover, grounded her effectiveness: “costumed always in matronly black silk and white lace . . . She called miners her ‘children,’ her ‘boys’” (Tonn 2). This motherly image clearly evokes familial tropes discussed earlier.

Jones sought to unionize the southern coalfields, especially in West Virginia. She corresponded with Governor Morgan in Charleston throughout West Virginia’s bloodiest labor struggles and spoke to West Virginia’s miners frequently. She never made mention of her association with the battle at Blair in an address, but spoke to the issues in West Virginia at conventions before and after the march. Moreover, there is a record of her fabricating a letter from Harding requesting the miners disband. Three speeches in particular exemplify Jones’ stylistics as well as her aims for West Virginia. Two speeches at public meetings in Williams and Princeton, West Virginia in 1920 give insight into struggles at Blair leading up to the march on Logan. One speech at the
United Mine Workers Convention in September 1921 displays Jones’ continued interest in the aftermath of the insurrection at Blair Mountain.

The autobiographical chronotope functions significantly in these speeches, especially because within them, Jones’ anecdotal style is central to her deliberative rhetorical approach to mobilization. Moreover, I look to Black’s “exhortation” as instructive about Jones’ pathetic appeals and anecdotes. Black conceptualizes exhortative discourse in lieu of exhausted neo-Aristotelian processes of composition and analysis. Building on Festinger’s “cognitive dissonance,” Black’s exhortation refers to auditors’ acceptance of deliberative addresses because of the auditors’ needs to adjust personal attitudes to their emotional identification with rhetorical imagery already in place. Put simply, within exhortative speech settings, “emotion can be said to produce the belief, instead of the reverse” (Black 138).

Jones’ public addresses to miners in West Virginia are significant for developing a construction of folk tropes at Blair Mountain. Her speeches exemplify the role of anecdote and the autobiographical chronotope in coal mining’s cultural expressions. Next, I highlight the rhetorical functions of song at Blair Mountain.

Blair Mountain Marching Song

Ballads, mountain string music, and marching songs were popular formats for artistic expression in bituminous coal camps in the early 20th century. Balladeers and troubadours of Scottish and Irish descent entertained mining families in idle seasons, and miners sang during breaks in work, convening around a fiddle player or joining in unison on familiar tunes. This musical tradition is the foundation for Appalachian music
produced today. At the battle of Blair, music played an important role in mobilizing individuals and solidifying group identity.

George Korson transposed hundreds of coal mining folksongs through ethnographic research in bituminous regions throughout the U.S. Resisting the push from ethnomusicologists to record the indigenous folk music he encountered, Korson eventually compiled two albums from both bituminous and anthracite regions, which are now archived in Smithsonian Folkways. Archie Green, author of Only a Miner, a history of coal song recordings and in particular an appropriated history of the song “He’s Only a Miner Killed in the Ground,” attributes the breadth of coal-mining’s cultural history to Korson. Had Korson not traveled and lived in numerous secluded coal camps, Green argues, much of what we know about coal mining’s cultural history would not exist.

Korson explains that musical exchange was condoned by operators because it kept employees contented. Oftentimes coal companies subsidized performances and promoted well-established musicians. Countless ballads were appropriated and first crafted in bituminous coal fields. According to Korson, however, the most stirring musical expressions were marching songs. Processions of mining families sang marching tunes such as “John Brown’s Body,” “Dixie,” and “Battle Cry of Freedom,” up and down mountain roads in attempts to convert miners to strikes and protests. Regarding these appropriated songs, Korson elucidates that even though “the airs were not original, the texts were, and their contagious spirit swept many a wavering worker from the sidelines into the union ranks” (287).

Jack Wright’s Music of Coal is a more recent compilation of 48 coal songs that capture the diverse themes central to coal mining for over a century (e.g., unionization,
disaster, strike, revelry, disease, etc). “Redneck War” by Ron Short, which recounts the battle at Blair Mountain, appears on Wright’s compilation. Also on Music of Coal is “West Virginia Mine Disaster,” a mining ballad written in 1980 about a flood in the No. 8 mine at Hominy Falls, WV, which was sung at Appalachia Rising’s protest at the White House in September 2010. Coal song is prevalent in contemporary anti-MTR protests and several records have been produced to publicize the issue (e.g., Still Moving Mountains).

In 1921, miners sang two marching songs, “We’re gonna hang Don Chafin to a sour apple tree” and “Every little river” to the tune of “John Brown’s Body,” melodically the same as the song, “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” as well as the IWW anthem, “Solidarity Forever.” The songs’ lyrics can be found in Robert Shogan’s The Battle of Blair Mountain. The songs reflect the violence of the dispute and the desire for vengeance felt toward Sheriff Don Chafin, leader of the infamous Baldwin-Felts detectives. As marching songs, they illustrate the rhetoric necessary for mobilizing the thousands of miners present.

Branham and Hartnett argue that song has specific functions for establishing and debating identity. In particular, they show how social and political actors collectively adapt a sense of nationalism through national anthems. Appropriation, they argue, is a key rhetorical device for challenging established beliefs and making known artistically political contestations. Hurner, similarly, focuses on suffragists’ protest songs and their rhetorical efficacy for group identification, arguing “protest music is largely an in-group activity that primarily serves to build the ego of the membership rather than persuade the opposition to recruit new members” (235). Like Branham and Hartnett’s discussion of
appropriation, Hurner suggests that suffragists’ songs enhanced solidarity and identity by using “familiar patriotic and hymnal tunes” (253). Carter looks at the Wobblies’ well-known Little Red Songbook, a booklet of protest songs sung at Industrial Workers of the World meetings and in factories and mills. Carter proffers that songs such as those found in the songbook not only invite appropriation and establish group identity, but they also amplify “principal concepts” of group ideology (373).

The Civil Rights movement, meanwhile, remains one of the primary exemplars for the use of protest songs in social movements. Sanger, for instance, uses interviews with activists from that movement (e.g., Bernice Johnson Reagon) to exemplify the importance of songs for unification, for members’ negation of fears, and for asserting common spirituality. She argues the songs transformed participants’ negative emotions into hopeful visualizations and offered avenues for cathartic, collective participation. Perhaps the most famous Civil Rights protest song, “We Shall Overcome,” exemplifies the “sociality of invention” common to the creation and dissemination of protest songs. Carter explains that even though an individual wrote the song, it was not until activists changed the traditional “I Will Overcome” to “We Shall Overcome” that singers felt converted to the cause. As a result, Carter emphasizes the significance of plural, inclusive pronouns for solidifying membership to any movement through song.

“We’re gonna hang Don Chafin to a sour apple tree” and “Every little river” exemplify the usefulness of lyrical appropriation for adapting song to particular movements and protests. Murphy articulates this point well, saying, “the malleable nature of [a] song’s lyrical form allows participants to adapt the lyrics to best fit the historical contexts and rhetorical situations in which collective movements operate and
rhetorical arguments are being advanced” (2). At Blair, miners paid homage to American struggles of strife and rebirth such as the Civil War and the abolition of slavery through these events’ songs, meanwhile reframing their message to their contextual needs. Next, I examine contemporary attempts at civil protest in the dispute over MTR practices.

Speeches of Judy Bonds

Anti-mountaintop removal activities have mounted in the past decade, even though coal companies began strip and surface mining in the 1970s. Because some believe (e.g., Shnayerson) mountaintop removal poses greater risks to the natural environment and public health than antiquated surface mining techniques, many environmentalists have joined in protesting its potentially irreversible effects. Shnayerson has been a reasoned, academic voice in the debate, using his book Coal River to look specifically at the environmental and legal battles fought against MTR practices at Coal River Valley.

While some activists like Shnayerson approach the broad economic and environmental issues clinically, many editorialists invoke more incendiary rhetoric to make their arguments. For instance, Williams exemplifies the fear and rage felt among concerned citizens in West Virginia and Appalachia generally. In some instances, his rhetoric sounds more caustic than fiery, saying about MTR: “Instead of taking the coal from the mountains, it takes the mountains from the coal” (Williams 1). Williams describes a reenactment of the march to Logan, performed in 1999, by one dozen activists in West Virginia:
A pro-mining mob drove 50 miles from Logan to assault [the reenactors]. Placards were ripped from their hands and destroyed. They were tripped, kicked, choked, spat upon, pelted with cans, eggs, and tomatoes, and informed that they would be killed if they didn’t go ‘back to Charleston where they belonged.’ (Williams 4)

Williams chronicles the tactics of coal companies forcing residents, who had sold their homes for mining operations to sign contracts agreeing never to protest MTR mining in Appalachia. The reenactment can be interpreted as a chronotopic approach by activists to historicize Blair Mountain and prevent its potential destruction.

Blair Mountain remained less than five months on the National Register of Historic Places. It was removed after Massey Energy Corporation petitioned the West Virginia State Legislature in July of 2009. Nida and Adkins detail that on 10 January 2010 the site was officially removed from the Register, stating, “Coal operator’s opposition was based on objections of property owners to the listing for which a simple majority was needed for the site to be removed” (11). Now, activists interested in protecting the mountain are devising plans to use the space for archiving local history in order to place the mountain on the register once again. Nida and Adkins believe that the urgency within current activism is well-suited to protect locations like Blair:

The red bandanas worn by the union miners in 1921 have reemerged, this time tied around the necks of anti-MTR activists. With this “rediscovery” of Blair Mountain, community activists are transforming their understanding of their own struggle and its historical contextualization. In the process, they layer new meaning and remembrance to the site, and are
involved in “active placemaking” through the creation of a “rallying point”

in the fight against MTR. (10)

Several activists make an overt connection between Massey’s CEO, Don Blankenship, who resigned 31 December 2010, and Don Chafin, characterizing them as manipulative, exploitative operators in a dirty industry, and who coincidentally share a first name. Blair also constitutes a living history, in that researchers are still finding ammunition, guns, and clothing from 1921 buried in ravines or elsewhere.

Haas and Anglin make explicit several cultural problems Appalachia faces in the current struggle. Haas’ dissertation covers the political economy of resources and law in the coal mining industry in Appalachia. The piece serves as a reference for many of the legal struggles inherent in West Virginia, for instance the role of broad form deeds that relinquish landowners’ mineral rights. Haas also highlights the concept that Appalachia is in, but not of, the United States, a commentary on the relationship between federal policy-making and cultural perceptions of mountain folk life. Anglin’s purpose is to subvert commonly held misconceptions and scholarly directions about “poor” Appalachians by focusing on historical grassroots activism there. Anglin seeks to problematize the push to consign Appalachian studies merely to the realm of folklore. His piece raises important issues about perceptions of Appalachian “folk” as under-educated hillbillies who are therefore exceptional and eccentric research subjects. Grassroots activism, for Anglin, is the answer for Appalachian communities: “they are determined that government officials, business people, union representatives and other political leaders address the concerns of their various constituents in the mountains and engage in ‘bottom-up’ approaches involving residents in the formation of public policy”
(576). This fundamentally grassroots impetus binds the present to the past, the local to
the universal, and the economic to the environmental, displaying the value of the
chronotope for investigating Blair Mountain in 1921 and today.

I look specifically to the speeches of Judy Bonds, an activist from Marfork, West
Virginia, whose public addresses have aided in mobilizing communities against MTR in
Appalachia. After Bonds died in January 2011 from cancer, she was memorialized as the
“Godmother” of anti-MTR activism. She was pivotal in the organization and execution
of the reenactment in 1999. Her speeches reprise the figurative language of Mother Jones
and explicate further how we can understand a rhetoric of coal mining.
CHAPTER II

“TIME THAT TRIES MEN’S SOULS”: THE CHRONOTOPE AND SPEECHES OF MOTHER JONES

Introduction: Mother Jones at Lens Creek

Blair Mountain is a unique site for contextualizing historic American labor struggles within contemporary environmental and labor disputes concerning strip mining. The site is contested terrain in which those who are most interested in its repurposing remember and forget its history for rhetorical aims. To anti-MTR activists, one history of the site – that is, the march and battle in 1921 – serves as impetus for its curation currently. As such, an historically grounded rhetoric emerges which reprises the discourse of labor relations in early 20th-century America. As has been indicated, central to those relations is a fiery rhetor and labor activist named Mary Harris “Mother” Jones, whose orations and negotiations helped dismantle exploitation throughout the United States, but especially within mining communities in the southern coalfields before the 1930s. This chapter analyzes three of Jones’ speeches given in 1920 and 1921 to gain a broad understanding of a rhetoric of coal mining vis-a-vis the autobiographical and folkloric chronotope.

Jones, cast as the “miner’s angel” and a prophetic voice for impoverished coal communities, spoke for miners in southern West Virginia. While she was not the sole representative of their “voice,” Jones’ coal and labor rhetorics have been archived and catalogued in numerous anthologies unlike any other mining labor activist of the time. Today, her speeches are prevalent historical documentation of coal mining’s rhetorical underpinnings. While many grassroots and local organizers are similarly responsible for
unionizing West Virginia – such as William Blizzard and Frank Keeney – Jones’ speeches and letters persist as representative of the rhetoric of the times. In this way, Jones’ speech exemplifies through direct and figurative language the themes most publicly important to and embraced by coal communities at the turn of the century. Affirmative audience responses indicated alongside transcriptions from her speeches substantiate this claim.

Jones spoke on three occasions near to the time of the march on Blair Mountain. Two speeches occurred in Princeton, West Virginia, and Williamson, West Virginia, in 1920 and the third occurred in Indianapolis, Indiana, at a UMWA convention in 1921. In these speeches, Jones exemplifies a rhetoric of coal mining which is oriented historically and deliberatively for the legislation of labor rights. While scholars (e.g., Haman) rightfully refer to her speech in Charleston in 1912 as the most poignant exemplar of her rhetorical impact on unionization in the Paint and Cabin Creek strikes, these later speeches were chosen as more pertinent to labor relations at Blair in 1921. Unlike many of her planned invitations at conventions, Jones’ speech at Lens Creek days prior to the march on Blair was not transcribed and is not archived. Therefore, this chapter analyzes the archived speeches chronologically closest to the time of the march.

Nevertheless, Jones’ engagement at Lens Creek on 24 August 1921 is pertinent for contextualizing her relationship to the dispute at Blair in 1921. Channeling concerns from Governor Morgan of West Virginia that the miners’ strike and march was doomed to bloodshed and eventual setbacks in the fight for union rights, Jones asked Frank Keeney and Fred Mooney, who were equally essential to the orchestration of the march, if she could speak to the miners on the brink of their march on Logan. After being
granted permission to speak, Jones retracted her advice to march on Logan and advised the miners to disband. Additionally, Jones produced a letter from President Warren Harding as evidence. It reads:

To the miners encamped at or near Marmet with the avowed intention of marching on Logan and Mingo counties. I request that you abandon your purpose and return to your homes and I assure you that my good offices will be used to forever eliminate the gunmen system from the state of West Virginia. Signed Warren G. Harding, President of this great republic.

(331)

Unfortunately for Jones, not only were the miners fixed on their path toward Logan, but Mooney and Keeney suspected foul play. Shogan writes that the two leaders “were openly skeptical. The ‘telegram’ and its message seemed too pat and convenient. They asked to see the telegram. ‘Go to hell,’ Mother Jones told them. ‘It’s none of your damn business’” (170). The message to disband was uncharacteristic of Jones, who was typically an unfailing and unabashed civil disobedient. Shogan opines that Jones may have been placating Governor Morgan’s fears about fallout in Charleston or Logan from a potential skirmish – Jones and Morgan were, notably, in consistent correspondence via telegram near the time of the march.

The following morning on August 25, the New York Times reported that the District 17 union president, Keeney, said that “Jones refused to show him the telegram and that upon his return to Charleston he obtained information from President Harding’s Secretary by long distance telephone that no telegram had been sent” (1). Shogan and Savage indicate that because of Jones’ fabricated letter at Marmet, she never again spoke
Bourland 29

publicly in West Virginia’s southern coalfields. Nevertheless, on 26 September 1921 Jones told a convention of UMWA members that, “there are some fellows who don’t want me to go back to West Virginia, but I am going anyway” (345).

Mother Jones’ Rhetorical Style

Many historians and labor scholars (e.g., Haman; Foner; Tonn; Tonn and Kuhn) have written about Jones’ speeches since her death in 1930. Part historical contextualization part analysis, these academic works characterize an orator of infamous renown, whose labor activism challenged the status quo and aided in winning union rights for miners throughout the United States. Much of these works consider Jones’ speaking conventions and forms in public address. They indicate how and why her style was so effective in mobilizing miners. In wrestling with these examinations, I show how the chronotope emerges as useful for “placing” Jones’ stylistics as embodied rather than strategized rhetorics. The chronotope founds her invention speech artistry and represents the implicit functioning of a broader coal rhetoric.

This is not to suggest that Jones founds how we might understand a coal and labor rhetoric, but rather that she is a landmark representation of the speech patterns and values that underpin such a rhetoric. Jones admitted her effectiveness in mobilizing mining communities and her speeches were well attended; in this way, I treat her speech as quintessentially indicative of a coal mining rhetoric. First, I look to extant analyses of her rhetorical oeuvre to cultivate a working catalogue of tropes common to her speech.

Mother Jones is an example of an effective orator whose petite stature and history of overcoming adversity challenge generalized precepts for what underlie a reputable
situated ethos. Not only did Jones lose her family to yellow fever after emigrating from Ireland during the potato famine, but she was a short, elderly woman speaking publicly at a time before women had gained civil rights in the United States. In the early-twentieth century, women avoided public, political roles of confrontation broadly, because “to do so was to risk appearing unwomanly, perhaps even crazy” (Haman 215). Theories abound about the reasons for both her ability to speak to and her immense popularity among miners. Tonn and Fetherling suggest that the most salient of these theories highlights Jones’ constructed, motherly persona as fitting to her audience’s needs. Tonn describes that miners were socialized within a paternalistic system and, in this way, occupied child-like identities toward leaders. She explains further that through coal operators’ use of fear-mongering in mining towns, they “had unwittingly increased [miners’] emotional hunger, which made them particularly susceptible to maternal nurturing and protection” (Tonn 6). Tonn designates Jones’ “motherhood” as a conditional and natural framework for her ability to identify with miners. Tonn also explains that this maternal persona was infused with a militancy that chided and coaxed the miners to rise up and defend their rights.

Jones’ militant, radical approach is well-documented by scholars. Haman indicates, for instance, that Jones was “a rabble-rouser – a flamboyant, radical speaker, who would say virtually anything to stir up a crowd” (210). According to Haman, Jones diverged from neo-classical and decorous conventions common to speeches of the time. Jones was incendiary, foul-mouthed, and spontaneous when speaking. She attacked the coal companies and capitalists, private detectives and government officials, and the miners for their apathy. She was exaggerated and theatrical, known for antics such as
displaying “a marching band, a parade of disfigured mill children, bejeweled effigies of capitalists, and grisly photographs of murdered unionists” (Tonn and Kuhn 314). Tonn suggests Jones’ militancy engaged miners, who reacted emphatically to challenges to their patriotism and group solidarity.

Jones’ “militant motherhood” meanwhile emphasized values and attitudes meant to evoke identification among audiences. Her speeches were peppered with parables and anecdotes meant to evoke critical thinking and action. She bolstered her credibility as well by speaking from a collective “we” as opposed to “I.” Haman indicates Jones used collective pronouns to “bracket her otherness” (218); that is, to divert attention from her sexuality. The technique hearkens to the “ego-function” of rhetorics of protest – where collectivizing language converts audiences to a centralized message.

A Christian ethic inhered in mining communities in the early-twentieth century. Catholics, Baptists, and Methodists attended Christian gatherings funded by the coal operators. Miners were knowledgeable in biblical narratives and looked to these stories as moral guides. Mother Jones, therefore, occupied a prophetic leadership role for many mining communities; her nickname, “the miner’s angel,” for instance, bore sincere religious implications for her image among miners. Jones often invoked personal anecdotes coupled with biblical allusions to bolster her prophetic ethos, and in turn, concretize her matriarchal status. Tonn and Kuhn instantiate this point, arguing that “the intense sense of futility that characterized extremely oppressed audiences like [Jones’] often prompted agitators (including Jones) to assume extraordinary leadership roles such as prophets to instill hope that change was possible” (315).
Jones’ predilection for appropriating prophetic Christian narratives explicated her unshakeable optimism for obtaining miners’ rights. Moreover, by analogizing mining life with biblical narratives, Jones imparted to her audiences a Christian ethic and imbued labor disputes with seriousness. Miners were God’s chosen people in a simple struggle between good and evil.

Jones was confrontational, flamboyant, motherly, prophetic and, due to her ties with the Socialist Labor Party and IWW, socialistic. Much of her rhetorical stylistics implied Marxist sentiments; in fact, she often related the IWW motto, “an injury to one man is an injury to all” at speeches. Socialism at the turn of the century in America represented the belief that the working-class deserved a higher standard of living, assisted by the government (Cordery). Jones’ adherence to the Socialist Labor Party and DeLeon was not for political gain; Jones had little interest in ideological squabbling among American socialist factions. For Jones, socialism represented the potential to disrupt labor injustice in the United States. Her content bore numerous examples of socialist language, which jeopardized her external locus of control rather than sanitized her otherness. Cordery describes that, “To its enemies, socialism threatened to destroy democracy, and its adherents were labeled dangerous fanatics whose words and actions unsettled contented working people” (98). Jones rarely bowed to threats of incarceration or ad hominem attacks. She aligned with socialist ideologies as a result of her investment in obtaining union rights in the southern West Virginia coalfields.

Jones has been treated by scholars as a prophetic, motherly, and radical speaker whose widespread popularity and leadership led to obtaining union rights throughout the United States. Jones adopted tropes related to family, Christianity and the biblical
In the rhetorical tradition, however, her nonlinear conventions represent an “everyday” eloquence, which has often been received as less instructive than more formulaic types of rhetorical arrangement (*dispositio*). Tonn and Kuhn counter that, in fact, such nonlinear techniques – that is, “associative or episodic form that unfolds inductively … influenced by audience contributions” (326) – invite new ways of framing speech effectiveness. They call Jones’ rhetorical functioning “co-constructed”; that is, extemporaneously invented in collaboration with reactionary audiences. According to Tonn and Kuhn, co-constructed stylistics such as interpersonal and conversational digressions, “[provided] opportunities for audiences to participate and respond” (316). Jones’ “everyday” speech patterns negotiated a tension between her otherness and identification with mining audiences. By invoking common discourse, Jones spoke simultaneously to and with miners, and exemplified what Tonn and Kuhn call “dialogic” (314) rhetorical practices. Due to this turn away from the authorititative and didactic, Bakhtin’s notions of dialogic discourse emerge as descriptive of Jones’ broader invention patterns. Jones was, in fact, “of the folk,” and in this way, speaking in the language of her audiences. Indeed, some of her stylistics display a conscious use of everyday rhetorical invention. Nevertheless, she was, first, an embodiment of the working-class, radical rhetoric she espoused, and did not appropriate merely dialogic stylistics for ego-centered aims.

Jones’ rhetorical invention was grounded in an autobiographical and folkloric chronotope; that is, a foundation oriented toward place, where time and history function as entrenched in place. In this way, an everyday and revolutionary rhetoric emerged that, through trope and anecdote, highlighted the values central to mining communities at the
time. Next, I discuss Bakhtin’s conception of the chronotope, keeping in mind Jones’ stylistics and invented practices, as useful in theorizing a broader rhetoric of coal mining.

Theorizing an Autobiographical and Folkloric Chronotope

In “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel,” Bakhtin proffers a conception of time and place special to both fictional and rhetorical discourse. Beginning with Greek poetry and speech, he describes types of moments that, when characters encounter crisis and transition, time slows and quickens, or in fact is suspended altogether. For instance, Bakhtin highlights sophistic rhetoric as the basis for a special autobiographical chronotope that emphasizes a “public consciousness of man” – that is, a public identity framed by nonlinearly related anecdotes and shared values. Moreover, he asserts a folkloric chronotope that places agricultural life as central to an understanding of time conditioned both by nature’s seasons and by the functioning of industry in the everyday. In West Virginia in the early-twentieth century, coal camps operated like agoras where the everyday was subservient to seasonal trends and the demands of industry. In this way, Mother Jones’ speech exemplifies a combination of autobiographical and folkloric notions of time. First, I ground the ways in which the

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2 That said, Bakhtin was primarily interested in novelistic discourse. Beginning with Greek conceptions of narrative and ending with works by Dostoyevsky and Rabelais as case studies in authorial design, Bakhtin theorizes the contingencies of time, place, and otherness in literature. He attempts to show, through a discussion of poetic logic, the nature of what he calls utterance, polyphony, and dialogism for an understanding of character in novelistic discourse. For an author, speaking as and through a constructed character demands a type of becoming in which imitation of the other is tantamount to novel truth-telling. Polyphony is the creation of a novelistic world in which the author occupies a multiplicity of voices, where a dialogism emerges among its characters and its author.
autobiographical chronotope functioned in Greek rhetorical practices. I then show how the folkloric chronotope theorizes a direct relationship between speech and place for communities dependent on industry and nature.

In differentiating autobiographical and biographical forms in ancient Greek and Roman rhetoric, Bakhtin discusses a dichotomy between public and private life. He explains that ancient Greek orators did not conceive of a private life. Instead, the agoras manifested individual self-consciousness where all things private were public. It was not until the writings of Tacitus, Plutarch and other rhetoricians in Rome that biographical forms emerged questioning the self-glorification of both others’ and one’s own life. Bakhtin posits a typology of biographical forms (e.g., energetic, analytic, and stoic) to categorize Hellenistic and Roman biographies and autobiographies. However, most significant to a rhetoric of coal mining, as specifically embodied by Mothers Jones’ speeches, is the classical Greek autobiography.

Ancient Greek rhetoricians publicly enacted epideictic, forensic, and deliberative speeches, often in reaction to events or in collaboration with civic duties. Greeks did not conceive of private discourse, such as found in the novel or biography. Instead, speeches were meant to be heard in the agoras. Bakhtin describes that, in this setting, “one’s own or another’s life is laid bare (that is, made public), that the limits of a human image and the life it leads are illuminated in all their specificity” (131). In this setting, the chronotope internalized in a speech’s written rhetoric is less important than the chronotope actualized in its delivery (elocutio). Therefore, Greek speech, such as an encomium to a statesmen, engaged autobiographical chronotopes by asserting shared cultural values.
The *agoras* were political, social, and disciplinary spaces. A citizen’s identity manifested in the square – it was “laid bare” for public examination. Personal history was made common, and formed the fabric of a broader public. Bakhtin explains that the squares “constituted a state (and more – it constituted the entire state apparatus, with all its official organs), it was the highest court, the whole of science, the whole of art, the entire people participated in” (132). In this way, rhetorical practices favored extemporaneous speech and eloquence, and grounded the values central to Greek life. Exteriority (that is, externalized persona) was paramount, therefore, for orators and public figures. Bakhtin defines this rhetorical position as “in the folk”; in other words, speech that is with and for others. He articulates that, “to be exterior meant to be for others, for the collective, for one’s own people. A man was utterly exteriorized, but within a human element, in the human medium of his own people” (135). Isocrates, for instance, did not bracket “personal” matters from the broader logic of a speech; income, philosophy, or family relations entered to fill the whole of his ethos. Bakhtin explains that the personal, in this way, served a pedagogical purpose in ancient autobiography. Speakers presented a morality to bolster or subsume narratives and arguments and to give speeches completeness (137).

Coal camps near the turn of the century operated similarly to ancient squares, due to their remoteness, privately contracted law enforcement, peculiar currency, and publicness (*e.g.*, New River Coal Company camps). Even specific to coal camps were its inhabitants’ artistry and sociality. Jones, too, embodied a genuinely public ethos, “of the folk” and sensitive to the local. However, her rhetoric adopted some Roman and Hellenistic biographical tendencies. That is, at times her speech exemplified what
Bakhtin calls “reversible time” – that is, time that gets filled in scattershot and, “becomes full and well rounded only at the end” (142). A “public self-consciousness” (140) emerges, then, which is only possible once a speaker demarcates the personal and private. Coal camps were a close (unintentional) imitation of the ancient agora, and Jones displayed stylistics entrenched in camp town discourse. Jones understood the private, of course, and mediated shared values in her oratory vis-a-vis Roman conceptions of “reversible time.”

Not only is character filled in and completed based on a sense of time-reversible, but Bakhtin explains the implications of historical inversion common to the chronotope. Historical inversion isolates the past as prescriptive for the future; said differently, for historical inversion, “the present and even more the past are enriched at the expense of the future. The force and persuasiveness, of reality, of real life, belong to the present and the past alone – to the ‘is’ and the ‘was’ – and to the future belongs a reality . . . more ephemeral” (147). Jones tended to allude to the past for its pedagogical import. She historicized the past and applied it in broad strokes for instructing mining audiences. Historical inversion, in this way, inheres in the autobiographical chronotope – what might we might call prophetic forms of rhetorical discourse.

Jones asserted an autobiographical chronotope that collapsed historical time to meet then-contemporary deliberative ends. Her speech highlighted a placed history resounding from and speaking to agora-like coal camps. Moreover, she was “of the folk,” simultaneously other than, and among, West Virginia coal miners. Jones was particularly public, and moreover, spoke in the language of the working-class. Peppered throughout her speeches were folkloric tropes illustrative of a basic coal rhetoric. For instance, light-
dark, Christian, and industrial metaphors shaped the color and timbre of her speeches. Bakhtin’s folkloric chronotope helps theorize these and other native stylistics that enabled Jones to effectively engage her audiences. Next, I describe the folkloric chronotope in relation to how we might understand a rhetoric of coal.

Much like the autobiographical chronotope, the folkloric chronotope explains a rhetorical fullness of time. Here, the present is a passage of time, suffused with memory and prophecy (146). The folkloric chronotope, moreover, emphasizes the heroic in the everyday explicated through the cycles of agricultural or industrial life. Life in the southern coalfields improved somewhat before the Norris-LaGuardia Act in 1932 and National Industry Recovery Act in 1933; however, coal camps in southern West Virginia were still generally isolated, impoverished, and poorly maintained up to and through those years. Miners worked twelve-hour days or longer and were paid severely low wages. They went into the mines before sunrise and returned after sunset. The amount of coal they loaded equaled their daily wages. Mining life, in this way, reflected miners’ industrial work – work responsive to the land and tempered by the seasons. Jones understood this life, and as a result, a distinct folkloric chronotope underscores her rhetorical trappings.

Jones’ rhetoric did not treat mining life as primitive – that is, simple and heedful – but rather she treated it as deeply oriented toward labor and place. Specifically, the tropes common to Jones’ speeches signified her connection to coal livelihoods and the process of mining. Moreover, these tropes hinted at what it meant to be a miner. Bakhtin’s treatment of the folkloric hero helps theorize Jones’ relationship to a broader mining ethic. Bakhtin describes that folklore conceives of the hero as “great on his own
right, not on some other account” (150), able-bodied enough to procure his needs from the land. Moreover, while this may suggest a rhetorical fantastic, it is meanwhile a “realistic fantastic” (151). A realistic fantastic “relies on the real-life possibilities of human development – possibilities not in the sense of a program for immediate action, but in the sense of the need and possibilities of men, those eternal demands of human nature that will not be denied” (151). More directly, Bakhtin argues that folklore deals in a realistic drama of man’s relation to nature, with its marked uncertainty and possibility (i.e., in regard to harvesting, extraction, etc.). Additionally, the folkloric chronotope implies this realistic fantastic as part and parcel of its time orientation.

Bakhtin theorizes the folkloric chronotope as devoted to agricultural life; however, mining may be conflated as an agricultural life less invested in growth, more in excavation. Mining, while engaged differently with land than planting and nurturing, is similarly responsive to the seasons and dependent on the land for procuring natural resources. This kind of chronotope values “a taking-apart and putting-together of social everyday time, the time of holidays and ceremonies connected with the agricultural labor cycle, with the seasons of the year, the periods of the day” (206). Implied in this time is a sense of being “in the folk.” Coal camps were diasporic communities, remote and public locales scattered throughout southern West Virginia. These communities, as such, operated entirely in relation to the miners’ work. Labor homogeneity brought about a deep sense of shared experience and oriented individuals toward industry and place. Bakhtin explains that, “this sense of time works itself out in a collective battle of labor against nature. The practice of collective labor gives birth to this new sense of time, and the ends of this practice serve to differentiate and reshape this sense of time” (207).
The southern coalfields were beholden to place, embedded on hillsides and removed from metropolises. Mining families lived on labor’s watch, conditioned by the tipple’s horn to begin and end a day’s work. The folkloric chronotope explains this time, describing that “this time is profoundly spatial and concrete. It is not separated from the earth or from nature. It, as well as the entire life of the human being, is all on the surface” (208, emphasis in original). The folkloric chronotope theorizes place-bound time in which the everyday is a reflection of the regimen of labor.

However, the folkloric chronotope also bears the problem of cyclicity, according to Bakhtin, which undermines the potential of productivity and growth. Cyclicity found in the seasons and reflected in the everyday can adversely replace progression with futility. While agricultural life rushes forward along with human development, natural growth, death and rebirth, meanwhile repeat endlessly. For Jones, the dark must become light, the frost must pass for rebirth; to jeopardize such tropes in deference to cyclicity is to relinquish hope and perseverance. However, the folkloric chronotope implies this risk. Bakhtin suggests that, “the mark of cyclicity, and consequently of cyclical repetitiveness, is imprinted on all events occurring in this type of time. Time’s forward impulse is limited by the cycle. For this reason even growth does not achieve authentic ‘becoming’” (211). Labor activists at the turn of the century fought for progression in the face of cyclicity; that is, they demanded rights in response to an inadequate status quo.

Jones’ rhetorical stylistics displayed tropes representative of place-bound time in the folkloric chronotope. She established shared meaning among the folk by orienting her rhetoric toward the everyday of mining life. Through anecdotes, character study,
historical inversion, and folk tropes, Jones’ speech implied a time-place orientation exemplary of both the folkloric and autobiographical chronotopes.

Scholars have pointed out that Jones was a fiery, flamboyant rhetor who spoke in a working-class style. They show that through otherness and identification, she mobilized thousands of miners to disrupt unjust labor practices throughout the U.S. However, implicit in her ethos was a specific time-place orientation; that is, Jones was “of the folk” and understanding of the everyday of mining life. While Tonn wrestles with Jones’ nonlinear speaking arrangements and co-constructed conventions, more central to a coal rhetoric is Jones’ broader orientation toward the placed rhetorics of mining life. Jones utilized folkloric tropes and autobiographical digressions in part, strategically, but also partly because her discourse was grounded in the folk. A public self-consciousness emerged in her speeches, which grounds how we might understand a broader rhetoric of coal.

Analysis I: Figures of the Autobiographical Chronotope

Jones spoke at Williamson and Princeton, West Virginia in 1920, approximately one year prior to Sid Hatfield’s murder on the steps of the courthouse in Welch. In 1921, she spoke in Indianapolis at a UMWA convention, three weeks after miners surrendered to General Bandholtz and armed forces at Blair Mountain. These speeches, together, capture Jones’ rhetoric broadly; in fact, the speeches are strikingly similar in message and content. As such, their chronology is less important than their rhetorical conventions for how we might understand a rhetoric of coal mining. Therefore, I layer citations liberally
(i.e., not in time-order) to give a sense of Jones’ rhetorical choices rather than particulars within each speech.

Indianapolis marked an interesting occasion for Jones to regain credibility with the UMWA. Her Lens Creek subterfuge had made national headlines. Moreover, the miners’ perceived loss at Blair meant serious losses in union membership nationally. While speaking in Indianapolis, Jones exemplified stylistics generally characteristic of her rhetoric broadly. However, near her conclusion, she hints at her work in the southern coalfields. Indignantly, she claims that, “there are some fellows who don’t want me to go back to West Virginia, but I am going anyway” (345). Had Jones not fallen severely ill, she may have spoken again in West Virginia. Instead, her failed speech and faux-telegram at Marmet mark her final appearance in the southern coalfields.

Nevertheless, Jones was viewed favorably by miners nationally. Her reputation preceded her at conventions and local union meetings. She was heralded as a beacon of hope for industrial life. Her rhetorical conventions achieved desirable ends for unionizing miners; that is, after hearing her speak, audiences felt compelled to enact their democratic will.

Jones was effective because she oriented her audiences as a unified whole, “the folk,” within an historical landscape of revolutionary and democratic practice, and moreover made pertinent connections for her audiences between their own strife and success for unions nationally. First, I look at the ways in which Jones builds identification with her audiences and among its members through autobiography. Next, I look at how she inverts historical icons and events (e.g., the Revolutionary War) to bolster a sense of urgency regarding unionization. Finally, I show how her use of similar
historical inversion regarding industry at the turn of the century challenges her audiences
to enact democratic practices and see themselves historically.

In speaking, Jones proffers an autobiographical chronotope, a public
consciousness, which fosters identification and challenges her audiences to understand
themselves collectively. Jones was “of the folk,” and therefore asserts unifying language
founded on the public nature of coal camps. She speaks directly to this point in
Indianapolis, lambasting union leadership unengaged with coal life. Regarding mining
communities, Jones speaks directly to John Lewis, president of the UMWA, saying, “they
live up to the creeks and the speakers who appear before them do not always use their
language or appeal to them. You must know the life of those men … The organizers that
go out, Mr. Lewis, don’t understand the game” (“Indianapolis” 342). From the outset,
then, Jones understood that appearing “of the folk” demanded rhetorical efforts on the
part of leadership.

Jones worked to unify the diasporic nature of coal camps. By acknowledging in-
group identities (e.g., Irish heritage) and establishing commonality (e.g., Americanism),
Jones forges communal dwellings for her audiences. In Williamson, she describes a
universal uprising of the working class, saying, “they are striking everywhere. They are
striking over there in Ireland, and the Irish are raising Hell in America, too (laughter and
applause)” (“Williamson” 213). Jones herself was an Irish immigrant and used this to her
advantage by accentuating the impact of immigration in America. Occasionally she
bolsters identification by turning the vantage upon herself. For instance, in Williamson,
following an anecdote about exploited child labor, she exclaims, “Old Mother Jones was
a frightful character! Good Lord, she is a horrible thing! What do you think of her? Oh,
Old Mother Jones fought” (“Williamson” 217). This excerpt emphasizes the ways in which Jones utilizes a public self-consciousness to fill her agitation with reflexivity and consideration of the private. Using the third person, in this way, lays bare her actions, and demarcates her private and public selves. Moreover, it invites her audience to reflect on their own will to confront unjust labor practices – if Jones’ can agitate with a clear conscience, so too can the working class.

Jones fosters identification by scapegoating the newspapers, coal operators, and hired gunmen. Moreover, she positions herself against female activists at the time, saying, “I am not a suffragette, for I have been suffering all my life” (“Princeton” 225). She pushes women in mining communities to stand up alongside male miners, and argues their role as supportive. In fact, regarding women’s voting rights, she says, “what good is the ballot if they don’t use it?” (“Indianapolis” 340). Jones simultaneously identifies with the working class and places herself against the grain of progression, asserting a traditional approach toward women’s societal roles. She invokes unifying language about Americanism, conversely, to silence issues regarding cultural differences and gender disputes. At Princeton, Jones challenged miners to “stand up like Americans. Join the union. Do you belong to the United Mine Workers? Say, ‘Yes, I do.’ Put on your hat like an American” (“Princeton” 230).

Jones appeals chronotopically to the socialist rhetoric of the working class familiarized through Labor Party pamphlets by establishing a Marxist ethos; that is, she embodies an omniscient leadership role in which she asserts challenges to her audiences. Only a speaker like Jones, who was common to the people, could chastise auditors for
their inaction and also consequently remain in their good graces. Jones displays this role in Williamson:

    You yourselves are men of honor, high-principled men, and have stood and seen yourselves robbed of every ton of coal so much was taken out and professional murderers were hired to keep you in subjection, and you stood for it. Damn you, you are not fit to live under the flag. You took the food from off the table of the child. You paid professional murderers with that money you were robbed of, and then you never said a word. Not a single word out of you. You stood there like a lot of cowards going along chewing some scab tobacco (applause) and you have let yourselves be robbed by the mine owners … Let me tell you American need not feel proud of you. (“Williamson” 216)

According to Jones, the power to undermine systemic injustices rested with the working class alone. She asserts that miners have no one to blame but themselves. Not only does she situate an American ethic of independence, in this way, but she hearkens to socialist rhetorics in favor of the rise of the working class. Her language operates chronotopically in that she recalls the emboldening discourse of socialist labor’s tenets.

    Autobiographical digressions often afford her speeches pedagogical ends. Jones relates personal anecdotes as modern parables. Her narratives center on proffering morals or indicating past success rather than on emphasizing particulars. In Indianapolis, Jones relates a story about traveling in West Virginia to find shelter with John H. Walker, then president of the Illinois Federation of Labor. She says they walked nine miles “after we had organized an army of slaves who were afraid to call their souls their own. We
didn’t dare sleep in a miner’s house; if we did the family would be thrown out in the morning and would have no place to go” (“Indianapolis” 334). Here, Jones exemplifies her understanding of the limitations of coal life like visitation rules due to yellow-dog contracts. She also asserts democratic values of independence and free will in relation to American slave-consciousness.

Jones’ public and private correspondences mimic the Greek autobiographical chronotope. Jones is unabashed in her willingness to disclose matters of her private life. She reveals her correspondences with businessmen and politicians like Rockefeller, Governor Morgan, and President Harding. For instance, at Indianapolis, she congratulates the work of Senator Kern of Indiana as a friend of the UMWA. Jones recalls that, “he gave me money often to places; he never turned me down and he knows I always got results . . . No man ever stood on the floor of the Senate in Washington who did more for the working class than Senator Kern of Indiana” (“Indianapolis” 340). Such disclosures reveal her private work as publicly appropriate, which entrench her “in the folk.” The honesty displayed in these anecdotes reinforces her authenticity as a public spokesperson for the labor movement.

Jones grounds her ethos in local, working-class struggles against labor exploitation. Public self-consciousness coupled with autobiography merit her authenticity among mining audiences. Once established in this way, Jones orients her audience within a historical fabric of democratic practice. Regarding the southern coalfields or other industrial locales, Jones invites audiences to question their place in history under the premise that citizens have “never gotten down to the core of the trouble that exists” (“Indianapolis” 334). She establishes historical footing, also, by asking
audiences to envision their lives temporally. For instance, in Princeton, Jones shows pictures from the Ludlow Massacre, and then asked, “is that to the honor of the American nation in the days to come? When future generations read it, what will they think?” (“Princeton” 226). In so doing, Jones challenges her audiences to concern themselves with future generations. She also achieves this concern through visualization. Visualization is, of course, an essential tenet of her effectiveness as a speaker. In Williamson, Jones describes that, “nobody can show you the way to freedom, and I wouldn’t free you tomorrow if I could. You would go begging. My patriotism is for this country to give to the nation in the day to come highly developed human citizens, men and women” (“Williamson” 220). In West Virginia, Jones clamored for the abolishment of contracted law enforcement, murder, poor living conditions, and infringement of civil liberties. She meant to make West Virginia the “greatest state of the Union” (“Williamson” 222).

The autobiographical chronotope functions in part due to the enthymemetic potential of historical inversion; that is, the process of emphasizing exemplary past events as prophetic in lieu of a certain future. Inversion’s enthymemetic premise lies in its logic – if time present is analogous to time past, present action fashioned like past action must prove equally successful.

Jones depends on historical inversion to effectively mobilize the working class. According to Jones’ historical choices, pertinent and recognizable past events for miners included American narratives of discovery, the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and World War I, from which thousands of miners had recently returned as veterans. Jones
historicizes these narratives for their thematic import within the contemporary labor protest.

Jones repeatedly recalls America’s discovery and colonization *vis-a-vis* their social and political import for the labor movement. For instance, in Williamson, she recollects a commonly held impression of Christopher Columbus, saying, “Columbus, didn’t he agitate? … Wasn’t Washington an agitator? Didn’t the Mayflower bring over a shipful of agitators? … Jesus was an agitator, Mr. Manager. What in hell did you hang him for if he didn’t hurt your pockets?” (“Williamson” 218). With agitation as a guiding principle, Jones conflates Columbus, Washington, and Jesus as timeless individuals essentially instilled with a common impulse – to disrupt the *status quo*. Moreover, her argument is enthymematic; in other words, Jones presumes her audience upholds these agitators as successful, revolutionary agents. In this way, she invites her audience to understand themselves as potentially successful in their struggle for union rights.

America’s colonization and revolution were recognizable, foundational narratives to mining communities due to the availability of history books and socialist pamphlets that infiltrated coal camps. Jones informally calls revolutionaries by their last name, amassing their legacies into a coterie of revolutionary confidants. Jones uses this stylistic to familiarize and make plain the work of revolutionary actors. Jones relates a disagreement concerning her credibility that exemplifies this stylistic *vis-a-vis* the autobiographical chronotope:

“Where do you live?”

“In the United States of America.”

“What part?”
“Wherever there is a fight for justice and freedom against the wrong, and particularly right now against the steel men.”

“Did you get permission to make a speech there?”

“Sure.”

“Who did you get that permit from?”

“I got it a hundred and forty-three years ago from Patrick Henry, and Jefferson, and Adams, and Washington. That was before God Almighty ever thought of sending you here, and I have been using it for sixty or seventy years, and am going to use it as long as I am here.” (“Williamson” 218)

Jones’ chronotopic argument instills the present with the urgency of the past. She connects her own stories to the courage and heroism of historical figures whose actions figure recurrently on the American imagination. Not only does she relegate herself to the test of historical purchase, but Jones makes common the import of the American Revolution. She asks, “where will you go? Come with me to old America … Or will you stay with Schwab and Rockefeller? … It was purchased by the blood of men who believed in justice, and for which seven long years they fought” (“Princeton” 229).

More recent to mining communities’ collective memory was the Civil War. Occasionally, Jones remarks on the “blues and grays” and equivocates about race relations and state politics. In Williamson, Jones exemplifies chronotopic figurations regarding the Civil War. Time’s metaphoric value is particularly noteworthy, when, citing Lincoln, she says, “men, this is the time that calls on men. Lincoln said, ‘It is the time that tries men’s souls’ … They who love the nation’s honor, love her future and love
the children that are yet to come know that the workers must be waked from their sleep” (“Williamson” 217). Jones’ chronotope underscores paradoxically how time in fact should ease miners’ collective spirit; that is, Lincoln presents the genuine possibility of success, which Jones argues should bolster deepened loyalty to the Union. Moreover, Jones portends labor’s inevitable compromises with operators based on the lessons of the Civil War’s reconciliations between Union and Confederate states (“Indianapolis” 344).

Past wars factor prevalently in Jones’ historical inversion as a way to stress the warfare implicit in the labor movement. In 1920, thousands of miners had just returned from World War I and were privy to conflicts abroad. Jones alludes to the “Kaisers” literally – as in, emperors such as Wilhelm II in Germany – but also, metaphorically, in reference to politicians at home. Regarding returned soldiers, she explains, “they went over to destroy Kaisers, and they have come home to find more Kaisers than they ever found in Germany” (“Princeton” 226). Such language indicts the principles upon which many miners fought and consequently returned to the United States. Jones displays here her willingness to take rhetorical risks to evoke responses from her audiences. On another occasion, Jones emphasizes the same problem, saying, “men have come home from the war, and they have been told, ‘now let’s clean up the Kaiser in Germany and we will have democracy.’ Well, they came home. They didn’t find any democracy but an increased autocracy at home” (“Williamson” 213).

War figures in Jones’ rhetorical approach in order to frame the severity of the labor movement historically. Nevertheless, Jones also argues chronotopically in reference to labor activism to illustrate revolution analogous to the miners’ struggle. An
autobiographical chronotope emerges in her anecdotes that is attuned to labor strife and envisions the rise of the working-class.

While many states had gained union rights circa 1900, West Virginia’s southern coalfields remained non-unionized until the 1930s. Jones explains this discrepancy for her audiences. In Indianapolis, for instance, she describes that at the turn of the century in West Virginia, “men were working fourteen hours a day and they did not get their coal weighed. They weighed a ton of coal with an aching back dug it, loaded it and didn’t know how much was in it” (“Indianapolis” 334). In Colorado in 1914, after the Ludlow Massacre, miners were granted some union rights and were provided with improved facilities in accordance with a plan written by John D. Rockefeller. In Indianapolis, Jones uses Ludlow as exemplary of the potential for change. Displaying a picture from the massacre, she says, “those are the guns they sent across seven states to Colorado when the men there struck … Those are the guns that murdered the woman and children at Ludlow” (“Indianapolis” 339). Ludlow, however, represented the worst brutality publicized in coal camps to date, and therefore, received recompense in the form of rights. Chronotopically, therefore, Ludlow embodies a cautionary tale to communities serving big coal and offers evidence of the potential for corporations like Rockefeller’s Colorado Fuel and Iron Company to permit union activity in coal camps.

Jones also alludes to steel and textile industries for chronicling the rise of the working class in America. In Williamson, she recollects a protest in Pennsylvania as a way to visualize the confrontational opportunities within mining protests. She admits, “we went to jail. A thousand steel workers gathered around that jail inside of ten minutes – I want to show you your power – and the burghers run away. They got a pain in the
stomach and went out the back door and went home (laughter and applause)” (“Williamson” 214). Burghers, here, is synonymous with the bourgeoisie. In this example, Jones’ autobiographical chronotope is less oblique; in fact, she reveals historical inversions’ purpose directly – to empower her audience toward social action. Jones’ anecdotes seek to embolden her audiences with the lessons of history. They challenge auditors to stand on the shoulders of historical icons and rale against unlawful oppression.

Jones builds identification with her audience through asserting an autobiographical chronotope entrenched in American rhetorics of war, socialism, and industry. She inverts pertinent history to envision the tidings of successful protest. Next, I show how a folkloric chronotope emerges that engages the placed rhetorics of industrial life in coal camps.

Analysis II: Figures of the Folkloric Chronotope

The folkloric chronotope theorizes the rhetorical relationship between Jones’ figurative language and industrial life common to coal camps. As I have shown, Jones asserted a public consciousness, “of the folk,” and engaged in the discourse of mining communities. Thematically, Jones’ style favored figurations that together reveal a folkloric chronotope inherent in her rhetorical invention. She developed metaphors and themes related to industry, the natural environment, Christian narratives, lightness and darkness, the family, health and disease, and violence. Together these figurations constitute the values essential to coal mining in the 1920s. Jones stressed such themes because she understood her audiences’ ethic; moreover, she prescribed the same ethic for
the good of American progression. Of note in these examples is Jones’ eloquence vis-a-vis her ornamented style. Her metaphors not only exemplify an implicit folkloric chronotope at work in her invention, but their beauty and evocation display a sincere pathetic rhetoric.

Root metaphors about labor pervade Jones’ stylistics. Such figurations were recognizable to miners, and moreover, their use subverted labor’s systemic power over miners’ daily lives. For instance, in Princeton, Jones claims that the private law enforced in coal camps is indicative of a broader industrial problem. She calls her revelation “the awakening,” and continues, saying, “the night bell of the worker is ringing in the dawn of the new day” (“Princeton” 227). For auditors, Jones’ use of the night bell sounds a strident call to action. Playing on miners’ Pavlovian conditioning to the beckoning ring of work, Jones highlights the habituated mining life as a bourgeois industrial construction. By appropriating a symbol of the coal operators’ systems of control, Jones emboldens her audience to reclaim liberties in the face of unjust police enforcement.

Jones occasionally teetered on the comedic through metaphor, too, as a way to hint at broader folkloric values. Moreover, certain labor metaphors recurred in her speeches because they made plain the values she instilled. She often invoked the mule, an essential aid to the loading and extracting processes of coal mining in underground mines. For instance, she asks, “did you ever watch a mule in a mine? If a mule turns his head around and the boss goes on, the mule takes to his hind legs and says ‘get the hell out of here’” (“Princeton” 227). Here, the mule embodies stubbornness toward coal operators acceptable only from an animal. While its folkloric chronotope achieves humor, the question also proffers the attributes necessary to democratic action. Underground
miners exhibited distinct relationships with mules – mules alleviated some of the most intensive labor in the extraction process. In this way, Jones’ folkloric chronotope orients her audience toward the components central to the work of industrial life.

In Princeton, Jones extends an argument about civil disobedience that most clearly exemplifies the folkloric chronotope within a broader rhetoric of coal mining. Recollecting a steel strike 8,000 men strong, Jones recalls her response to the threat of incarceration. Sarcastically, she says, “I told them that we built the jails and that we had a perfect right to be put in them” (“Princeton” 230). A folkloric chronotope emerges here portrayed in the asserted credibility of making things. Again, Jones uses humor for several reasons. First, she attempts to make plain and challenge fear associated with the threat of jail. Moreover, she seeks to engage her audience on a human level. In one sense, the argument teeters on the absurd, yet it also hints at something true; that is, that her audience feels pride and care towards their work. Jones’ argument underscores a folkloric chronotope that values the time and effort of labor in the face of perceived corporate greed. In Indianapolis, she makes a similar argument, this time minimizing her humor. Relating the brutality at Ludlow, Jones recalls being denied after asking to inspect guns used to murder innocent civilians, to which she responds, “no sir; my class go into the bowels of the earth to get the material to make these guns and I have a right to examine them” (“Indianapolis” 339). In this way, Jones again grants credence to the working-class livelihood to interrogate the dynamics of social stratification.

Jones also builds connections between historical inversion and figurations of labor in the folkloric chronotope. The most striking example hearkens to chattel slavery as analogous to the problems faced by the working-class. Jones asks:
What would the black man do in slavery? Why is the Union so dangerous today? If it was safe in the days of Lincoln, who took the chattel slavery off your back, why shouldn’t you, the industrial slave, take a lesson? He didn’t shirk. That old black slave went like a man over to the Union. (“Princeton” 228)

“Industrial slave” may be treated literally or metaphorically. As a metaphor, the phrase analogizes miners to the strife of American slaves at a time when Blacks still lived without civil liberties. Jones intimates her use of historical inversion by analogizing chattel slavery with coal mining. Not only does she argue that history serves pedagogical ends, moreover, it repeats itself.

Root metaphors about the natural environment also exemplify the folkloric chronotopes inherent in Jones’ rhetorical invention. Figurations regarding the weather and its seasons, harmony, and animal life recur in her speeches. The weather perhaps occurs most often when she prophesies the labor movement’s uprising. For instance, in Williamson, she presents a metaphor common to her speeches, saying, “the man who sits on the tower knows before the thunder clap comes there must be a clash of clouds, and he sees the clouds clashing and gathering and he warns that the storm will break … It is the new era, the new manhood and womanhood coming to life, my friends” (“Williamson” 214). In Princeton, following the same metaphoric logic, Jones suggests that the coal operators do not understand these signs or see themselves at fault (224). The metaphor frames labor strife as an inevitable force of nature, the meeting of cold and hot fronts. It argues that progression will occur, whether or not every miner has joined the union. Just as coal towns tucked along creek beds withstand the tumult of autumnal storms, the
metaphor suggests they will also stand by the subversion of labor’s unjust practices. Jones presents other natural metaphors that convey the same general principle. In Williamson, for instance, she says, “we are in the turning tide, and it is time for all to turn around” (“Williamson” 215). Persistent in these metaphors is the raw force of nature, the environment’s prowess and spontaneity to which the epic folkloric hero heeds. Folkloric time, then, through the logic of Jones’ metaphor, asserts an inevitable and certain progress made plain through commonplace natural data.

Not unlike Jones’ recurrent mule metaphor, animal metaphors emerge that reframe the hierarchical systems of control within coal communities. Jones, along with miners generally, had distaste for the privatized police forces at coal camps. At Princeton, “seven wagon-loads” (224) of Baldwin-Felts detectives, made infamous in the Matewan Massacre and Sid Hatfield’s murder, were said to be in attendance. At times at Princeton, Jones speaks in reference to them. Disparagingly, she says, “God – they make me sick. They are worse than an old bunch of cats yelling for their mother” (“Princeton” 224). The metaphor, by both raising and lowering tension through humor, indicts the detectives for their loyalty to an unethical system of control. The metaphoric logic positions the detectives as needy agents dependent on the authority of the coal companies. The metaphor works to weaken their authority – instead of commanding respect, they play “the lap-dog” (“Princeton” 230) to big coal. The folkloric metaphor analogizes the detectives to wanton, devolved people, incapable of taking care of themselves. Meanwhile, the metaphor bolsters the folkloric value of self-sufficiency, and Jones implicitly instills this in her intended audience.
Jones presents a figurative idea of world connectivity and harmony as well, which emphasizes values of commonality and being-with-nature. In Indianapolis, she grounds a metaphor of harmony in the industrial shift toward electricity internationally, saying, “the pulse of the world is beating my friends, as it never beat in human history … You are living in an electric age. The current is touching the human heart of man” (“Indianapolis” 341). The heartbeat emerges as figurative of a world commune, one in which the heart makes men common and defies class antagonisms. Its folkloric time is finite in that its pulse is an indication of life in the face of death. Moreover, the metaphor evokes a pathetic rhetoric of empathy for the exploited classes. In Williamson, Jones reasons similarly in order to petition local and national journalists to write just accounts of labor struggles. She says, “my friends, the newspaper man, this is not the time to sow poison. This is the time to sow harmony” (“Williamson” 221). Paradoxical, of course, is the fact that the harmony Jones seeks means, first, the onset of class warfare and governmental lobbying.

Miners were generally of Christian denominations and attended churches provided and paid for by coal operators. Biblical narratives were commonplace. Morality was enforced through camp policing and variable wage distribution. However, church ministers were often advised by operators to inculcate coal camp policies. Jones admonishes this behavior in Williamson:

Why don’t you ministers go out and preach as Christ did? You are afraid of the high-class burglars, and there are many (applause). You are gambling in Christ’s philosophy; but you are not carrying out Christ’s doctrine, and I defy you to tell me so. How many of your ministers came
with us in Cabin Creek when we cleaned out the professional murderers?

There wasn’t one of them. Not one of them. (“Williamson” 215)

The Cabin Creek strikes were a precursor to the West Virginia mine wars in the 1920s. By participating in both, Jones learned that church officials were beholden to operators’ demands. Religious hypocrisy represented a problem for mining families invested in seeking both a moral compass and increased quality of life. At Princeton, exemplifying the implicit inventional conventions of a folkloric chronotope, Jones argues for a natural order. She says that the human race “has looked forward to that mighty power where men could enjoy the right to live as nature intended that they should” (“Princeton” 224). Here, natural order stands in place for Christian fundamentals endowed in part by a “mighty power.” Jones often alludes to the “world’s savior” (“Williamson” 212) and imparts a Christian ethic.

Moreover, Jones’ language is riddled with Christian metaphors. In Indianapolis, she opines, “we have some good boys in West Virginia and some good fighters, but we have got some damn snakes, too. Look after the snakes” (“Indianapolis” 345). The snake metaphor solidifies a sense of reversible time, a world where Adam and Eve repel Satan embodied in the snake and live in an endless Eden. The snake personifies deception, evil, and the fall from grace. Metaphorically, the snake hearkens to a lost perfection, a bucolic past, and entices auditors into the logic of historical inversion. Common to Jones’ Christian, metaphoric impulse lies shared conceptions of the afterlife, where the saved ascend to heaven and sinners descend to hell. Recollecting a dispute with Governor Peabody, Jones says, “he is dead now, and I don’t know whether he went up or down, and I don’t care a damn which” (“Princeton” 229). These orientations of up
and down mimic the coordinates of coal-mining. While “down” implies the damp, dark workspaces of coal seams, “up” defines the openness and expansiveness of the horizon. Folkloric time, therefore, theorizes the eternal nature of a Christian afterlife, which is reinforced by the cyclicity of coal mining industrial life.

Light-dark metaphors follow from Jones’ figurations of the afterlife. Coal seams enclose a profound sense of darkness – a complete absence of light. Returning to the surface, then, awakens the senses to light, be it merely the subtle glow of the moon. For mining, returning to the surface also implies the return to safety, where coal dust no longer thickens the air, and the constant threat of ceiling collapse no longer induces anxiety. Light-dark metaphors emerge in Jones’ prophetic digressions. In Princeton, she foretells:

In that grand array to come, a man who will stand up in these brutal days, when these murdered babes from the altar of your Gods, is in that great age to come, that we are so near now, which is breaking in the sunlight, you will get your reward. The voice of freedom is coming across the world’s waters. The dawn is breaking. ("Princeton" 231)

A broader rhetoric of coal mining emerges in this passage that threads the diverse themes theorized by the folkloric chronotope. The natural environment, Christianity, and light-dark metaphors meld in an exclamation of prophecy. Jones’ lightness and darkness metaphors, in particular, indicate a sense of folkloric time cadenced by dusk and dawn. Dawn, for Jones, implies safety, return, and rebirth. Dawn represents the opportunity to “see life in a new light.” For Jones, dawn shines light on the remote darkness of coal camp life for the world to see.
Jones asserted a “militant motherhood,” and moreover, normalized familial and matriarchal metaphors as a way to deepen a natural, Christian ethic within coal camps. She adopted a socialist rhetoric of unity to prescribe an ethic of responsibility for all. Narrating the hearing of a slave from the Roman Empire, Jones explains that when asked by a judge, “Who are you?” the slave responded, “I am a man, and a member of the human family” (“Williamson” 212). Jones positions this story to found a unified conception of humanity, one in which the burden of labor is an egalitarian dispersion of work. The familial metaphor, in this way, implies normative values about societal interrelationships where the nuclear family represents the good. Miners were “children.” Jones was “mother.” These terms concretized a Christian moral center and normalized an ethic of responsibility. To Jones, mothers represented the moral center of the family. Men, for instance, were in fact a “reflex of the mother” (“Williamson” 219); that is, only as good as their nurture. Family life in a chronotopic sense meant time spent together, time set aside for engaging the festive and traditional ceremonies of habituated life. Mothers oriented this time and understood it. In other words, the implied folkloric time in familial metaphors was kept sacred by mothers. Jones says, “the destiny of the nations depends upon the women. No nation has ever grown beyond its women. Whatever corruption, whatever brutal, ugly instincts the man has he hasn’t got from his mother” (“Indianapolis” 342). The familial metaphor and folkloric time it represents, for Jones, lays bare the dangers of ceding too much power to the coal companies.

Jones bolsters her cautionary tale regarding the destruction of family life through metaphors about health and disease. Big coal represented a “rotten system” (“Princeton” 225) and its proponents embodied an “ulcer” (224) that needed cleaned out. Rotting
illustrates the natural inclinations of agricultural life, a slow folkloric time that comes from within. An apple might have the sheen of first ripe, but ooze black rot from inside. An ulcer, similarly, hides from plain sight, and causes the stomach serious pain. These metaphors occur in Jones’ speeches to explain incidents like the Ludlow Massacre, where families were “{In a low, pathetic tone} … just asking for more bread to feed their children” (“Princeton” 226). The relationship of sustenance and disease become important metaphorical demarcations within the folkloric chronotope. This chronotope theorizes agricultural and industrial time such that food and nourishment establish benchmarks for the passage of time. When, instead, “the system is eating the vitals out of the honor of the nation” (“Indianapolis” 340), the folkloric chronotope emerges as a wellspring of health and sustenance.

Violence was common to labor disputes in the early twentieth century. Jones has been called “incendiary” and “fiery,” which denotes her callous, rhetorical style reactionary to the inevitable violence of labor disputes. Yet Jones tailored her rhetorical violence, imbued with a folkloric chronotope, to a broader Christian ethic. Regarding coal operators, Jones asserts, “they know their day is doomed. But they are going to give us a fight, and if they want to we are going to give them a fight, and we know how to raise Hell as well as they do (applause)” (“Williamson” 214). Jones enacted democratic and civilly disobedient protests, yet fueled her audiences’ aggression with hell-raising sensibilities. Violent language engaged recent war veterans in familiar wartime rhetorics and endowed the labor movement with self-reliance. In this way, Jones’ violent metaphors may have given credence to the possibility and effectiveness of fighting. Relating again the atrocities of Ludlow through photograph, Jones invokes a pathetic tone
and folkloric foundation to describe the violence that transpired, saying, “this is the blood of the babes that stained the mountain. These babes struck for industrial freedom, for better homes, for better schools, for better manhood, for better womanhood, and you took their blood” (“Princeton” 228). The blood runs thick; so think, in fact, it turns the mud red. Jones’ metaphor figures King Herod’s slaughter of the innocents, and may have moved her audience to see the red Appalachian clay for the first time. Her rhetoric may have moved audiences to see themselves as a collective force. No doubt, she says, miners are “the fighting army of the working class of America. I plead with you to do your business rapidly, get through here, go home and go to work to earn some money. We are going to win the battle in West Virginia” (“Indianapolis” 346). Jones’ violent rhetoric fills her audience with a sense of place and grants them the right to defend it and the values it represents.

The folkloric chronotope emerges in Jones’ figurative language and theorizes an interrelationship between the everyday and industrial life in the southern coalfields. Jones asserts root metaphors related to industry, the natural environment, Christian narratives, lightness and darkness, the family, health and disease, and violence to prophesy the coming of a “new dawn” for American coal mining. Her rhetorical trappings instill in her audience an ethic of responsibility and placed solidarity. Next, I analyze a marching song from the battle at Blair Mountain as a reification of the autobiographical and folkloric chronotope.
CHAPTER III

“WE’RE GONNA HANG DON CHAFIN TO A SOUR APPLE TREE”:

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION AND FOLK SONG

In front of the hotel were two fellows and one said: “I would like to have a rope and hang that old woman to a tree.” Another one said: “And I would like to pull the rope.” After the meeting the boys pointed those men out. I stood with my back to a tree and said: “You said you would like to hang the old woman. Here is the old woman and the tree, where is your rope?” They ran away because there were more than a thousand men at the place. (“Indianapolis” 338)

When you hold your next convention I may be moldering in the dust. (“Indianapolis” 345)

Introduction: Sid Hatfield, Don Chafin, and the March on Blair

Essential to a foundational rhetoric of coal mining, beyond the situated rhetorics of public address, are the cultural enterprises of “the folk.” Music was especially vital to the confrontational rhetorics of unionizing efforts in the southern coalfields; marching songs, anthems, and ballads forged ephemeral yet unifying discourses for striking miners (Korson). Moreover, mining songs bore the timbre of history. Borrowing the melodic material of antebellum compositions, miners rehashed implicit, American histories through historical inversion. Such cultural appropriation mirrors the autobiographical and folkloric chronotope that can be seen in Jones’ inventional stylistics. Thus, the improvisational tendencies discovered in mining songs evidence further the significance of chronotopic figuration for how we might understand an American rhetoric of coal mining.

Along the path to Blair Mountain, miners marched to the lyric, “We’re gonna hang Don Chafin to a sour apple tree” to the tune of “John Brown’s Body.” They also intoned a ballad, singing, “Every little river must go down to the sea / All the slaving
miners and our union will be free / Going to march to Blair Mountain / Going to whip the company / And I don’t want you to weep after me” (Shogan 190). These few lyrics capture the guiding narrative for the mining strike and march in 1921. More importantly, they characterize the cultural appropriation and figurative language unique to wartime and labor rhetorics in American folk tunes. They can be seen to exemplify an inventional connection to the chronotope and illustrate further how we might understand a “placed” rhetoric of coal mining.

The miners’ march was a direct reaction to the Matewan Massacre and Sid Hatfield’s murder on the steps of the courthouse in Welch. At the request of Frank Keeney, hundreds of miners gathered in Marmet beginning 20 August 1921, weeks after Hatfield’s death. Hatfield was seen as a working-class hero against the unjust law enforcement of the Baldwin-Felts detectives, and his murder enraged the boiling passions of disadvantaged mining communities. Shogan argues the impetus for the march began in Matewan:

It was Hatfield who, by gunning down Albert and Lee Felts, had turned the labor conflict into a blood feud. It was Hatfield who had sparked the union resistance to the use of strikebreakers during the violent months that followed the Matewan confrontation. And it was Hatfield’s acquittal in the murder trial in Williamson and his defiant testimony in the Senate hearings that had sustained the miners’ spirits. So it was only natural that as the conflict in southern West Virginia neared its climax, it was again Hatfield who would serve as a catalyst for the denouement. (Shogan 153)
For the hired gunmen, Lively, Salter and Pence, the only way to silence Hatfield’s impertinence was his execution, meanwhile relying on their ability to frame the murder on Ed Chambers. Ed Chambers, a friend and accomplice to Hatfield, accompanied him and their two wives to McDowell County, where Hatfield faced charges for raiding the Mohawk mining camp and dynamiting its tipple. Gubernatorial candidate Sam Montgomery had advised Hatfield to arrive in McDowell unarmed, arguing that there was no physical threat to Hatfield upon arrival. Montgomery said he “found it hard to believe that the system in which he had labored and put his faith could be so corrupted as to condone murder in cold blood” (Shogan 154). In McDowell, Hatfield and Chambers were surprised by a planned attack. Hatfield had no time or defense and was shot and killed. Within one day, word had spread far and wide of Hatfield’s murder. The *UMW Journal* opined: ‘‘Probably never in the history of the country did a cold blooded murder ever create so much indignation.’ Around the country labor groups adopted resolutions that blended sympathy, outrage and the demand for revenge” (Shogan 162).

Especially in the southern coalfields, emotions ran high. While publicly the miners organizing in Marmet vowed to merely “make a demonstration” (Shogan 167), they privately communicated intentions to march south to Mingo County to free jailed union organizers and then to Logan County to engage Sheriff Don Chafin’s police forces. Chafin, receiving word of the miners’ mobilization, claimed that “no armed mob will cross the Logan County line” (Shogan 167). By threatening job firings and imprisonment, Chafin amassed nearly 3,000 defenders in Logan County to stand against the miners. He then requested support from the U.S. armed forces. Subsequently, U.S. Army General Bandholtz was dispatched to West Virginia to persuade Keeney and Mooney to disband
the miners or be held responsible for crimes against the government. They did, and the miners slowly began returning to their homes. Had it not been for a simultaneous shoot-out in Clothier and resulting news that innocent women and children had been killed there, the march on Logan might never have occurred. However, news spread and hundreds of miners began pouring into Marmet once again. This time they coerced their peers to march by way of physical threats and looted company stores as they journeyed. General Bandholtz returned to Marmet to advise President Harding about federal involvement. The miners intended to conquer Blair from the north and west and engage Chafin’s forces stationed just south of the mountain. By early September, the U.S. Air Force and infantry troops had surrounded and defeated the slapdash Redneck Army at Blair Mountain. Consequently, thousands of miners were sent to Charleston on court order. While union spirits ran high in terms of the rebellion’s perceived successes, the battle at Blair Mountain depleted union membership exponentially and undermined trust between the union and policy-makers. As for Don Chafin, the miners did not overwhelm his forces, and according to Shogan, “even if they had, it was not clear what they might have gained from such a tactical success” (211).

The story of Blair Mountain is a tale of last wits. Enraged by the exploitation of capitalist interests and fearful of martial law, miners in West Virginia took up arms against the federal government. Histories of the Civil War, WWI, and slave rebellions were made strikingly present as tear gas and pipe bombs dropped from biplanes besieging miners clad in red bandanas on Blair’s hillsides. The miners were, in fact, living out Jones’ historicized prophecies of insurrection. Moreover, their marching songs
instantiated such a reality and illustrate again broader connections to chronotopic invventional patterns within a foundational rhetoric of coal mining.

“We’re gonna hang Don Chafin to a sour apple tree” inverts the fictionalized and historical narratives of John Brown, an abolitionist executed in West Virginia in 1859. It also bears direct melodic connections to Julia Ward Howe’s “Battle Hymn of the Republic” and the IWW anthem, “Solidarity Forever.” Cultural appropriation at Blair Mountain, therefore, exemplifies the ways in which miners viewed themselves historically and founded their confrontational rhetorics on the narratives of iconic American revolutionaries. Moreover, an autobiographical and folkloric chronotope can be seen in the lyrical figurations of “We’re gonna hang” and “Every little river,” respectively.

In order to analyze the figurative language in these marching songs and proffer their exhortative and rhetorical impact, I first build a connection between the chronotope and cultural appropriation. I then offer a brief history of “John Brown’s Body” and its iterations to explore its placed history for pedagogical import at Blair. Finally, I show how cultural appropriation of folk song at Blair bolsters the invessional stylistics of the chronotope for a rhetoric of coal mining.

Theorizing Cultural Appropriation

Cultural appropriation is one way in which to theorize the chronotope within traditional American folk music. The term subsumes a cultural inclination toward improvisation, and at base, the communicative tendency to say something anew, to make plain the abstract present. For miners, song was an avenue to lay bare their lives (Green).
Korson explains that in coal camps, “the instinct for improvisation was general. In the daytime mine workers drove mules; at night they mounted Pegasus. Improvisation was not only common but casual” (22). Miners improvised new lyrics or embellished standard melodies imported from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and Africa. They paid homage to Civil War dead by singing Union marching anthems or ballads. They celebrated with drinking songs or intoned story songs recollecting the life of Mother Jones. In this way, appropriation underpinned a cultural predisposition toward music-making in coal camps before and after the Civil War.

As explained in my introduction, appropriation in song (e.g., national anthems and protest songs) is rhetorically significant for group identification, solidarity, emotional evocation, catharsis, and for establishing values (Branham and Hartnett; Hurner; Carter; Sanger). However, cultural appropriation in coal songs also suggests an autobiographical and folkloric chronotope that orients audiences historically and emphasizes an understanding of place. In other words, cultural appropriation for a rhetoric of coal mining is not merely a device, but a place from which to stand.

Marothy, a Marxist critic theorizing cultural appropriation, suggests that “borrowing is as characteristic of folklore as a creative transformation of what was once borrowed … A folkloric quality may lie not so much with the invention of an original idea as with the way of its re-interpretation” (15). The marching tunes sung on the march to Blair Mountain exemplify both an autobiographical and folkloric chronotope. From a public consciousness, “of the folk,” marchers inverted historical narratives through song to imbue the present with urgency. Moreover, their songs characterized lives deeply connected to place and industry. The chronotope exemplified in the cultural
appropriation of Blair’s folk songs shows further how we might understand a rhetoric of coal mining.

The autobiographical chronotope can be seen in the public consciousness of coal life. Character is warranted through anecdote, and history is made present. Korson bridges cultural enterprises to the publicness of coal life, arguing:

The bituminous miners did not merely transmit things learned in childhood. They created a culture of their own from inner resources playing upon everyday experiences. But there was nothing self-conscious about their creation. It was carried through with casual unawareness of any cultural value . . . They made ditties, jingles, and ballads, swapped yarns, played the fiddle and danced merely to pass the time. (Korson 20)

Archetypal characterizations aside, improvisation in this sense founds the fabric of cultural life in coal camps. That there was “no self-consciousness” indicates an important connection to Greek forms of speech. Appropriation experienced in the everyday asserts an invention standard for acceptable practices. Mining songs were natural vessels, creative platforms, for crafting new lyrics.

In the marching tunes sung at Blair, the strike’s narrative is told. Don Chafin is an eternalized villain. The miners bring an end to martial law. An enslaved workforce breaks its chains. Of course, the song tells a prophetic narrative instilled with hope. We know now that the southern coalfields remained non-union until the early 1930s. However, the narrative told instantiates an autobiographical chronotope; it recollects abolitionism, civil war, and labor strife through the cultural appropriation of an
antebellum melody. In this way, the songs argue for the certainty of American revolutionary success.

Not only does an autobiographical chronotope emerge in the public and historical narratives recalled in folk songs, but figurations of industry and the everyday illustrate a folkloric chronotope as well. Silber explains that such figuration was unique to American music at the turn of the century:

For nineteenth-century America was a youngster among nations, a brash adolescent emerging from the long shadow of European tradition and culture, the smoke from its newly sprung factories fashioning a soot-grimed image against the stars, the burgeoning music of steam whistles and pounding engines and slave cries giving birth to melodies and tunes and manners of speech. (3)

Silber displays through poetic language the placed rhetorics of music within industrial communities in the nineteenth-century. Musical appropriation, for the folkloric chronotope, describes mimesis – that is, the ways in which musical composition mimics everyday life. Marothy describes that appropriation in this sense, “does not begin with the appropriation of already existing musical idioms but with the musicalization of originally non-musical sounds, objects, human relations” (19). Natural sounds and industrial noise, such as the clop of a mule’s steps or the beat of a pick-axe on the face of a coal seam, “lie behind” (Marothy 19) musical qualities found in folk compositions. In this way, the folkloric can be seen in the sounding of the everyday through folk songs’ mimetic characteristics.
However, the folkloric chronotope can be seen more specifically in folk songs’ lyrical figurations of industry and the everyday. In fact, the tunes sung by miners at Blair exemplify lyrical folkloric qualities most explicitly. Here, comparisons can be made to the folkloric figurations in Jones’ speeches; that is, the marching songs intoned at Blair engage themes like Christianity, the natural environment, the home, and health.

“We’re gonna hang” and “Every little river” both exemplify an implicit autobiographical and folkloric chronotope through the cultural stylistic of appropriation. Moreover, in 1921, these marching songs equally bolstered group identification, evoked emotions, exhorted solidarity, and established shared values. Next, I ground a history of “John Brown’s Body” and its nineteenth- and twentieth-century iterations.

“John Brown’s Body”

“John Brown’s Song,” or later “John Brown’s Body,” originally chronicled the career of Union Sergeant John Brown from Fort Warren in Massachusetts (Nudelman 180). “Say, brothers, will you meet us?” written by William Steffe in 1856 is also accepted as the first appearance of these songs’ shared melody. The song now only refers to John Brown of Connecticut, a devout Calvinist and tanner turned abolitionist in the decades leading up to the Civil War. Hanged for treason in Charles Towne, West Virginia in 1859, Brown led slave revolts in Kansas and Virginia. His political agitations are well-documented and their impact recurrently debated (Reynolds; Nudelman). While his legacy served to solidify the Union and boost abolitionist sympathies, conversely, Brown was and continues to be characterized as a fanatic and bloodthirsty criminal. The Pottawatomie Massacre in Kansas in 1856, in which Brown and a small group of
abolitionists murdered five northern settlers, led many to see Brown as a reckless terrorist warring ineffectually against the institution of slavery. More infamous was the raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859, when Brown and some twenty accomplices attacked the Confederate camp and armory of Robert E. Lee.

On the surface, the Harpers Ferry raid accomplished little for dismantling the institution of slavery. Horwitz describes the penultimate skirmish:

Trapped in Harpers Ferry, the raiders fought for 24 hours until Robert E. Lee ordered marines to storm the building where the survivors had holed up. Ten raiders were killed, including two of Brown’s sons, and seven more hanged. No slaves won their freedom. The first civilian casualty was a free black railroad worker, shot in the back while fleeing the raiders. (1)

For many opposed to Brown’s tactics, the railroad worker’s death was case enough to judge Brown insane. Instead of being seen as fighting for abolitionism, Brown was thus perceived as a psychopath masking a thirst for violence with social and political interests. At his trial, however, Brown denied an insanity plea, and instead argued the moral good of his actions. He prophesied, moreover, that the nation would endure a civil war of epic proportions in the coming years due to the continuing injustice of slavery.

Nationally, Brown was denounced as a violent radical after the attack at Harpers Ferry. However, Transcendentalists like Thoreau and Emerson “salvaged his reputation by placing him on the level of Christ” (Reynolds 1) and cast him as a martyr. Eventually, John Brown’s story evoked broad Union sympathizing in the North. Frederick Douglass attributed the onset of the Civil War to Brown’s revolutionary actions, saying, “I could live for the slave. John Brown could die for him” (Cox 1). Brown’s posthumous
reimagining asserted the underlying moral principles of abolitionism. His body stood as a sacrifice for inalienable rights granted to all citizens in the U.S. Constitution. In fact, on 1 January 1863, after the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, George Stearns held a party for Lincoln’s achievement at a mansion in Medford, Massachusetts (Reynolds). There, a marble statue of Brown was unveiled and attendees sang Julia Ward Howe’s “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” an homage to Brown and an anthem for Union forces, and as Silber points out, “the single most popular parody to the most-parodied melody in American music” (10). These words inspired strong Union loyalty:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.

Chorus:
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!

His truth is marching on. (Howe)

Reynolds explains that the party was, “in its own way, as meaningful as Lincoln’s proclamation” (1). Earlier that day in Harpers Ferry, General Robert Milroy read the proclamation at which troops stationed there celebrated, chorusing to “John Brown’s Body.” They sang:

John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave,

John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave,
His soul is marching on.

Chorus:

Glory, glory hallelujah!

Glory, glory hallelujah!

His soul is marching on.

He’s gone to be a soldier in the army of the Lord,

He’s gone to be a soldier in the army of the Lord,

His soul is marching on!

John Brown’s knapsack is strapped upon his back,

John Brown’s knapsack is strapped upon his back,

His soul is marching on!

His pet lambs will meet him on the way,

His pet lambs will meet him on the way,

They go marching on!

They will hang Jeff Davis to a sour apple tree,

They will hang Jeff Davis to a sour apple tree,

As they march along!

Now, three rousing cheers for the Union,

Now, three rousing cheers for the Union,

As we are marching on! (Nudelman)

We see here that in the original “John Brown’s Body,” “soul” was used instead of Howe’s “truth.” Moreover, Howe’s version, like other parodies of the antebellum tune,
displays more poetic complexity than the original marching song. The simplicity of “John Brown’s Body” made the lyrics both memorable and easy to learn.

Many parodies were written adhering to the complexity seen in “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” For instance, the Industrial Workers of the World anthem, “Solidarity Forever,” displays poetic verbosity in each of its verses. Not surprisingly, “Solidarity Forever” proved one of the labor movement’s more recognizable protest tunes. The first verse clearly values eloquence over conciseness:

When the union’s inspiration through the workers’ blood shall run,

There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun;

Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one,

But the union makes us strong.

Solidarity forever,

Solidarity forever,

Solidarity forever,

For the union makes us strong. (Chaplin)

Chaplin’s version of the antebellum song played on the familiarity of “Battle Hymn of the Republic” for turn-of-the-century working-class Americans. While union songs abounded beginning in the nineteenth-century (Carter), “Solidarity Forever,” an unoriginal musical composition (i.e., lyrics aside), gained the most popularity.

The cultural history of “John Brown’s Body” and its fanatical, martyred subject are laid bare in the chronotopic cultural appropriation of “We’re gonna hang” and “Every little river” sung at Blair Mountain. John Brown’s “truth” marched beside striking miners on their path to Logan and aligned their plight with cultural histories of revolution
and revolt. Next, I investigate the ways in which the folk tunes sung at Blair figure an autobiographical and folkloric chronotope.

Analysis: Figures of an Autobiographical and Folkloric Chronotope

“We’re gonna hang” and “Every little river” together explicate the ways in which appropriated folk melody transcends and binds historical time chronotopically. The John Brown melody underlying the Blair Mountain marching songs implies a distinct cultural memory. Meanwhile, their lyrics simultaneously conceal and reveal such memory. First, I show the ways in which “We’re gonna hang” and “Every little river” lyrically and melodically bolstered group identity, exhorted solidarity, and evoked emotion. I then examine the songs’ figurative language in relation to an implied cultural memory as indicative of an autobiographical and folkloric chronotope.

The marching songs were invocations of identification. Specifically, marchers defined themselves collectively by using plural pronouns. Aside from the final lyric of “Every little river,” “And I don’t want you to weep after me,” the use of “we” and “our” indicated the group consciousness of the striking miners. Singing the word “we” individuated a collective whole, such that each miner, by singing along, understood his peers’ and his own intentions. The use of plural pronouns, in this way, encouraged the ego of the group; that is, the pronouns bolstered a broader group identity.

Such identity was, in part, inartistic. That is, the striking miners were common and familiar to each other as members of the working-class. However, they also established an artistic identity through song. In this way, the miners were “slaving” and liable to violence. This latter, artistic, identification was exhortative (Black); that is,
however committed to the union or the intentions of the march, by singing the marching tunes’ lyrics, each miner (consciously or not) adjusted himself to such attitudes through song. The tunes, thus, converted miners to a group identity of resistance.

“And I don’t want you to weep after me” personalized the emotional tumult of labor warfare and differentiated individual struggle from group identity. The lyric reinforced the necessity of the march and turned the fear of death into hope for the union. Rhetorically, it reflected collectivizing language on the self, querying each miner’s commitment to the establishment of union rights, his willingness to die for the union. By bracketing remorse, the miners were simultaneously reminded of, and enabled to, shun the security of home. Death was in service of the good of the union; weeping, in this context, proved the futility of the march. While “Every little river,” like “John Brown’s Body” in this way, enabled marchers to translate “death into martial enthusiasm, reminding soldiers that they died on behalf of a greater cause, it did not allow them to ignore the difficult reality of violent death” (Nudelman 15).

“Every little river” is anecdotal as much as figurative. Its anecdote is a primary indication of an autobiographical chronotope. The miners were, literally, “Going to march to Blair Mountain, / Going to whip the company.” Of course, the narrative of the march is not complete without historical context; however, the place and impetus are overtly stated. The song is set in motion, explicitly for the march on Blair, and reflexive. The song is anecdotal for its own sake. Certainly the miners knew their directional and political intentions privately, yet they sang these outright. One explanation might argue reflexivity here was a cause of a lyrical fit. A better explanation grounds their anecdotal reflexivity in the autobiographical chronotope; that is, the miners chronotopically “placed”
their lyrics because such information was “of the folk” and appropriate. In “We’re gonna hang,” the explicit use of Don Chafin substantiates the miners’ rhetorical impulse to lay bare the abstract present through musical narrative.

Nevertheless, the use of “Don Chafin” indicates more than a reflexive, anecdotal impulse. Due to the cultural memory implied in “We’re gonna hang,” “Don Chafin” recalls “Jeff Davis” of “John Brown’s Body” and the rhetorical significance of Brown’s “a-mouldering” for Union fervor. “Don Chafin” not only named the Sheriff of Logan County in 1921, but recalled the Confederate leader Jefferson Davis and the decomposed body of Sid Hatfield through the melodic appropriation of “John Brown’s Body.” The literal meaning of “We’re gonna hang” denotes the miners’ intentions to overwhelm police forces in Logan. Extant scholarship does not support the miners’ literal intention to lynch Don Chafin. Fidelity to the historical melody may explain why the verb “hang” remained. However, there is no reason to throw out the possible literal meaning; the miners did, in fact, intend to hang Don Chafin in Logan County. We know now that the miners were besieged at Blair, and therefore never actually confronted Chafin in Logan. Nevertheless, rhetorically, “Don Chafin” represents the idea of a lynched sheriff on whom the miners could pin their frustrations, emboldening them along their way to Blair.

Implicit in “We’re gonna hang” is the image of Sid Hatfield’s dead body, murdered on the steps of McDowell County’s courthouse. In singing “John Brown’s Body,” Union soldiers “celebrated the process of decomposition through which Brown’s actual body was transformed into a diffuse, inspiriting presence” (Nudelman 2). Sid Hatfield’s political agitations and execution were, by many accounts, responsible for the labor uprising in the southern coalfields. In this way, his “mouldering” body haunted the
long march to Logan. Yet, as was the case in the Civil War, such decomposition abstracted imminent violence, instead, “reassuring soldiers who contemplated imminent death that their pain would serve a transcendent purpose” (Nudelman 2). Like John Brown, Sid Hatfield is melodically resurrected as an argument for the transcendent potential of death at war. “Don Chafin” implies this cultural heritage through historical inversion. Its pedagogical import is especially important – as for Union soldiers, the song advises the “abstraction of bodily suffering that allows for the amplification of the body’s social meaning” (Nudelman 15).

An autobiographical chronotope emerges in “We’re gonna hang” and “Every little river” as the songs sought to exhort solidarity through anecdote and invert history through lyrical improvisation. The “slaving” miners abstracted the fear of violence through the decomposed body of Sid Hatfield as exemplar of the transcendent potential of death at war, that death might enable the labor movement to “endure” (Nudelman 16). The miners sought to break the chains of industrial slavery and “whip the company” in order to obtain union rights. Moreover, they simultaneously “placed” their narrative historically and transcended time chronotopically through melodic appropriation.

Meanwhile, figurations of a folkloric chronotope can be seen in the lyrics of both “We’re gonna hang” and “Every little river.” Similar to Jones’ stylistics, these songs exemplify figurative language regarding violence, the natural environment, and Christian narratives. In this way, the songs connect industry and the everyday to deliberative rhetorics – the songs’ metaphors argue for the necessity of revolution.

Miners abstracted violence and bracketed remorse; however, metaphorical readings of “hang” and “whip” exemplify the violence inherent to industrial life at the
turn of the century. Especially during the Reconstruction, lynchings were common in the U.S. as anxieties about white supremacy heightened in the South. Hanging, in this regard, has a long history in American race relations. The noose or images of hanged-dead symbolize mob consciousness, (in)justice, and ritualized execution. To threaten a man’s hanging was not only to threaten his life, but to publicly reconstitute his image and subvert his status. Both “hang” and “whip” hearken to terms common to the institution of slavery. “Whip,” more obliquely, again implies the violence of industrial life. It also bears in its symbolism the muleskinner’s relation to the mule. The whip, for the miner, was used to keep the mule moving. Mules, known to be savvy, stubborn animals, were outsmarted by the lash. At Blair Mountain, the miners intended to outsmart and commandeer Logan County by the force of the whip. Moreover, they meant to reconstitute Don Chafin’s image as a criminal.

The “sour apple tree” displays miners’ relations to the natural environment common to the folkloric chronotope and meanwhile figures a pathetic rhetoric. The tree, as tree, symbolizes growth and fruit. Timber from the tree is a product of industry and a staple of American fortification. The sour apple tree, more commonly referred to as a crab apple tree, however, symbolizes fruit only good once fallen from the tree, and quickly rotted from within on the barren earth. Like Jones’ disease metaphors, in this way, rotting demands remedy; that is, a rotten labor system demands a revolutionary democratic will. Chafin’s hanging, therefore, enables the fruitful rebirth of a just police state in the southern coalfields. The tree’s sourness, moreover, embodies the violent, pathetic rhetoric of the striking miners. Their past, futile attempts at unionization had
soured them to civil practices. In turn, their march sought to show that their resistance had not spoiled; that, instead, it had fermented into a volatile movement.

One biblical allusion, “every little river must go down to the sea,” also adopts poetic language tied to the natural environment. In Ecclesiastes 1:17, King David describes the “futility of nature,” proclaiming, “all the streams flow into the sea, but the sea is not full, and to the place where the streams flow, there they will flow again.” Natural cyclicity, in this way, does not undermine the miners’ deliberative ends to disrupt the status quo. Instead, cyclicity here argues in terms of the endless stream’s flow as a metaphor for the miner’s march. The streams “will flow again,” because the sea is never entirely filled. Again, such a biblical allusion was familiar to miners, who were knowledgeable in Christian narratives and found them pedagogical for the everyday.

Figurations of violence, the natural environment, and Christian narratives exemplify the folkloric characteristics of the chronotope in “We’re gonna hang” and “Every little river.” Because the miners were “soured” to the futility of civil disobedience, they threatened to “whip the company,” and understood themselves as part of a natural, cyclical movement to obtain union rights. Moreover, through melodic appropriation and lyrical improvisation, the miners displayed such figurations as tied to the past, as haunted by a distinct cultural memory.

Folk singing, for the march at Blair Mountain, transcends and binds historical time through cultural appropriation. By chorusing an antebellum melody, marchers saw themselves historical; yet by improvising lyrically, they “placed” themselves firmly in time and imposed on the present a sense of urgency. Next, I look to several speeches by Judy Bonds to show the ways in which contemporary environmental arguments against
MTR in Appalachia display chronotopic figurations for how we might understand a broader rhetoric of coal mining.
CHAPTER IV

“NATURE’S DEADLINE, NOT OURS”: A RHETORIC OF COAL MINING AND SPEECHES OF JUDY BONDS

Leave those mountains down, boys,
Leave those mountains down.
Don’t tear up what the heavens bore;
Leave those mountains down.

My daddy was a miner, and my granddad too;
They crawled inside the bowels of earth diggin’ coal and paying union dues;
They long since died from King Coal, lay buried in the ground,
But if they were here, they’d tell you: Leave that mountain down.

This earth has housed my people, our sorrow and our pain;
We’ve climbed the mountaintops, where we bowed our heads to pray;
We’ve seen her through some bad times, but not as bad as this:
They’re tearing off the mountaintops, you can’t put ‘em back again.

What gives you the right King Coal to tear these mountains down?
Once you’ve stole her treasures, you’ll not hang around
Although you’ll have your riches, behind a shell you’ll be;
And the mountain citizens will pay for all your lustful greed. (Burns)

Introduction: Judy Bonds and Blair Mountain

Shirley Stewart Burns sang these lyrics at the 2008 Conference for the Appalachian Studies Association (ASA) to the tune of “Which Side Are You On?” That song was written by Florence Reece in 1931, imitating the melodies of “Lay the Lily Low” and “Jackaroe,” traditional instrumental tunes from the nineteenth-century. “Which Side Are You On?” chronicles the alienation felt by unions and union organizing in Appalachia historically, and has been rerecorded by country and folk musicians over the last eighty years. Burns was introducing Julia “Judy” Bonds, an anti-mountaintop removal activist and guest speaker at the conference. Bonds’ subsequent twenty-minute
speech displays the incendiary stylistics that garnered her international acclaim for her environmental activism beginning in the 1990s. The speech, along with three other speeches by Bonds since 2007, typify MTR debates in relation to the historically-grounded rhetoric of coal mining discussed thus far. Therefore, Bonds’ speeches characterize contemporary, grassroots opposition to coal mining policies in Appalachia.

Historically, coal communities fought corporations for the right to organize, for improved facilities, for increased wages, and to prevent unjust, privatized police enforcement within coal camps. Today, some individuals within coal communities, especially in the southern coalfields, are protesting the process of mountaintop removal mining due to its effects on the environment and on the quality of life of nearby residents. This debate has broadened the scope of historically grounded labor arguments to include disputes about the environment. Consequently, Appalachian communities have received increased national attention in the last decade as environmentalists and lobbyists dispute domestic causes and effects of climate change. Moreover, the debates have pitted West Virginia residents against each other.

The chronotopic figurations of coal mining seen in public address and cultural appropriation at Blair Mountain at the turn of the century underpin contemporary rhetorical strategies to prevent MTR there and throughout Appalachia today. Today, an autobiographical and folkloric chronotope persists in coal mining discourse and is specifically exemplified in the speech of Judy Bonds. While arguments surrounding Blair have broadened paradigmatically to include environmental concerns, their rhetorical foundation remains grounded in chronotopic figurations.
Bonds’ speeches embody the raw frustration felt by many displaced residents of Appalachian coal communities. Born in 1952 and raised in Marfork, West Virginia to a third generation coal miner, Bonds lived through coal’s recession mid-century and observed the onset of strip mining practices in West Virginia. Her father died of black lung at 65, only months after he retired (Schnayerson 43). Married and with a daughter, Bonds worked at a Pizza Hut and convenience stores until the early 1990s. At that time, Massey Energy Corporation had selected Marfork as an MTR site and was purchasing neighboring homes in order to clear land for operations. Schnayerson recalls, “Together with her daughter and grandson, Judy lived in a state of siege … She couldn’t imagine leaving the house where she’d lived most of her life, especially knowing that Massey would raze it as soon as she did” (47).

Finally, due to worries about her grandson’s health, Bonds sold her family estate to Massey Energy. Residents bought out by Massey were forced to sign non-disclosure contracts, agreeing not to publicly discuss MTR practices. Bonds signed, but by the time she moved into a new home in Marsh Fork, West Virginia she vowed to fight MTR and Massey Energy in the Coal River Valley, the threat of a civil suit notwithstanding. She joined Coal River Mountain Watch (CRMW) and worked tirelessly in organizing protests. Bonds led rallies throughout the coalfields, enduring physical attacks and alienation; for instance in 2009, she received a slap to the face from a Massey employee at a demonstration at Marsh Fork Elementary, a school adjacent to an overburdened coal sludge impoundment. The encounter gained national attention and invigorated opposition to MTR practices. Bonds told Jeff Biggers, who was reporting on the event,
that “this violent, unprovoked attack demonstrates the tactics Massey will use to silence and intimidate local residents” (Biggers 1).

Bonds earned the title “Godmother” of the MTR movement and was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize (also known as the “Green Nobel Prize”) for her work in West Virginia (Berkes). In the summer of 2010, she was diagnosed with cancer and died 3 January 2011. Before her death she was traveling and speaking about MTR practices. Her relatively early death led Director of CRMW, Vernon Haltom, to speculate, saying, “I believe, as others do, that Judy's years in Marfork holler, where she remained in her ancestral home as long as she could, subjected her to Massey Energy's airborne toxic dust and led to the cancer that wasted no time in taking its toll” (Biggers 1).

Like the speeches of Mother Jones, Bonds’ speeches were incendiary, “godmotherly,” co-constructed, deliberative, and deeply “of the folk.” She was called a “spitfire” (Brown) and was well-known for her “straight-talking indignation” (Brown, “Post Mortem”). To proponents of the coal industry, Bonds represented a threat to surface miners’ job security and to the economic future of West Virginia. Schnayerson recounts:

Almost every day, Judy ran up against someone who wanted her to cool down or shut up. Her angriest critics were neighbors who worked for Massey or had a relative who did. Red strikers and their families despised her and weren’t shy about telling her so. Mine-truck drivers still made obscene gestures as they rumbled by CRMW’s Whitesville storefront or pulled their Jake Brakes and blared their horns as a show of scorn. (39)
In 1999, Bonds organized and led a reenactment of the 1921 miners’ march on Blair Mountain. Along with a dozen dedicated activists, Bonds departed in August on the sixty-mile trek to Logan. Like the incident at Marsh Fork Elementary, however, Bonds and company were intercepted. Williams recalls:

A pro-mining mob drove 50 miles from Logan to assault them. Placards were ripped from their hands and destroyed. They were tripped, kicked, choked, spat upon, pelted with cans, eggs, and tomatoes, and informed that they would be killed if they didn't go "back to Charleston where they belonged." [Environmental activist] Gibson ripped a man off the back of Ken Hechler, then 85 and West Virginia's secretary of state. (Williams)

This quarrel displays the heightened emotions on both sides of arguments regarding MTR. Moreover, it displays recurrent violence in the southern coalfields. As the debate broadens paradigmatically, violent feuds continue in coal communities. Bonds advised audiences to adopt nonviolent civil disobedience in her speeches (“Powershift”); nevertheless violence has often erupted at anti-MTR events.

This chapter explores four of Bonds’ public engagements at conferences and rallies (Powershift! 2007 in Washington, D.C., Appalachia Studies Association’s 2008 Convention, Capitol Climate Action in March 2009, and Coal River Mountain Rally in December 2009) as contemporary instantiations of a rhetoric of coal mining broadly. While Bonds’ arguments engage labor and environmental concerns, her figurative

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3 Mountain Justice, an activist organization, will again reenact the march on Blair Mountain in June 2011. This time, however, they expect much greater involvement from opponents to MTR than the number of participants in 1999. This summer marks the ninetieth anniversary of the march in 1921; moreover, Blair Mountain is projected for surface mining sometime in the next year. Having been removed from the National Register of Historic Places, Blair Mountain is at risk of repurposing by Massey Energy.
language exemplifies both an autobiographical and folkloric chronotope. In this way, she espouses stylistics entrenched in the anecdotal and everyday of coal life. Bond, in fact, embodies an ethos akin to the “placed” persona of early twentieth-century hell-raiser, Mother Jones. First, I show how Bonds was “of the folk” in order to ground further her placed rhetorics of resistance.

The “Godmother” of a Mountaintop Removal Movement

Bonds, speaking at “Powershift” in Washington D.C., advised nearly 6,000 attendees:

Remember, coal is enemy number one. It’s the number one enemy of you and your children. Greedy corporations and coal companies says [sic] that treehuggers and environmentalists will destroy the American way of life, but I say, that doing nothing, as the coal companies and corporations want you to do, will destroy the American way of life, and it will destroy life itself. (“Powershift”)

A move toward a labor and environmental rhetoric of coal can be seen here. At the turn of the century, coal, as a fuel source, represented an industrial and economic good publicly. At that time, communities fought the exploitative practices of coal corporations. Bonds’ argument, in this instance, exemplifies environmentalist logic that demonizes the destructive potential of burning coal. She meanwhile adopts an historical rhetoric of coal mining, where the “greedy corporations” are at fault for mining coal, “public enemy number one.” These phrases hearken to a bygone era of clear cut good and evil, and mimic parodied warrants for the Wild West’s “wanted” renegades. In this way, Bonds
proffers an environmental argument couched in the figurative language of an historicized “American way of life,” especially in the discourse common to labor disputes in the early twentieth century.

Often clad in a t-shirt with the slogan, “Save the Endangered Hillbilly,” Bonds asserted an ethos “of the folk.” Bonds was raised a coal miner’s daughter and she lived in the southern coalfields until her untimely death. Her audiences, however, were an amalgam of concerned local residents, intellectuals, and environmental activists, many of whom were college-educated youth. In this way, she argued for the universality of “hillbilly,” not as a derogatory distinction, but as a term to convert audiences, perhaps outside the folk, to a grassroots ideology. At the ASA conference, Bonds displays her “hillbilly” authenticity and normalizes such an identity for conference participants, saying, “hello, Appalachia! Don’t you just love that name? My old grandma taught me is you pronounce it like ‘I’m gonna throw an apple atcha’” (“ASA”). Citing a West Virginia University study on hazardous conditions in coal communities due to coal pollution, she says, “Well, we hillbillies have known that for over a hundred years, what took you so long?” (“ASA”). Many in the audience laughed and cheered, to which Bonds pushed the point further, arguing that state and federal legislators view “hillbillies” as “disposable.”

Bonds used the plural pronoun “we” to normalize and universalize coal community issues to a broader demographic in attendance at her speeches. When she asks, “If coal is so good for us hillbillies, then why are we so poor?” (“ASA”), Bonds broadens the socioeconomic issues of coal community life to a public presumably above the poverty line. Moreover, like Jones, she often reflects on her own experience,
explicating how an authentic “hillbilly” reacts to political and socioeconomic injustice. This way, her audiences are invited to adopt “hillbilly” identities performed by a credible folk hero. For instance, Bonds admits, “you know what, I don’t mind being poor, and I don’t mind being made fun of, but I draw the line at being blasted and poisoned” (“Capitol Climate Action”). Here, poverty is positioned as common, “of the folk,” and accepted. Additionally, Bonds demarcates the boundaries of her contention – her activism is about health and safety, not personal monetary needs.

Unlike Jones, who corresponded with governors and corporate executives, Bonds worked entirely from a grassroots political position. Nevertheless, for anti-MTR activists, Bonds was perceived as a potential sociopolitical agent for policy change in West Virginia. Environmental activists were drawn to hear her speak and Bonds was frequently interviewed as a “voice” for the movement.

Bonds’ title, “Godmother,” is a play on similarities drawn between her public persona and the historicized orator, Mother Jones. Not only was Bonds a confrontational speaker against the coal industry and a woman, she constructed a matronly role through argument and language. At “Powershift,” she claims, “I think my children, and that is each and every one of you, deserve clean air, clean water, and energy” (“Powershift”). Like Jones’ public in this way, anti-MTR audiences were Bonds’ “children.” Bonds’ concern was their future and their ability to take action against destructive industrial labor. Following stories regarding arrogant attitudes about global warming or strip mining, Bonds scolded audiences, saying “Shame on him” (“ASA”) or “Shame on us” (“Powershift”). Such admonishments echo parent-child relationships and constitute Bonds’ motherly status. Yet, Bonds was not characterized merely as a motherly figure,
but a “godmother.” A godparent, in the Christian tradition, guides a person’s baptism and is a model for their religious life. In a folkloric sense, the godparent is supernatural, capable of granting guidance and opportunity. Symbolically, “Godmother” Bonds presented a message of moral good for Appalachian communities and embodied the enchanting presence of the uncanny. As folkloric hero, “Godmother” Bonds was a vessel for the hope of environmental justice.

Bonds meanwhile established universalizing arguments to widen her audience base. At the ASA convention, she argues that all Americans need to accept responsibility for environmental ills in Appalachia: “If you get your electricity from a coal-fired power plant, then yes, you do have coal mining issues” (“ASA”). Rather than positioning MTR mining as a mere regional issue, Bonds describes an integrated national problem regarding manufacture of American energy. Additionally, she explains that the U.S. is not unique in this way: “The entire world has coal issues: Global warming, asthma, water poisoning of our children. Coal issues should be everyone’s priority. Everyone’s priority” (“ASA”). Like Jones’ rhetoric, Bonds’ universalizing language bolsters her argument by broadening responsibility; moreover, it enlivens coal mining issues with a sense of urgency.

Figurative and implicit similarities between Bonds and Jones strengthen how we might understand the chronotope to be functioning in an rhetoric of coal. Bonds may be seen to embody a chronotopic figuration of the historicized Jones, thus instantiating a performative metaphor for one of the labor movement’s lost folk heroes. That said, Bonds’ implicit rhetorical appropriations of Jones’ ethos and style also disclose the lapse of time. In particular, Bonds frequently uses the word “still” to indicate continuing
injustice in Appalachia, a device unobserved in the speeches of Jones. For instance, at
the ASA convention, she laments condoned discrimination in the coalfields:

The Appalachians is the only ethnic group left that America can still make
fun of and get by with it, the only one left. America still rapes the land
and people of Appalachia and doesn’t think twice about it. Government
agencies still hold contempt for us Appalachians, they want us extinct –
they want us to go away. (“ASA”)

Through these rhetorical choices, Bonds orients her audience toward Appalachian history
and describes the cyclicity inherent in sociopolitical struggles between lawmakers and the
public in coal communities.

I show, next, the ways in which Bonds inverts American history to instill
audiences with a sense of urgency. Like Jones, she recalls wartime and labor rhetorics as
indicative of successful revolutionary action. By demonstrating an autobiographical
chronotope through anecdote and figurative language, she exemplifies how we might
understand an historicized, contemporary rhetoric of coal mining.

Analysis I: Figures of an Autobiographical Chronotope

An autobiographical chronotope underpins Bonds’ stylistics through her use of
personal narrative, anecdote, and historical inversion. While Bonds’ stylistics may be
seen as rhetorical conventions, they more importantly explicate her “placed” ethos “of the
folk.” Bonds argues from “placed” rhetorics of opposition that are imbued with the
specter of history.
For Bakhtin, the autobiographical chronotope emerges in the narratives of an orator whose public and private self manifests in speech, whose character gets “filled in” through self-disclosure. Bonds, like Jones, had led the front lines of civil disobedient resistance against coal corporations. Consequently, Bonds publicly narrated her experiential history in the coalfields to ground her artistic ethos and engender continued support for the movement. In Washington D.C., she admits her own conversion toward new approaches to mobilizing activism:

Months ago, the youth of America were told to chain themselves to coal fired power plants to stop the new ones. And then a youth looked at me and said, “Why just the youth? We didn’t create this mess by ourselves, so why just us? We just inherited the mess that you created.” And I agree and that’s why I’m here today to stand beside the youth of America, to cross across that line. (“Capitol Climate Action”)

Bonds’ narrative illustrates that she is open to broadening her scope, willing to admit fault and work toward a stronger collective. Moreover, she prescribes such an attitude as necessary to the movement’s democratic character. An autobiographical chronotope emerges in which Bonds’ public and private character is manifest through personal narrative.

She accomplishes similar ends through anecdote. Bonds’ use of anecdote proffers collective identity in order to bolster solidarity and engage audiences through emotion. Journalists and friends often described Bonds’ caustic wit and her ability to make audiences laugh (Biggers). At the ASA convention, she explains, again, what it means to be a “hillbilly”: 
A couple from a West Virginia holler, or any Appalachian holler, was seated on an airplane across from another couple. Well the West Virginia holler girl, being friendly an all, looked at the couple across the aisle, from where they were sitting, and asked, “So, where ya’ll from?” Well, the upper crust girl looked at her and said, “From a place where they know better than to end a sentence with a preposition.” So the holler girl sat there quiet for a minute, and then she looked back across the aisle, at the woman, and said, “So where ya’ll from, bitch?” That’s why they don’t want us around, because we’re real, we’re honest, and we’re in your face. (“ASA”)

Here, Bonds makes plain what it means to be Appalachian, meanwhile normalizing such an archetype for her audience. The anecdote asserts that Appalachians are “real,” “honest,” and “in your face”; in this way, Bonds argues authenticity is judged based upon a person’s ability to call it as it is. Moreover, her description of the “upper crust” girl figures both the facade of inauthentic speech, as a folkloric allusion to the mountain’s outer surface, and the disparity of socioeconomic stratification between the anecdote’s characters. Conversely, the “holler girl,” represents the roughness, the loudness of Appalachian speech, figuring the natural authenticity of sub-bituminous coal. Appalachians, according to Bonds’ anecdote, endorse an authentic form of humanism where no one is “disposable,” no matter how simplified their speech. Other anecdotes depict endangered communities and sick children; in these instances, Bonds’ seeks to evoke empathy and concern from audiences.
At times, Bonds’ personal narratives and anecdotes received laughter and cheers from enthusiastic audiences. Such co-construction illustrated similarities to the performative stylistics of Mother Jones. In fact, similarities abound in exploring speeches from both orators, not least in their stylistic proclivity toward historical inversion. Bonds seems to have had an eye on the past, and an ear toward Jones’ public speeches. For instance, at the Coal River Mountain Rally, she says, “About a hundred years ago, Mother Jones says there’s no justice in southern West Virginia. Amen, Sister Jones, ‘cause that’s still true today. There’s no justice in West Virginia. Over a hundred years ago, the greed and corruption of the coal industry stole our great state” (“CRMR”). The crowd erupted in applause as Bonds prophesied the successful protection of Coal River Mountain. Bonds’ rhetorical appropriation of Jones’ assertions inverts the historical narrative of labor resistance for the rallied audience. Disregarding how Jones might have argued for or against an environmental rhetoric today as right, Bonds endears herself to the historical narrative of Jones’ oppositional rhetoric of coal mining.

Although she displaces a labor ideology in favor of an environmental impulse, more accurately, Bonds invokes Jones’ labor activism for its pedagogical import. In other words, Jones’ speeches teach contemporary activists that the coal corporations were and continue to be greedy and malevolent, that confrontation is necessary for the survival of democratic life in the southern coalfields. At times, Bonds’ figurative language seems cropped directly out of Jones’ speeches at Williamson or Princeton. At Coal River Mountain, she asks, “The pro-coal thugs talk about patriotism, but yet they support a Russian coal company that bombs our Appalachian communities – is that patriotism?” (“CRMR”). Later, she demands reform in state and local governance, asking the
assistance of the federal government, saying, “Coal has corrupted our state government, and the Feds need to come in and take over the state government of West Virginia, all the way from the governor to the dogcatcher, especially the governor of West Virginia” (“CRMR”). In this way, Bonds’ language hearkens to a bygone era of “Feds” and “coal thugs.” Similar language emerged when Jones insisted on oversight in private law enforcement, or asked President Harding to mediate an imminent “blood feud” in the coalfields. In discussing MTR, Bonds’ figurative choices exemplify the “placed” rhetorics of coal mining disputes, and audiences celebrate Bonds’ antiquated language. Due to the audience response, one may presume that the West Virginia Mine Wars are not only familiar, but also that their specter haunts the conflict over MTR in Appalachia. For Bonds, Jones and labor movement histories are appropriate analogies for resistance against Massey Energy and the “coal barons” responsible for coal slurries, silica ash, and contaminated water in coal communities.

Like Jones, Bonds utilizes a breadth of historical data to ground contemporary political opposition as both necessary and democratic. Eighty years after Jones, Bonds has new American revolutionary action from which to draw. The ways in which Bonds treats such democratic histories are significant for how we might understand historical inversion to operate within a rhetoric of coal mining. In particular, Bonds inverts histories of September 11, the Civil Rights movement, World War II, and slavery to call attention to revolutionary behavior inherent in American democratic practices.

At Coal River Mountain, Bonds figures the 2001 destruction of the World Trade Center as analogous to surface mining in the Appalachian Mountains. Abstractly, she exclaims, “We are ground zero, to save the earth, the only place we know is home”
Bonds makes common the terrorist attack in 2001 as a metaphorical threat to Appalachia and the earth broadly. In this way, the explosives used to strip mine thousands of acres of mountaintops are indictments of ideology, breaches of security, weapons of hate. Home is no longer safe. Communities must arm a defense. “Ground zero,” moreover, implies an attack has already occurred; now, in other words, coal communities can only sift through the rubble, become familiar with what once was. The September 11 attacks remain a vivid collective memory in the American psyche; as such, Bonds’ analogy evokes the emotional tumult felt by many during and after planes collided with the twin towers in the heart of Manhattan.

Bonds also refers euphemistically to the Civil Rights movement as a challenge to young Americans to enter the political stage. At “Powershift,” while offering advice on the steps toward collective mobilization, she argues: “The first step is to tell the baby-boomers to get off their retired butts and finish the job they started in the 60s” (“Powershift”). Never is there mention of the specifics of the “job they started,” nor why they never finished it. Nevertheless, in response, the 6,000 person audience erupts in applause. Presumably, “the 60s” operates ideographically in that individual audience members attribute Bonds’ argument to various narratives about civil disobedience, the Civil Rights movement, and resistance to the Vietnam War. In this way, histories of civil rights, war protest, and the sexual revolution are freely attached to the ideographical presentation of “the 60s” as something concrete or shared. Differently, speaking to a conference audience of “baby-boomers” in West Virginia, Bonds bemoans the movement’s futile attempts to compromise with coal corporations and state governments, saying, “We’ve already done that. We did that in the 60s, we did it in the 70s, and we did
it in the late 90s, and it was a waste of time then, and it will be a waste of time now” (“ASA”). Here, Bonds seems to be speaking more directly to past attempts at challenging surface mining in Appalachia. However, audiences are invited to attach other histories to these decades as well. What is meant by each ideographical era is made plain when each audience member fills in the appropriate history.

While speaking at “Powershift,” Bonds inverts the history of World War II. She looks to wartime iconography for its pedagogical import, this time stipulating clearly her historical allusion. She argues: “The students raising the wind turbine is [sic] as important as the Marines raising the flag at Iwo Jima, it is as important, if not more important. You are the future” (“Powershift”). The wind turbine, in this instance, represents an obelisk of success, the defeat of evil, a memorial of conflict. The flag at Iwo Jima pictorially and literally remembers the lives lost fighting to protect the world from paragons of evil and ethnic genocide. For Bonds, then, environmental solutions to energy crises trump American histories of war. Moreover, environmental solutions to energy crises represent the good fight and the prudent moral standing against malevolent coal corporations.

Like Jones, Bonds draws from a political history of slavery, in particular from the rhetoric of Frederick Douglass, to argue for the necessity of resistance. In Washington D.C., Bonds’ historical inversion forecasts confrontation regarding the ways in which the U.S. handles energy disputes:

Frederick Douglass told us that change requires thunder and lightning.
And today the thunder and lightning begins for change, you are the thunder, and you are the lightning of America. You are our hope for the
future, and our hope for the yet to be born. This action today will spark many more actions to come. (“Capitol Climate Action”)

Frederick Douglass, fortunately, escaped from the bonds of slavery to later become a leader of abolitionism in the U.S. The “thunder and lightning” he prophesied is explicated in the previously discussed histories of John Brown and the Civil War. Douglass’ narrative represents sacrifice for the public good, the necessity of revolt, and the effectiveness of oratory. His story makes plain to Bonds’ audience the possibility of opposition and fills the present with urgency. Allusions to slavery serve an enthymemetic function. By connecting the ills of slavery to MTR mining in Appalachia, audiences discover a major premise: MTR must be eliminated immediately.

Bonds’ personal narratives, anecdotes, and historical inversion imply an autobiographical chronotope. Personal narratives lay bare Bonds’ character and normalize such traits to audiences, while her anecdotes instantiate a collective identity capable of bolstering solidarity and evoking emotion. Moreover, by inverting American history, Bonds figures the pedagogical import of revolutionary and wartime narratives for the anti-MTR movement. Next, I explore a folkloric chronotope in the figurative language of Bonds’ speeches.

Analysis II: Figures of a Folkloric Chronotope

At “Powershift,” Bonds prophesies an apocalyptic future, saying, “We’re at a crossroads today, and it’s nature’s deadline, not ours. And what you choose to do today, will determine your future and your children’s future” (“Powershift”). “Nature’s deadline” figures the end of cyclicity inherent in a folkloric chronotope, where natural
rebirth and the seasons falter due to human tampering. Dead, as in “deadline,” is not a metaphor, it is a prophesied reality regarding nature’s wrath and humanity’s legacy, or lack thereof.

Bonds’ speeches, like Jones’ rhetoric, exemplifies a folkloric chronotope in which deliberative rhetorics are made common in characterizations of industry and the everyday. However, Bonds’ environmental logic and figurative language display that time is running out. Such a logic emerges when Bonds prophesies the end of cultural life in Appalachia, arguing, “Destroy the mountain, and so goes the mountaineer. When the mountains and the mountain cultures are gone, who will we be? Our culture and our dialect will be forgotten” (“ASA”). In this way, a folkloric chronotope can be seen in Bonds’ speeches that orients her audience toward the everyday of coal life, while arguing that folkloric life itself is at risk of extinction. In particular, Bonds develops tropes related to industry, the natural environment, culture, Christian narratives, the family, the home, and violence.

Mountaintop removal debates often center on job security and the economic future of West Virginia. While Massey Energy argues they have increased the mining labor force, anti-MTR activists describe the opposite. For Bonds, environmental concerns settle the debate. She says, “Remember this, there are no jobs on a dead planet” (“Powershift”), shifting the original premises of labor rhetoric in Appalachia toward an environmental, apocalyptic logic. Similar to Jones’ figurative language about the labor movement, Bonds hints at the political maneuvering of coal corporations. At the ASA convention, she explains, “We know that our politicians are corrupt and in coal’s pocket. They’re aiding and abetting an ethnic genocide” (“ASA”). Bonds reprises Jones’
arguments, here, explaining the inevitable interaction of political lobbying with policy-making. Coal’s “pocket,” is presumably a money pit, a monetary reserve, in which politicians exchange favors for endorsements.

Bonds also uses figurative language related to the natural environment, emphasizing everyday and labor discourse pertinent to coal life. By urging audiences to “birddog” (“Powershift”) their politicians to cut spending on clean coal initiatives, – “clean coal is a dirty lie” (“Capitol Climate Action”) – Bonds highlights her audience’s relation to the mountaineering tradition of hunting and gathering in West Virginia. A “birddog” is literally a dog that hunts for wild birds. Here, it symbolizes for her audience the necessary attitude to affect change on a state and federal level. The “dirty” lie of clean coal may hearken to coal dust covered miners on their way home from a day’s work. More accurately, it represents the airborne ash and soot covering homes and polluting the air in communities near MTR sites. At “Powershift,” Bonds’ rhetoric is especially attuned to the everyday of Appalachian life, where she advises her audience on the future of the environmental movement:

I want you to notice nature, how geese are in flight, and they form a V in a leadership role. And when that leader, of that flight, the lead goose, when he gets tired of flapping his wings, he drops to the back, and the next goose comes up front and becomes the leader, without stopping, without fussing, without whining. He becomes that next leader, he or she, and that’s what we have to do, we have to move in those positions. (“Powershift”)

The flying-V is a common trope for the ranks of leadership. That said, this metaphor exemplifies succinctly not only how we understand a rhetoric of coal, but it also illustrates the ways in which implicit, natural environment metaphors help shift Bonds’ labor arguments toward environmental activism. In other words, an inclination toward figures of the environment within a rhetoric of coal mining lend Bonds ready-made tropes to broaden the paradigmatic scope of activism in the southern coalfields.

Bonds relates many Christian metaphors in her speeches that hearken to the Christianity common to coal camps at the turn of the century. Mother Jones was seen as an “angel” and moral guide for coal mining communities; similarly, Bonds was called a “Hillbilly Moses” (Biggers), a vessel for moral truths. She sometimes figures an imminent apocalypse in Christian terms, saying, “We are in a climate crisis now, an energy Armageddon” (“Powershift”). Armageddon, in the Christian tradition, foretells the return of the Messiah to earth to defeat Satan. In this way, Bonds invokes a Messianic rhetoric of redemption, in which she is a vessel for revealing the truth of the fate of the world. Bonds outlines the opportunity to make right the Satanic “false prosperity” (“Powershift”) of destructive mining practices for American energy needs. For instance, at the ASA convention, she invites her audience to reconcile their passivity in the face of evil, saying, “Let’s redeem ourselves. Rise up Appalachia. Honor your ancestors, protect your children, restore your souls, save your souls” (“ASA”). Such Christian metaphors seek to accomplish deliberative ends. Bonds may believe Jesus will return to the Appalachian Mountains to exile Satan for 1,000 years; however, by connecting Armageddon to policy issues for industrial practices in Appalachia, she fills the present with urgency and strikes fear into the hearts of “good” Christians.
Bonds favors familial metaphors as a way to orient audiences toward America’s environmental future. Specifically, Jones invokes the innocence of children as a future casualty of present neglect toward the environment. She says, “We owe our children, and grandchildren a livable Appalachia with mountaintops and streams. We owe that to our children” (“ASA”). Bonds’ audience is invited to imagine a world in which the Appalachian Mountains are a relic of the past, only accessible in history books, travel literature, or a PBS special. Moreover, she foretells an uninhabitable Appalachia, a wasteland of toxic sludge and contaminated streams. Similarly, she figures a familial ethic of responsibility, saying, “We adults told our children to clean up their rooms, but look at the toxic mess we’re leaving our children to clean up” (“Capitol Climate Action”). In this instance, Bonds’ figurative language rebukes the hypocrisy of corporate irresponsibility – you may talk the talk, so long as you walk the walk. Familial root metaphors, moreover, presume and normalize family life as essential to coal community life.

Metaphors related to the home build on familial root metaphors through essentializing arguments about the Appalachian Mountains. Bonds admits that, “The best way to destroy mountaineer and hillbillies is destroy their habitat, the very essence of who we are” (“ASA”). Here, figures of the natural environment and the home coalesce to position further the apocalyptic future of Appalachian life. Like the flora and fauna extinguished by MTR in mountaintop “habitats,” Bonds foretells the extinction of the “hillbilly” from his natural terrain. While Massey Energy’s refurbishment plans outline pristine reclamations of mountain ranges, Bonds argues the extermination of biodiversity in the wild. The “essence” she means refers to the historical livelihoods of
mountaineering, underground coal mining, and cultural life. For Bonds, as for Jones, the contemporary labor and environmental dispute threatens the essence of the nuclear home as well, where man is the “reflex of woman.”

Bonds also relates metaphors of violence coupled with principles of civil disobedience to equip her audience with rhetorical weaponry. Bonds, like Jones, makes plain that the “oppressive yoke … is still around our necks” and the “coal baron’s foot is on our throats” (“ASA”), figuring slave-like metaphors of exploitation and injustice. The “oppressive yoke” alludes to the historicized bondage of industrial life or to the polluted air of communities adjacent to MTR sites. Moreover, she universalizes an ethic of responsibility for the U.S., explaining that, “It’s not a benign switch that we flip on – blood is dripping from that switch, and it’s our blood” (“ASA”). Here, the “dripping blood” recalls West Virginia’s histories of mine wars, disasters, innocent casualties, and disease like black lung. The “dripping blood” refers more directly to modern day diseases due to “sludge-poisoned” water and airborne toxics, causing children to “pee blood” (“ASA”). While such violent figurations hearken to West Virginia “blood feuds” at the turn of the century, Bonds advises her audience to “arm yourself with knowledge, arm yourself with the truth” (“Powershift”), playing on citizens’ Second Amendment rights to defend themselves. In other words, we see that Bonds’ brand of incitement in favor of “knowledge” and “truth” repurposes Jones’ violent discourse for the sake of civil disobedience. Bonds, like Jones, makes plan that the “oppressive yoke … is still around our necks” and the “coal baron’s foot is on our throats” (“ASA”); however, she urges audiences to call their politicians and enact civil protests.
Chronotopic figurations of coal mining seen in public address and cultural appropriation at Blair Mountain at the turn of the century underpin contemporary rhetorical strategies to prevent MTR there and throughout Appalachia today. Judy Bonds represented the voice of anti-MTR activism for two decades, explicating a rhetoric of coal mining in the labor and environmental disputes over surface mining in Appalachia. Bonds’ speech exemplifies figurative language that implies an autobiographical and folkloric chronotope. Such a chronotope lays bare Bonds’ character and makes plain the everyday life inherent to coal communities.
CONCLUSION

This project investigated Appalachian coal mining’s uniquely American tropes. By exploring a “placed” rhetoric of coal mining at Blair Mountain, this project showed that an autobiographical and folkloric chronotope can be seen to operate in labor and environmental disputes in the southern coalfields historically. Such a chronotope emerged in the public address and cultural appropriation in 1921 and today.

Chapter II highlighted Mother Jones, a labor movement activist at the turn of the twentieth century, as indicative of the “voice” of opposition to unfair corporate practices in coal communities. An autobiographical and folkloric chronotope emerged in Jones’ figurative language that displays an interrelationship between the everyday and industrial life in the southern coalfields. Jones asserted root metaphors related to industry, the natural environment, Christian narratives, lightness and darkness, the family, health and disease, and violence to prophesy the coming of a “new dawn” for American coal mining. She invited her audience to accept an ethic of responsibility and mobilize against coal corporations.

Chapter III explored appropriation and figurative language in folk song as a cultural instantiation of the chronotope. This section showed that by borrowing the melodic material of antebellum compositions, miners rehashed implicit, American histories through historical inversion. Such appropriation mirrored the autobiographical and folkloric chronotope seen in Chapter I. The improvisational tendencies discovered in mining songs evidenced further the significance of chronotopic figuration for how we understand an American rhetoric of coal mining.
In Chapter IV, the speeches of “Godmother” Judy Bonds were shown to assert an environmental and labor rhetoric regarding mountaintop removal mining in Appalachia. Bonds’ speeches explicated the chronotope through historical inversion; that is, she reprised American histories as instructional narratives for contemporary resistance against coal corporations. Like Jones, Bonds laid bare a public consciousness and made plain the everyday for audiences. A folkloric and autobiographical chronotope was seen to be operating in Bonds’ implicit rhetorical invention.

By generalizing a “placed” rhetoric of coal mining so to theorize a broader American rhetorical history, this study admits limitations. Bituminous coal mining has a rich history of symbolic action, especially histories found in public address and cultural enterprises. Moreover, industrial coal mining occurred throughout the Appalachian Mountains and in the northwest U.S. In this way, the ability to generalize rhetorical stylistics found at Blair Mountain was limited. That said, because Blair Mountain’s sordid history was similar to labor uprisings in numerous other Appalachian communities (e.g., Paint and Cabin Creeks and Eagle Creek), its themes were taken as generalizable.

Descriptions of coal communities at the turn of the twentieth century presented here lack the complexity described about anti-MTR collectives. This difference is problematic for writing a longitudinal history; it would be myopic to treat the past as simple and the present as complex. However, this study’s simplified treatment of the past arose due to grand narratives about American coal camps in the scholarship consulted.

Artifactual limitations emerged in this study of Blair Mountain. While the march in 1921 proved well-suited to chart a history of coal mining for how it relates to MTR, its rhetorical legacy was elusive. This study would have benefited greatly from Jones’ Lens.
Creek speech and an address by Bonds’ at the reenactment in 1999. That said, Blair served to orient this work spatially and give it a narrative framework. In that way, the reader could understand the ways in which figurative language in coal mining public address and folk song operated chronotopically.

Moreover, Blair Mountain was and is, in many ways, a hub for grassroots mobilization. Investigating a public figure like Jones, who lobbied politicians and businessmen internationally, challenged this study for garnering and understanding of such grassroots activism. Nevertheless, to get at the discourse of the times, the “voice” of coal mining activism, Jones provided the clearest textual history. Perhaps archaeological studies of Blair Mountain will provide important grassroots histories before the site is repurposed for surface mining.

That said, studying public address challenged this study’s ability to adequately assess representational voices of coal communities. While Jones was a clear agent of union mobilization, she was not necessarily the most exemplary voice for what mattered to coal miners. However, because she asserted shared values through figurative language, this study treated her speeches as indicative of values pertinent to coal communities.

If anything, this study should provide fodder for further study. In ways, this project highlighted an oppositional rhetoric within coal communities. Further study could look to the organizational rhetoric of coal corporations historically to examine conventions and tactics. Doing so might further evidence chronotopic figuration found here or make plain other theoretical understandings of a corporate rhetoric of coal mining.

More could be done to examine appropriation in both cultural and rhetorical enterprises in coal mining histories. While cultural appropriation was used here to
theorize the implicit histories of folk song, appropriation may be seen more broadly as a rhetorical convention of coal mining life. In fact, it may serve to supplement an understanding of the chronotope in specific ways.

More could be done, as well, to theorize the role of gender for the how we understand a rhetoric of coal to operate. This study longitudinally displays the speech of female leaders in labor and environmental disputes in Appalachia. Other coal mining histories exemplify female leadership in labor struggles, too (e.g., *Harlan County, USA*). Future study might theorize the role of American womanhood and manhood for political mobilization in Appalachia to support and broaden an understanding of a rhetoric of coal mining. Gender analyses, moreover, could bridge a folkloric chronotope of the natural environment to femininity in order to theorize a situated ethos of “Mother Nature.”

Finally, chronotopic figuration theorized here may be useful for an understanding of other “placed” rhetorics oriented toward the everyday. Other histories of industrial life may prove exemplary of an implicit chronotope and add to coal mining rhetorical traditions in fruitful ways. This project argued that, in fact, the chronotope is a worthy theoretical vantage for extra-textual artifacts, or discourse found outside the confines of the novel.
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