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Coal, Land, and Ideology:
Inventions of Appalachia in the Mind of the American Ruling Class

by

Zachary Harris

An Undergraduate Thesis in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
University Honors in Discipline Program
Honors College
and the
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College of Arts and Sciences
East Tennessee State University

Dr. Daryl Carter, Thesis Mentor

Dr. Tom Lee, Reader

Dr. Elwood Watson, Reader

Abstract

Appalachia, itself a difficult to resolutely define region, has undergone the economic forces of colonialism and industrializing capitalism which allow for an excellent case study to apply Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. No American region's national conception is likely to have been as varied and often misrepresented as that of Appalachia. From the Revolutionary American State's invention of early white settlers as the virtuous yeoman of the Republic to the modern perception of Appalachia as backwards, conservative, and drug-addled, shifting national economic conditions resulted in a constant invention of Appalachia in congruence. Whenever the people residing in Appalachia, whether Black, white, or indigenous, either failed to represent or directly challenged the interests of empire or profit, ideas and perceptions of the region subsequently shifted accordingly. Utilizing secondary sources which have attempted to paint an overarching narrative of the region and primary sources recounting contemporary individuals' views on said region's people, the broad arc of cultural hegemony's construction in Appalachia is traced in this thesis. From Thomas Jefferson's invention of the virtuous and integral small land holding settlers in the region to Theodore Roosevelt's shifting of national consciousness away from Appalachian settlers and into the proverbial international settler frontier, tracing the ideas of state leaders within the American Republic and profit-focused interests allows for a general timeline of social invention to be traced. The constructed timeline insinuates that one thing remained certain throughout Appalachian history: constantly changing perceptions of the region almost directly followed changing economic and political agendas. Further, after an exploration of how Black and white Appalachians indeed presented a counter-hegemonic movement necessarily connected with the rest of the nation in the form of the Mine Wars, Appalachia as a proverbial helpless region apart is argued to be ultimately a false

conception. In response to this conclusion, a responsibility arises for those with the power of narrative and cultural production. Meaning, as academics or scholars, those Antonio Gramsci deemed the intellectual base of any given economic class, conscious counter-narrative production steeped in consciousness of exploitation and class antagonisms becomes objectively necessary. In fact, this work concludes, without an intellectual counter to dominant minority economic interests, social invention of often exploited regions will and do continue unabashed and unopposed.

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Introduction

“Appalachia, political commentators proclaimed, could reap what it had sown.”

- Elizabeth Catte¹

Elizabeth Catte, East Tennessee born public historian, perfectly encapsulates the latest twist in political ideology regarding Appalachia. In the four years following the 2016 United States presidential elections, anyone placing themselves in front of a television set tuned to any mainstream news media likely became exposed to the indignant condemnations or romanticization of Appalachia as “non-college-educated white (NCEW) voters.”² Further, following a current American logic that the poor are broadly “at very least, non-white,” this group of Appalachians are racialized into a “white trash” apart or below the rest of white America.³ This collective grouping of said voting population, at least in generally mainstream political circles, is considered a homogenous one. Meaning, more specifically, in these pictures of the nation there exists a group of people who coalesce politically around feelings of indignation and disenfranchisement. This indignation and disenfranchisement, undoubtedly felt within portions of Appalachia, mainstream think pieces and academic studies apply to the entire

¹ Elizabeth Catte, *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia* (Cleveland, Ohio: Belt Publishing, 2018), 8.

² Katy Hull, “Lost and Found: Trump, Biden, and White Working-Class Voters,” *Atlantish Perspectives* 44, no. 5 (2020): 11, accessed May 16, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48600591>.

³ Marshall A. Jolly and Clint Jones, “Re-Conceiving the Concept of Stewardship: Coal Production and the Importance of a New Christian Context for Appalachia,” *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 43, accessed May 20, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/jappastud.21.1.0033>.

region as an explainer for apparent trends of Appalachian conservatism. According to historians such as Cattaui, some sections of the mainstream viewed this group of Appalachian white working-class voters as an explanation for the 2016 election of Donald Trump. So, how does this modern invention of Appalachia stand against its previous incarnations? The region dubbed modernly as Appalachia has faced the blunt end of a hegemony which has justified its utilization for the state's ends and profit's ends since its very first colonizers and slaves set foot there. As argued in Chapter I, people under the dominion of the pre-American English colonies sent into the region became foot soldiers for "the struggle of Appalachian lands" fought between major European powers and wealthy landholding "English claimants."⁴ Therefore, rather than simply an individualized, pathologically explained issue, the problems found within Appalachia must be approached with its history of colonial expropriation, capitalistic development, and constant invention and re-invention in mind.

Undoubtedly, the region of modern Appalachia, which has been deemed at least partially a part of the southern United States, continues to harbor generally socially conservative voting populations. However, it seems strange to generalize this region according to its relatively small number of active voters.⁵ Direct and often interracial opposition against local capitalists and, as is explored in Chapter II, militant and communist-led campaigns to unionize Appalachian coal mines also litter the region's history. In light of the rapport a candidate such as Bernie Sanders garnered in states like West Virginia, one might hold some doubt towards the modern practice of

⁴ Richard B. Drake, *A History of Appalachia* (University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 45, accessed August 2, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2jcv7t.8>.

⁵ David Sutton, "'Living Poor and Voting Rich' in Appalachia," *Appalachian Journal* 32, no. 3 (2005): 341, accessed June 28, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40934420>.

lumping in an entire region within the group of active voting Republicans.⁶ Indeed, perhaps to anyone at least partly familiar with the history of the region, it might also rightly seem shocking that a region so affected particularly by the coal industry and economic insecurity would be incorporated into the political party generally in favor of continuing an often extractive status quo.

For many, outsiders looking at the current political dynamics of the region, the response to this newfound, seemingly bottom-to-top class solidarity, trend within the region prompts explanations which fundamentally place blame on the moral failings of Appalachian individuals. This tendency fails to incorporate an understanding of the way in which the state, in conjunction with the capitalist class, sought to nullify the power of particularly Appalachian cross-racial workers' movement in the era of the New Deal. As argued in Chapter III, the ramifications of the New Deal set the stage for a decades long process of austerity and belief in the pacification of the Appalachian movements and the revolutionary stirrings of the colonized in the United States.

For the political mainstream, loyal to the continuation of the status quo at least in some capacity, understanding Appalachia becomes easier through a lens of individualism that turns Appalachia's problems into a "universal experience" with blame on the shoulders of everyone residing there rather than that of a specific class or any other ruling body.⁷ As Chapter IV interrogates, modern Appalachia has become the national charity case. Further, Appalachians are invented as lacking in political or economic autonomy, constantly victimized by some greater

⁶ West Virginia Secretary of State, *Primary Election – May 10, 2016*, accessed August 2, 2021, <http://services.sos.wv.gov/apps/elections/results/Default.aspx?year=2016&eid=22>.

⁷ Catte, *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia*, 60.

individual person or individual corporation. In light of this trend, what is immediately required is an exploration of what it means to be Appalachian, why the region has a history of being defined in this manner, and what methods are truly necessary to utilize in understanding the region. Further, an understanding of Gramscian hegemony and how those ideas apply to the United States must also be properly understood to provide a narrative of Appalachia's social invention. Hegemony in the Gramscian sense, in short, simply is the process in which a class in control of the "means of material production" also come to control "mental production."⁸ The ideas of a ruling body in any particular historical situation become society's "ruling intellectual force."⁹ Ultimately, an approach steeped within the lens of the interplay of race and class, systemic development, and private accumulation will lend one an acute understanding of a region often misrepresented.

⁸ Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (Marx/Engels Internet Archive), Part I, Section B, Marxists Internet Archive, accessed March 30, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01b.htm>.

⁹ Marx, *The German Ideology*, Part I, Section B.

I

Foot Soldiers of Accumulation: Early Colonization of Appalachia and its Legacy on Modern Social Incarnations

“Rather than treating political developments as the result of happenstance or the contrivances of particular personalities or idiosyncratic events ... most of what occurs is the outcome of broader configurations of power, wealth, classes, and institution as structured into the dominant political organizations, the economy, and society itself.”

-Michael Parenti¹⁰

According to the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965, Appalachia as a physical place at most stretched from Pennsylvania to northern Alabama.¹¹ Further, the Appalachian Regional Commission’s statistics listed “more than 25 million Americans” as residing in this area.¹² Nevertheless, it is a difficult to cohesively define place, often dubbed the “mysterious region” even in a modern context.¹³ In light of this difficulty, a brief clarification on

¹⁰ Michael Parenti, preface to *Democracy for the Few*, (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s Publishers, 2002), viii.

¹¹ US Congress, Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965, March 9, 1965, S. Doc. 3, Public Law 89-4.

¹² Appalachian Regional Commission, *Appalachia Then and Now: Examining Changes to the Appalachian Region Since 1965* (February 2015), 2, accessed April 12, 2022 <https://www.arc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AppalachiaThenAndNowCompiledReports.pdf>.

¹³ Richard B. Drake, *A History of Appalachia* (University Press of Kentucky, 2001), i, accessed August 2, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2jcv7t.8>.

what geographic area exactly is discussed here is needed. The special attention paid here to the labor disputes of coal and the past attempts to contrast the “peculiar people in the southern mountains” against a supposed civilized or modern region must be noted.¹⁴ Due to this emphasis, West Virginia through Eastern Tennessee will serve as a major focus of this exploration of inventions of Appalachia and its people. However, this study is not restrictive to stay within these state lines. Yet, I will attempt to use this geographic range to pinpoint the exact process of Appalachian hegemony’s construction. From this analysis, I will endeavor to illustrate the interlocking connections the hegemonic process mirrors in greater Appalachia and the United States. Importantly, it is not claimed here that this selection constitutes the entirety of the Appalachian identity nor that it proposes to become the final word on the region’s conception. Rather, I will strive to conceptualize this region’s history and social construction without falling into simple repetitions of widely held beliefs or the “mythologizing” surrounding Appalachia.¹⁵ This central area of West Virginia through East Tennessee will serve as a jumping off point for understanding economic exploitation, land accumulation, and inventions of “a distinct population” within the American conscious.¹⁶ The hegemonic process in Appalachia reveals that this region invented as a place apart is simply another manifestation of the national maintenance

¹⁴ Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 120.

¹⁵ Miriam J. Shillingsburg, “William Gilmore Simms and the Myth of Appalachia,” *Appalachian Journal* 6, no. 2 (1979): 111, accessed January 1, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40932698>.

¹⁶ Shapiro, *Appalachia on our Mind*, 115.

of settler colonialism and capitalism as derived from the shifting interests of the dominant economic class.

With geography in mind, the first settling developments prior to American independence must be considered. Before the conception of Appalachia as a cohesive region even manifested in popular consciousness, pioneering and smallholding individuals served as the vectors of significant material and ideological developments found there. Smallholders are understood by economists as simply individuals in possession of “small-scale landownership and cultivation” usually living prior to a historical period of large private industries with massive amounts of land and production.¹⁷ These developments made by said individuals were not only the physical appropriation of the land, but ruling economic interests also began to lay the foundations of the hegemonic process. As the first individuals began to foray into the indigenous-owned land of the mountains, those considered “*highlanders, mountaineers, or settlers of the backwoods,*” served the interests of the often distant and wealthy land speculator.¹⁸ These individuals began the groundwork of what is modernly considered “settler colonialism,” or an attempt on behalf of an expanding state to remove indigenous people along with exploiting “the labor and resources” within their lands.¹⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre argued that the presence of “both settlement and

¹⁷ Lowell Gudmundson, “Peasant, Farmer, Proletarian: Class Formation in a Smallholder Coffee Economy, 1850-1950,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 69, no. 2 (1989): 221, accessed August 3, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2515829>.

¹⁸ Steven Stoll, *Ramp Hollow: The Ordeal of Appalachia* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2017), 7.

¹⁹ Jeffrey Ostler and Nancy Shoemaker, “Settler Colonialism in Early American History: Introduction,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 3, (July 2019): 361, accessed May 20, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5309/willmaryquar.76.3.0361>.

exploitation,” found in the United States for example, represented a unique and often brutal form of colonialism.²⁰ The blame for this exploitative and expropriating practice is not wholly on the supposed “supercilious” and smallholding individual “settler bully” who indeed physically began settlements in Appalachian territory.²¹ Rather, the driving ideological impetus behind appropriative settling derived more readily from the owning and absent classes of the budding American empire.

Indeed, to justify the presence of smallholding whites within the Appalachian region, the newfound American and loyalist English class of those with claims to massive amounts of colonized land required an invention of the indigenous people and of the smallholders which justified the gradual process of inhabitation. As decolonial psychologist Franz Fanon aptly described the advancement of invention, the colonizing force “*fabricated and continues to fabricate* the colonized subject.”²² Mary Beard, an early twentieth century social historian, feminist, and union organizer, presented some of the earliest attempts at understanding this aforementioned process within the specific context of capitalism. She argued that “wealthy proprietors” with an ability to face “risks more imminent” than the average settler could withstand drove American colonization and expansion at the behest of “the corporation” and the

²⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, by Franz Fanon (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2004), xlvi.

²¹ Olster and Shoemaker, “Settler Colonialism in Early American History: Introduction,” 363.

²² Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2004), 2.

wealthy speculator “that furnished the capital and leadership.”²³ Expanding into regions such as the particularly mountainous areas of Appalachia undoubtedly proved no easy task. Certainly, it should not come as a surprise that the poor from European countries often going through the loss of their own land made up at least part of the “frontier people settling the interior and upland regions” rather than the commonly English-born gentry and wealthy speculators.²⁴ Coming from reasonably harsher conditions than those able to afford higher positions in the new colony, this diaspora made up large numbers of the first smallholders coming into the mountains. This idea of poor white European colonization within the Appalachian Mountains continues to play into the mythology surrounding the region’s inhabitants.

Karl Marx described primitive accumulation as the process of “divorcing the producer from the means of production.”²⁵ This process, he argued, served as the precursor to capitalistic development which required the process of primitive accumulation to set in motion the “vicious circle” of capital circulation.²⁶ In practice, this development served as the primitive form of accumulation as it takes place in “capital’s prehistory,” meaning that it becomes the method

²³ Mary Beard, *History of the United States* (Macmillan, 1921), Marxists Internet Archive, accessed May 28, 2021, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/beard/history-us/index.htm>.

²⁴ Beard, *History of the United States*.

²⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital Vol. 1, Part VII: Primitive Accumulation* (London: Electric Book Co., 2001), Marx/Engels Internet Archive, accessed May 31, 2021, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch26.htm>.

²⁶ Marx, *Capital Vol. 1, Part VIII, Ch. 26*.

which lays the foundations for the capitalist system.²⁷ The process takes the moniker of accumulation because it functions as “a period of expropriation and accumulation of property, land, and money” all of which will become utilized in setting up proto-“wage relations” within labor settings.²⁸ Indeed, as European capitalism necessitated the feudal order’s predominance of partly self-sufficient peasantry to be negated, so too did the American colonizers require a form of primitive accumulation which also negated the communal ownership held by various indigenous populations. Settler-colonialism necessitated a unique form of resource appropriation. Paul Smith, in *Primitive America*, argues that the first stage of primitive accumulation in America began as “the theft of land from Native Americans” to appropriate resources for the proto-capitalist class to construct and implant a European proto-proletariat and smallholding class all the while creating an indigenous lumpenproletariat.²⁹ Proletariat simply refers to those who, to survive, must at least occasionally sell their “labor-power” by working in exchange for a wage.³⁰ In the colonial sense, they are also those workers and scant indigenous person who enjoy a minor “privileged position” above the colonized person who does not conform to the colonial state.³¹ Lumpenproletariat in a colonial context as described by Franz Fanon, represents those

²⁷ Paul Smith, *Primitive America: The Ideology of Capitalist Democracy* (Minneapolis: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 51, accessed May 31, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.cttt40z.16>.

²⁸ Smith, *Primitive America*, 50.

²⁹ Smith, *Primitive America*, 51.

³⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 19.

³¹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 64

indigenous people who have been stripped of land, full political rights, and specifically “excluded from the benefits of colonialism.”³²

Karl Marx’s definition of the lumpenproletariat proves difficult to condense and steeped in his often Europe-limited analysis of class relations. To Marx, the lumpenproletariat does not make up simply the unemployed proletarians. Rather, the class makes up an “industrial reserve army” which is precluded from a traditionally productive economic position by the forces of capitalist relations.³³ It represents a grouping which the European capitalist class utilized as an antagonistic force against the comparatively privileged position of the proletarians, threatening “to make [them] superfluous.”³⁴ This class, in short, is integral to the bourgeois-led process of “pitting the lower classes against each other” in order to maintain bourgeois class domination.³⁵ The lumpenproletariat becomes an excluded force in society which, from the perspective of the proletarian class, represents a frightening “mass of human material always ready for exploitation” or utilization by the bourgeoisie to justify its dominance as it supposedly keeps control of the lumpenproletariat.³⁶ A major criticism of Marx remains his lacking analysis on the complexities of colonial class and racial relationships. Franz Fanon goes a long way in correcting Marx’s peripheralization of colonial systems. Fanon divides colonized people, relevant to the

³² Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 66-67

³³ Marx, *Capital Vol. 1, Part IV, Ch. 25, Sec. 3*.

³⁴ Marx, *Capital Vol. 1, Part IV, Ch. 15*.

³⁵ Michael Villanova, “The Lumpen in Marx’s Works and its Relevance for Contemporary Political Struggle,” *Capital & Class* 45 no. 4 (Dec. 2021): 482, accessed April 19, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0309816820959824>.

³⁶ Marx, *Capital Vol. 1, Part VII, Ch. 25, Sec. 3*.

history of the U.S. regarding Native Americans and later enslaved Black Africans, into two important subsets. He argues that there exists a class of the colonized, the colonial lumpenproletariat, that wholly and totally finds itself excluded from any benefits or privilege of colonialism and still attempts to hold “on like grim death to rigid social structures” which are contrary to the colonial system.³⁷ The second class makes up those individuals, hailing from the colonized classes, Fanon classifies as the “townspeople.”³⁸ These individuals still make up part of a class of colonized people to Fanon. Yet, this section attempts to integrate itself into the “framework of the colonial system,” attempting to become proletarians equal to that of the European settler class.³⁹ As Marx understood the utility for the bourgeoisie to utilize the European lumpenproletariat, Fanon understands that the colonial power continues to foster a division between these subsets of colonized people in order to “pitch the hinterlands against the seaboard” and divert national liberation struggles.⁴⁰ Primitive accumulation in the United States not only prepared the land materially for the development of capitalism, but also created Fanon’s class of colonized lumpenproletarians whose potentially antagonistic existence justified the continuing ruling status of the colonial bourgeoisie.

Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and their writings and theories are integral to this piece and history itself. Beginning their careers as students of German philosophy, Marx and Engels lived

³⁷ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 111

³⁸ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 111

³⁹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 111

⁴⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 111

and worked in what they perceived as “capitalism’s *dénouement*.”⁴¹ Specifically, they witnessed what is commonly referred to as the Industrial Revolution, or the mid-nineteenth century solidification of capitalism’s hegemony over feudalism.⁴² Looking upon what they charged to be a gradual transition of economic power from feudal lord to capitalist, Marx and Engels sought to understand the underlying “material basis” of the “economic conditions” which arose in the nineteenth century.⁴³ Simply, their analysis can be understood as a response to the rise of capitalism, and in many ways a guide to understanding history itself and the power derived from said understanding. Further, Marx and Engels sought to correct the ideas of the “Utopian” socialists who sought to “impose” a “perfect system of social order” in the abstract by either spreading ideas or conducting utopian “experiments” to demonstrate their new model of society.⁴⁴ Indeed, Marx and Engels formulated that social and economic change must be conducted with the process of “scientific Socialism” utilizing a historical method which seeks to understand the exact methods of expropriation, and often violence, the formation of any stable society underwent.⁴⁵ While the thinkers they deemed utopian sought immaterial change as the

⁴¹ Henry Heller, “The Industrial Revolution: Marxist Perspectives,” in *The Birth of Capitalism: A 21st Century Perspective* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 176, accessed January 1, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt183p671.10>.

⁴² Heller, “The Industrial Revolution: Marxist Perspectives,” 176.

⁴³ Karl Marx, *Wage-Labour and Capital / Value, Price and Profit* (New York: International Publishers, 2006), 15.

⁴⁴ Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (Marxists Internet Archive Publications, 2003), 41.

⁴⁵ Engels, *Socialism*, 84

path forward, Marx and Engels postulated that material action must be taken to bring “the whole sphere of the conditions of life ... under the dominion and control of man” as a whole body.⁴⁶

Perhaps the most remembered summarization given by Marx is that “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.”⁴⁷ Expanded on by Engels, nations and material changes in specific human societies have been the products of that “society at a particular stage of development” to “moderate the conflict” between “classes with conflicting economic interests.”⁴⁸ However, one aspect is often left out or simply forgotten regarding this analysis. According to Marx, class and class struggle “[constitute] the economic structure of society” and from them “arises a legal and political superstructure” which dialectically influence the other and push historical processes onward.⁴⁹ Meaning, class stratification is integral, the classic understanding being “between the bourgeoisie” which owns and moderates the method of society’s value production and the “working class” or proletariat which collectively produces that value.⁵⁰ However, the superstructure which arises out of this economic base, the “network of doctrines, values, myths, and institutions,” is also essential to understanding human societal

⁴⁶ Engels, *Socialism*, 81.

⁴⁷ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Arcturus Publishing Limited, 2018), 30.

⁴⁸ Friedrich Engels, *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (Marx/Engels Internet Archive, 2000), 92, accessed October 14, 2021, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/origin_family.pdf.

⁴⁹ Karl Marx, Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), Marxists Internet Archive, accessed November 5, 2021, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>.

⁵⁰ Marx, *Wage-Labour and Capital*, 15.

development.⁵¹ In short, Marx and Engels sought to understand the material basis of history and the rise of capitalist value production relations primarily. Nevertheless, the social inventions, customs, and the “conception of reality” which accompany an economic class’s “hegemony” over human production influence history and historical processes themselves.⁵²

To clear the way for establishing a colonial superstructure, one of the first individual forces of continued colonization, settlers, of course served to prepare the economic conditions. Mountain settlers have generally made up those individuals who resided in the mountainous regions of Appalachia and established supposed civilized methods of subsistence on indigenous land. Popular conceptions and scholarly work into the early twentieth century handed down images of these settlers as bearing traits such as an “independent spirit” and supposed inherent love of the mountains where they could practice their romantic “expression.”⁵³ At least, that is how some twentieth century outside observers tried to picture the individuals moving out of Appalachia after the land became fully expropriated from indigenous peoples. Did twentieth century scholars invent this romanticized idea? Interestingly, depictions utilizing something of a romantic tone regarding Appalachia and its people can be traced as far back to individuals such as Richard Henderson, a relatively wealthy jurist and land speculator in the mid-eighteenth century. He interpreted the prospects of continued occupation into the Appalachian region in an

⁵¹ Michael Parenti, *Inventing Reality: The Politics of News Media* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 212.

⁵² Antonio Gramsci, quoted in Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1992), 333.

⁵³ Woodrow R. Clevinger, “The Appalachian Mountaineers in the Upper Cowlitz Basin,” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (Apr. 1938): 116, accessed January 1, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40486282>.

extremely positive light. A laudatory account of his life by early twentieth century historian Archibald Henderson quotes him as observing that “the country might invite a prince from his palace” due to its natural beauties and “only add the rapturous idea of property, and what allurements can the world offer for the loss of so glorious a prospect?”⁵⁴

Richard Henderson, tantalized by the prospects of accumulation, perfectly encapsulates the monetary potential early Appalachian settlers represented for the class of colonists with the means and desire to expand their holdings across the mountains. Although for a time during Henderson’s life white settlement throughout the Appalachian Mountains proved restricted, this certainly did not stop wealthy speculators, perspective planters, and squatters “squeezed by overpopulation” from coming into the region on an enormous scale.⁵⁵ The restriction of incursion into Appalachia, officially, was attempted mainly by massive land-owning gentry such as Lord Fairfax who wished to transform his holdings into a property relationship akin to a “neo-feudalism” without the influence of a colonial bourgeoisie.⁵⁶ The mercantile precursors of the colonial bourgeoisie and land speculators also attempted to place themselves in “a frequently challenged domination” of the land often populated with settlers long before they set foot there.⁵⁷ Lord Fairfax, at least, can be understood as a reaction to the rising mercantile elements of the

⁵⁴ Richard Henderson, quoted in Archibald Henderson, *The Conquest of the Old Southwest: The Romantic Story of the Early Pioneers into Virginia, the Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky* (New York: The Century Company, 1920), accessed June 3, 2021, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/SC5101983975/GDSC?u=tel_a_etsul&sid=bookmark-GDSC&xid=0bd012fe&pg=7.

⁵⁵ Drake, *A History of Appalachia*, 38.

⁵⁶ Drake, *A History of Appalachia*, 35.

⁵⁷ Drake, *A History of Appalachia*, 38.

colonies as evidenced by his advocacy to the colonial powers regarding his desired stratification of the land. Rather than seeking land for strict profit production, Thomas, “the sixth Lord Fairfax of the British nobility,” sought to convince the colonial power to restrict land speculators and allow him to set up “vast manors” which required settlers to pay a feudal form of “quitrent.”⁵⁸ Further desire to restrict the mercantilist expansions into the west can be found from British general Thomas Gage who, in 1770, decried American settlers in the Appalachians as “almost out of the Reach of Law and Government.”⁵⁹ Settlers, even in the face of reaction from neo-feudalists and the budding bourgeoisie, represented the base on which both factions of the colonial ruling class relied on. Even still, mountain settlers that had served the eventual interests of the American owning class so heavily would still face the brunt of a political hegemony which painted them as an inherently backwards people.

“The Country in every part of it manifest no other disposition than for resisting the Authority of Government” diagnosed the Lord of Dunmore, John Murray regarding the increasingly rebellious American colonists.⁶⁰ This passage within the communications of Lord Dunmore exemplifies a tactic, often utilized by those in power, that seeks to ignore the “social commentary” against “injustices of the political economy” that may be present in a group’s

⁵⁸ Drake, *A History of Appalachia*, 35.

⁵⁹ Thomas Gage, *Letter to William Johnson Apr. 14, 1789*, quoted in Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press: 1991) 340.

⁶⁰ Lord Dunmore to Lord Dartmouth, June 25, 1775, Naval Documents of the American Revolution, accessed June 4, 2021, <https://www.ndar-history.org/?q=node/1408>.

thought or actions.⁶¹ Instead, the challenging person's actions are regarded as "delusions" or something inherent and diagnosable outside the social norm.⁶² From this practice, or pathologizing, refers to experiences and actions which might disrupt "the very rationality that founds political economy" and that can be easily explained away as an incongruity with society.⁶³ Utilizing a pathological explainer for an individual's, class's, or region's actions allows vested economic and political powers to depict potentially subversive movements as either the result of character flaws or outright mental illness.

Dunmore's reduction of American colonists as individually disposed to resistance to authority rather than as acting on the material interests of wresting British controlled profit represents a tactic employed even by the later American statesmen and capitalists themselves. "Social Darwinism," utilized often in the Appalachian sense to justify the owning class's wealth and prevalent poverty in the underclasses there as being due to "differences in their innate abilities," stands out as an immediate example of how those in power within the American state shirked confronting material causes for problems within the region.⁶⁴ If not directly referencing Social Darwinism, American economic elites often placed the blame for unrest on "self-seeking

⁶¹ Roby Rajan, "Pathological Rationality / Rational Pathologies," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 17, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 356, accessed January 1, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40644747>.

⁶² Rajan, "Pathological Rationality / Rational Pathologies," 356.

⁶³ Rajan, "Pathological Rationality / Rational Pathologies," 360.

⁶⁴ Catta, *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia*, 42.

and self-advertising” agitators simply fooling working people into going against their bosses.⁶⁵ Certainly, British interests utilizing pathological explanations against American colonists is particularly ironic in light of the same tactic used by the American state itself in the post-Revolutionary period. Thomas Jefferson’s own words on the British authorities’ tendency of constructing false narratives of its enemies to push its own economic interests represents a primary example of this seeming irony. In a letter to John Adams, Jefferson wrote that the British government is “founded in corruption itself” and “insinuates the same poison into the bowels of every other” to falsely incite dissatisfaction among the people of enemy powers.⁶⁶ Within the context of Jefferson’s own false narrative of the agrarian myth, this irony, and potentially hypocrisy, held by major American statesmen becomes abundantly clear.

On the romanticizing side of social invention, some historians credited the first settlers as a “restless and nomadic race” pushed on by their “independence of spirit” to lay the foundations for “a typical democracy.”⁶⁷ This romanticization indeed finds a mirror within major contemporaries of early American settling into Appalachia. Following American independence, many within the landed elite harped frequently on the “preoccupation of the upper classes,”

⁶⁵ Senate Committee on Manufactures, *Conditions in Coal Fields in Harlan and Bell Counties, Kentucky* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932), 208.

⁶⁶ *Thomas Jefferson to John Adams*, November 25, 1816, accessed April 14, 2022, National Historical Publications and Records Commission, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-6665>.

⁶⁷ Archibald Henderson, *The Conquest of the Old Southwest: The Romantic Story of the Early Pioneers into Virginia, the Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky* (New York: The Century Company, 1920), xviii, accessed June 3, 2021, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/SC5101983975/GDSC?u=tel_a etsul&sid=bookmark-GDSC&xid=0bd012fe&pg=7.

meaning the “agrarian myth” which idealized smallholding settlers as completely happy and simple-minded people which fulfilled their important yet diminutive part towards development of the American state.⁶⁸ Thomas Jefferson, perhaps most blatantly, extolled the smallholders which fueled the myth of exceptionally morally superior individuals who pushed colonization through the Appalachian range. Indeed, Jefferson is quoted as claiming that “the small landholders are the most precious part of a state.”⁶⁹

The myth of the “ideology of American uniqueness” believed to exude from American frontiers as bulwarks “against savagery” and forces of “democracy against tyranny” carried onward in the minds of American statesmen at the turn of the twentieth century.⁷⁰ “The hunter is the arch- type of freedom” declared Theodore Roosevelt in his book recounting the supposed representatives of the purest Americans, or those “old-time hunters who have been the forerunners of the white advance throughout all our Western land.”⁷¹ The more reserved contemporaries of Roosevelt, who still believed in the myth of the frontier settler, would have generally understood the people he described as the agents of the force of primitive accumulation

⁶⁸ Richard Hofstadter. “The Myth of the Happy Yeoman,” *American Heritage* 7, no. 3, (1956): 1, accessed June 8, 2021, <https://www.americanheritage.com/myth-happy-yeoman#1>.

⁶⁹ *Thomas Jefferson to James Madison*, October 28, 1785, accessed June 8, 2021, National Historical Publications and Records Commission, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-08-02-0534>.

⁷⁰ Richard Slotkin, “Nostalgia and Progress: Theodore Roosevelt's Myth of the Frontier,” *American Quarterly* 33, no. 5 (1981): 609, accessed August 4, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2712805>.

⁷¹ Theodore Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* (New York: The Century Co., 1902), 83; 81.

which made “the woods safe for bourgeois society.”⁷² Undoubtedly, a closely held belief that American frontier settlers served to prepare the groundwork for an elite class prevailed within and far beyond Appalachia. This mythology prevailing in the minds of statesmen into the arguable beginnings of its modernity should evidence that the social invention of those without direct societal power helped shape Appalachia. Further, these inventions justified the ends of the state and profit-focused endeavors throughout the region’s history.

The conception and expansion of America required the economically powerful, along with the state apparatus, to construct various myths and ideological truths regarding itself, its settlers, and its supposed idyllic goals. Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist and founder of the Italian Communist Party in the early twentieth century, found himself “arrested and imprisoned” by Benito Mussolini’s “fascists” prior to World War II.⁷³ In prison, he formulated a conception of a hegemony that, in his time, painted southern Italians as racialized “biologically inferior beings” to justify massive discrimination.⁷⁴ Indeed, as will be covered in depth later, all major states embark on some form of hegemonic mythmaking which arises out of economic and class realities. These myths and beliefs are “[t]he ideas of the ruling class” which are internalized in a

⁷² Slotkin, “Nostalgia and Progress,” 613.

⁷³ Joseph A. Buttigieg, “On Gramsci,” *Daedalus* 131, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 67, accessed January 1, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20027789>.

⁷⁴ Antonio Gramsci, trans. Quintin Hoare, “Some Aspects of the Southern Question,” (October 1926): 4, accessed June 9, 2021, <https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.uoregon.edu/dist/f/6855/files/2014/03/gramsci-southern-question1926-2jf8c5x.pdf>.

ruling class and spread hegemonically down the class ladder.⁷⁵ From the beginnings of establishing bourgeois power in the American sense, Appalachian smallholders were a major focus of budding political hegemony. As Appalachia began to develop throughout the period marked by physical removal of indigenous people and primitive accumulation, the era of coal and labor disputes loomed on the horizon to showcase the power of the American myth making machine.

⁷⁵ Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (Marx/Engels Internet Archive), Part I, Section B, Marxists Internet Archive, accessed February 27, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01b.htm>.

II

Ideological Shifts: Class Conflict and Transforming Notions of Appalachian Labor Prior to the New Deal

“In Russia they will read the fate of this man. If you turn him loose, there will be celebrations in thousands of places, and in Moscow the red flag will be raised higher.”

- W. C. Hamilton⁷⁶

W.C. Hamilton, the commonwealth attorney who oversaw the trial of Harlan, Kentucky United Mine Workers secretary, William B. Jones, stands responsible for this red baiting quote. Members of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, a party of cooperating farmers and workers in the early 1900’s which faced this same rhetoric, understood the UMW as a unionizing force which funded and organized “the struggle of the miners against the coal barons.”⁷⁷ Hamilton sought to capitalize on the growing public anxieties over radicalization within political parties and union organizations, seeking to push the public towards his desired outcome in the case against Jones. Indeed, Hamilton invented an image of Jones as an individual who “carried an American flag in his hand” but secretly espoused “the red flag of the I.W.W.”⁷⁸ The Industrial Workers of the World, still a prominent unionizing force, sought “to organize a labor movement

⁷⁶ W. C. Hamilton, quoted in “Jones’ Prosecutor went Farther than Farthest’ in ‘Red’ Speech, He Says,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, Jan. 8, 1932.

⁷⁷ Federated Farmer-Labor Party, *Statement of Principles of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party* (Chicago: FFLP National Convention, July 3-5, 1923), Marxists Internet Archive, accessed April 14, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/parties/flp/1923/0705-fflp-principles.pdf>.

⁷⁸ Hamilton, quoted in “Jones’ Prosecutor went Farther than Farthest’ in ‘Red’ Speech, He Says.”

for the working class.”⁷⁹ The organization indeed utilized a starkly radical rhetoric from the day of its founding. The IWW sought and continues to seek to “put the working class in possession of the economic power” and in doing so achieving “emancipation” from “the slave bondage of capitalism.”⁸⁰ Understanding the utility of painting Jones as a secret member of the IWW, Hamilton utilized red scare imagery and paranoia to sully Jones’s public image.

Jones had a target placed on him for being involved with an association which organized miners into unions and collectives that sought some control in the Appalachian coalfields. As an eyewitness to Harlan’s labor uprisings recounts, Jones faced charges for supposedly conspiring to organize the Harlan County Battle of Evarts, where “three company gun thugs” died and “one picketing miner was killed.”⁸¹ Jones was indeed often decried for “secretly advocating radicalism and violence.”⁸² Although, there are many contemporaries and those today that contend that there existed evidence that what happened in Kentucky in 1931 ultimately proved nothing more than an attempt to kill picketing miners and place them “between two fires.”⁸³ Nevertheless, William B. Jones faced the brunt of an anti-union prevailing hegemony. Indeed, as announced in

⁷⁹ William D. Haywood, “Speech on IWW Ratification” (speech, Chicago, July 7, 1905), Marxists Internet Archive, accessed January 2, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/unions/iww/1905/convention/appendix01.htm>.

⁸⁰ William D. Haywood, “Speech on IWW Morning Session” (speech, Chicago, June 27, 1905), Marxists Internet Archive, accessed January 2, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/unions/iww/1905/convention/ch01.htm>.

⁸¹ George J. Titler, *Hell in Harlan* (Ohio: Commonwealth Book Company, Inc, 2015), 26.

⁸² John W. Hevener, *Which Side Are You on?* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 36.

⁸³ Titler, *Hell in Harlan*, 32.

a Knoxville newspaper on December 11, 1931, Jones “has been convicted of murder in the first degree and sentenced to life imprisonment.”⁸⁴ The case of William B. Jones, and countless other unknown labor organizers and activists, represented a small outcome of the major shift in class relations, in cultural hegemony, and industrial capital regarding the image of Appalachian workers and their place in society.

Contrary to strictly cut and dry histories of American labor-capital contradictions which depict them as being mainly an issue of the early twentieth century, labor conflicts arose in the nineteenth century which at times sought to protest the “wage system of labor” and advocated for a “commonwealth of worker-citizens.”⁸⁵ As the settlement period of the late-eighteenth century began to move beyond its initial purpose of utilizing smallholders to directly prepare indigenous land for capital, the relatively independent artisan and sufficiency farmer found themselves facing the slow “encroachments” of wage relations.⁸⁶ Further than simply being the subjects of this historical process, a court document from an 1806 Philadelphia court recounts some of the first resistances to capital which resulted in official governmental rulings. The document ruled that there was a “common law conspiracy” among various “journeymen,” such as tailors and watchmakers, which attempted to collectively raise their wages and actively stop others from working under low-waged conditions.⁸⁷ The judge in this case ruled that the journeymen forming

⁸⁴ “The Jones Verdict,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, Dec. 11, 1931.

⁸⁵ Josiah Bartlett Lambert, *“If the Workers Took A Notion”: The Right to Strike and American Political Development* (Cornell University Press, 2005), 20.

⁸⁶ Lambert, *“If the Workers Took a Notion,”* 20.

⁸⁷ *Commonwealth v. Pullis*, 3 Doc. Hist. of Am. Ind. Soc. 59 (Philadelphia Mayor’s Court, 1806).

an association represented a threat to budding wage relations, that the men acted “unjustly and oppressively” to prompt higher “wages [than] usually allowed [to] them.”⁸⁸ Collective action, perhaps in more blatant rhetoric than seen during the early twentieth century, represented a challenge to profit and a direct threat to “the sovereignty of the state.”⁸⁹ From an understanding of labor’s long contradiction with the interests of a profit-centered system and the state which upholds it, the conflicts which more often come to mind in Evarts and on Blair Mountain are not spontaneous nor incongruous with American history.

To understand the labor conflicts which then boiled over in the early twentieth century, the Battle of Evarts which saw Jones imprisoned for life will serve as a case study. Located in Harlan County, Kentucky, Evarts had a reputation in the late 1920s and early 30s as a “tough” town.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, prior to the 1932 Battle of Evarts, Evarts became a center for flowing strike “relief” funds and a place for housing striking miners and those who conducted “raids on company stores” to feed strikers’ families.⁹¹ As the 1920s came to a close, Eastern Kentucky witnessed growing agitation and outright direct actions taken by miners against coal company assets all the while Evarts grew into “a powderkeg placed right at the heart [sic].”⁹² In early 1931, with a focus on Evarts, the Black Mountain Coal Company began to take the lead on stepping up “the eviction of miners and their families” who were suspected of taking part in

⁸⁸ *Pullis*.

⁸⁹ Lambert, “*If the Workers Took a Notion*,” 20.

⁹⁰ Hevener, *Which Side Are You on?* 35.

⁹¹ Hevener, *Which Side Are You on?* 35.

⁹² Hevener, *Which Side Are You on?* 35.

union activity.⁹³ Further, perhaps most egregious to miners, was the companies use of a privately hired policing force, or “mine guards,” to carry out these evictions and other abuses reported by miners and their families.⁹⁴ Organizer George Tiltler present in Eastern Kentucky at this time, recounts that tensions bubbled over into a “skirmish” between mine guards and striking miners which “lasted only fifteen minutes.”⁹⁵ Rather than being the result of an underhanded conspiracy at the behest of William B. Jones, the testimony from a witness present at Jones’s trial recounts a different motive as cited by Titler. The witness testified that the striking miners present at the battle had gathered there to persuade strike-breaking miners to join the strike.⁹⁶ Moreover, the witness believed that once word of the altercation spread to nearby Black Mountain mine guards, guards immediately arrived and began firing on the striking miners.⁹⁷ In all, whether commonwealth attorney Hamilton is correct that the Battle of Evarts resulted from conspiring miners or simply a skirmish instigated by the mine guards themselves, the local police, coal operators, and statesmen took it as an opportunity to decry the “undesirable citizens” and the “Reds” which filled the Appalachian labor movement.⁹⁸

A question that undoubtedly arises from this case and others like it is how places now known as Kentucky, West Virginia, or East Tennessee, once held “a vast class of yeomen”

⁹³ Hevener, *Which Side Are You on?* 37.

⁹⁴ Hevener, *Which Side Are You on?* 39.

⁹⁵ Titler, *Hell in Harlan*, 26.

⁹⁶ Titler, *Hell in Harlan*, 28.

⁹⁷ Titler, *Hell in Harlan*, 28.

⁹⁸ Kentucky Governor Flem D. Samson, quoted in *Harland Daily Enterprise*, May 7, 1931.

separate from slaveholders whose value production and subsistence did not rely entirely on wage labor.⁹⁹ This reality stands in stark contrast to a modern Appalachia going through a “struggle with the process of deindustrialization” which is rapidly creating an army of relatively impoverished service workers, and an early twentieth century Appalachia with its countless miners beholden to the will of the owners and management in company towns.¹⁰⁰ The significant population of farmers separate from slaveholding or major wage relations would not be the sole producer of value as industrial forces advanced in Appalachia. Within the region of Appalachia before and after the Civil War, the interests ultimately served by primitive accumulation achieved by the settler began to become laid bare. Proletarianization loomed on the horizon for the small settler class which once represented the noble pioneer or the virtuous smallholder. The evidence for the small settler no longer representing the driving force of colonization rests within the shifting ideas and opinions on the white population in Appalachia and the Southern United States who did not own major plantations. A quote accredited to George M. Weston and addressed to Congress in the mid 1800’s paints a stark contrast to very early American state ideology towards smallholding Appalachians. Appalachian historian Steven Stoll argues this sentiment is that early American statesmen “[believed] that the interests of the backwoods aligned with those of the nation-state.”¹⁰¹ Weston’s depiction of “the whites at the South not

⁹⁹ Blanche Henry Clark, *The Tennessee Yeomen* (Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 1942), 1.

¹⁰⁰ Patricia Beaver, and Tom Hansell, “Documenting and Engaging Communities in Appalachia and Wales: Life After Coal,” *Practicing Anthropology*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2014: 20, accessed August 8, 2021, www.jstor.org/stable/24782447.

¹⁰¹ Steven Stoll, *Ramp Hollow: The Ordeal of Appalachia* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2017), 11.

connected with the ownership or management of slaves,” or the growing wage-dependent class and shrinking smallholders, was that they “lead a semi-savage life, sinking deeper and more hopelessly into barbarism with each succeeding generation.¹⁰² According to this ideological shift, the material conditions from the Revolutionary War into the pre-New Deal mining disputes shifted away from the environment and needs of early colonization.

As the frontier began to move far past the Appalachian range, and indeed as the idea of an American frontier began to take the form that Theodore Roosevelt called “deciding the destiny of the oceans of the East and the West,” or simply of empire, the settlers in the Appalachian range without major ownerships no longer served the changing interests of the settler-colonial state.¹⁰³ Around the time of the Civil War, the hegemonic focus on white incursions into the region began to turn away and outward from Appalachia. Rather than a frontier rife with a so-called adventure and individualism, capitalists began to settle the region not for state-sponsored territorial expansion but for making profitable industry from the “mineral and timber rights” of the region.¹⁰⁴ In practice, even the Appalachian Regional Commission admits that this often led to those who were once considered vital settlers to become “landless”

¹⁰² George M. Weston, *The Poor Whites of the South* (Washington D.C.: Republican Executive Congressional Committee, 1860), 5.

¹⁰³ Theodore Roosevelt, “The Strenuous Life,” (speech, Hamilton Club, Chicago, April 10th, 1899), Theodore Roosevelt Association, accessed August 8, 2021, https://theodoreroosevelt.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=991271&module_id=339361.

¹⁰⁴ Michael Bradshaw and John D. Rockefeller, “Origins of the Problems of Appalachia,” in *The Appalachian Regional Commission: Twenty-Five Years of Government Policy* (University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 18, accessed January 2, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt130j097.8>.

and left to simply work in burgeoning industries.¹⁰⁵ Specifically, from the 1860s, coal companies began to integrate themselves in Appalachian economics and commenced their “voracious demand” for workers.¹⁰⁶ However, there rested an issue with filling mining camps in the region. How could coal companies bring relatively independent and “backward mountaineers into their own” sphere of influence?¹⁰⁷ How could people in Appalachia be coerced into subjecting themselves to the often-brutal life of subordination to the will of a coal town’s operators? How could so-called progressive industrialists justify generating a massive, easily controlled workforce to staff the project of extracting the land’s resources? Industrialists hailing from the northern states, which often looked on Appalachian and southern people as prone to engage in “irksome and offensive” leisure and finding “no pleasure in labor,” utilized an industrialization-centered mindset within their view of Appalachian life and the methods for its supposed modernization.¹⁰⁸

While the early days of white Appalachian colonization witnessed land speculators which sought to increase massive holdings said speculators may never have seen, near the turn of the twentieth century West Virginia through Eastern Tennessee witnessed an influx of “private speculators” and “wealthy visitors” who laid claim to grand swaths of land for industrial

¹⁰⁵ Bradshaw and Rockefeller, “Origins of the Problems of Appalachia,” 18-19.

¹⁰⁶ John H. M. Laslett, edited, *The United Mine Workers of America: A Model of Industrial Solidarity?* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 30.

¹⁰⁷ Elizabeth Catte, *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia* (Cleveland, Ohio: Belt Publishing, 2018), 37.

¹⁰⁸ Fredrick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveler’s Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States* (New York: Knopf, 1953), 616.

purposes.¹⁰⁹ This influx resulted in an attempt to industrialize operations and extract Appalachia's vast mineral and coal deposits. Industrialization, historically, becomes "busy putting the world out of joint" through a process laden with coercion, economic dislocation, and class struggle.¹¹⁰ Not only does transition from a non-private property centered economic order come with struggle, but it also proves time consuming. Seemingly, capitalists, excited by profitable aspects of an industrial Appalachia, attempted to condense "into a decade or less" this agonizing process.¹¹¹ It is generally understood that through the end of the Civil War into the 1920's, Appalachia experienced the common side effects that often accompany a fast paced industrialization, be it a "rapid natural population increase," "export-oriented child labor," or a major decrease in self-sufficiency as the main mode of subsistence.¹¹²

So, what exactly is to be made of this developmental period in Appalachian history? Is it simply what many industrialists and outside missionaries of the era deemed modernization and development of a backwards race of people?¹¹³ Or, as some scholars have coined it, a

¹⁰⁹ Susan L. Yarnell, *The Southern Appalachians: A History of the Landscape* (Asheville, North Carolina: United States Department of Agriculture, 1998), 17-18.

¹¹⁰ Friedrich Engels, *Conditions of the Working Class in England*, (Moscow: Institute of Marxism-Leninism, 1969), 42.

¹¹¹ Henry D. Shapiro, *New Encyclopdia of Southern Cuture: Vol. 11: Agriculutre and Industry*, edited by Walker Melissa and Cobb James C., 257 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), accessed July 10, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469616681_walker.78.

¹¹² Paul Salstrom, *Appalachia's Path to Dependency: Rethinking a Region's Economic History 1730-1940* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 60.

¹¹³ Jilly Fraley, "Missionaries to the Wilderness: A History of Land, Identity, and Moral Geography in Appalachia," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 17, no. ½ (2011): 37, accessed July 12, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41446933>.

conscientious manifestation of industrial and religious elite cooperation “to engage the new world orders” that each wished to set up in the region and within the whole United States?¹¹⁴

Whether one subscribes to the theory which attributes industrial consequences in Appalachia as a particular character failing within Appalachians or as simply a consequence of a wealthy and powerful cabal’s pursuit of their own personal gains, both paths fail to completely encapsulate the origins and modern implications for Appalachian industrialization. Indeed, argument and condemnation solely based on historical individuals’ ideals or ill intentions is insufficient to understand historical processes.

A prime example of the overfocus of the ideal or individual action is found within popular narratives of early immigration to the United States, into Appalachia, and beyond. Narratives that put forward moralistic arguments such as the desire for “freedom of conscience” as the driving force of colonization miss a crucial social and economic incentive for such trends.¹¹⁵ Although these superstructural ideals undoubtedly influence historical trends, as capitalism developed as a social system its enclosure process brought “survey lines, fences, and legal rules” which established strict private ownership of land and resources in Western Europe.¹¹⁶ Land which was once considered the “commons,” or the “people’s land” which

¹¹⁴ Richard J. Callahan, Kathryn Lofton, and Chad E. Seales, "Allegories of Progress: Industrial Religion in the United States," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 1 (2010): 3, accessed July 12, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40666460>.

¹¹⁵ Andrew M. Baxter, and Alex Nowrasteh, “A Brief History of U.S. Immigration Policy from the Colonial Period to the Present Day,” *Cato Institute*, no. 919 (2021): 3, accessed January 5, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep33757>.

¹¹⁶ Allan Greer, “Commons and Enclosure in the Colonization of North America,” *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 2 (2012): 365, accessed January 5, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23310740>.

provided sustenance for many families at once, became subject to the process Karl Marx sardonically referred to as “[setting] free’ the agricultural population as proletarians for manufacturing industry.”¹¹⁷ Whether immigrants from Europe in the early nineteenth century sought ideals such as freedom of expression or were simply convicts avoiding “hanging,” often driven to crime due the crisis of enclosure, both were subject to similar historical and economic processes which ruptured much of the old ways of subsistence and life.¹¹⁸ These ruptures and social incentives are incredibly important for understanding the actions of individuals among such historical processes as colonization or industrialization. Without this approach, viewing history as a narrative of individuals unattached and uninfluenced primarily by the historical trends and economic progressions which continue in some form presently may lead to an outright “mystification of the past.”¹¹⁹

The approach of mystification allows many to avoid confrontation with history and instead allows individuals to consider themselves and the modern world as distinct and “unnecessarily remote” from the past. It is not considered “history which belongs” to regular people.¹²⁰ Rather, history itself becomes a belonging of an economic class which holds power

¹¹⁷ Karl Marx, *Capital Vol. 1, Ch. 27: Expropriation of the Agricultural Population from the Land* (London: Electric Book Co., 2001), Marx/Engels Internet Archive, accessed January 5, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch27.htm>.

¹¹⁸ Baxter and Nowrasteh, “A Brief History of U.S. Immigration Policy from the Colonial Period to the Present Day,” 2.

¹¹⁹ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1977), 11

¹²⁰ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 11.

and hegemony within a society.¹²¹ Yet, still, regular Appalachians, just as all other people, hold the capacity to “make their own history.” Nevertheless, the actions of the past influence the present, as Marx proverbially compared to “a nightmare on the brains of the living.”¹²² Particularly in Appalachia, this metaphorical nightmare exists in the form of a tradition to compartmentalize its inhabitants as particularly remote, premodern, or simply exploited by morally corrupt individuals. In effect, inventing people as needing to be modernized by outside “interventions” to meet with the rest of the nation can invalidate and disconnect them from their own history and subsequent fate as it becomes reliant on the paternalism of outside forces.¹²³

This method of disconnection indeed proved useful for those which did seek to develop Appalachia. In pathologizing Appalachian white people as somehow “sub-human” and never quite “white enough,” the economically elite followed trends of modern America.¹²⁴ This is not to argue that whites in Appalachia are victims of racism, however. Rather, this consideration serves as evidence of the twisted racial logic which has served to legitimate exploitation of not only white Appalachians, but all within the American state whose land or bodies have been

¹²¹ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 11.

¹²² Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1937), I, Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm>.

¹²³ Chad Berry, Phillip J. Obermiller, and Shaunna L. Scott, edited *Studying Appalachian Studies: Making the Path by Walking* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 122.

¹²⁴ Barbara Ellen Smith, "De-Gradations of Whiteness: Appalachia and the Complexities of Race," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 10, no. 1/2 (2004): 46, accessed August 8, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41446605>.

utilized in some fashion by the supposedly “superior and deservedly privileged.”¹²⁵ Nevertheless, this racialized invention of the region is a familiar tactic utilized by modern conservative pundits to assert that “‘noticing’ race is tantamount to racism,” and that the “African American poor” are simply guilty of “cultural deviance” rather than facing a racist and hostile system.¹²⁶ Denigrative racial logic, and this supposed denial of racialization through an arguably more dangerous form of racial prejudice, still marches on as a common logic in the minds of many Americans. Today, these tactics paint the inherent, genetic, backwardness of the Appalachian working class as an explainer of trends of conservatism and poverty. Their backwardness and fragility of character made them not only easy vectors of industrial capitalism, but the potential revolutionaries within their midst all the easier targets for being labelled outside agitators, “connected directly with the communists of Russia,” or fools with a veiled vision which concealed the supposed fair treatment imposed by their bosses.¹²⁷

While there has been much focus on the plight of the white worker, smallholder, or professional within inventions of Appalachia, in most popular analyses or narratives of the region the “existence and plight” of Black or indigenous people in Appalachia is often secondary to that of white Appalachians.¹²⁸ Still, there are many scholars and activists attempting to correct this peripheral position of Black Appalachian studies, such as William H. Turner who attempted

¹²⁵ Smith, “De-Gradations of Whiteness,” 46.

¹²⁶ Smith, “De-Gradations of Whiteness,” 46.

¹²⁷ Senate Committee on Manufactures, *Conditions in Coal Fields in Harlan and Bell Counties, Kentucky* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932), 54.

¹²⁸ Fayette A. Allen, “Blacks in Appalachia,” *The Black Scholar* 5, no. 9 (1974): 42, accessed January 5, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41065738>.

to present a “Black insider’s view” of Appalachian coal camps in his *Harlan Renaissance*.¹²⁹ Activists working with the East Tennessee organization known as *Black in Appalachia* have also gained prominence through their attempt to teach and “highlight the history” and “contributions” of Blacks in the region which often are minimized, if taught at all.¹³⁰ The ignorance that these groups seek to correct is due to the historical attempts at justifying modernizing Appalachia to a white management and capitalist class because Appalachians are similar to them, that is they are the “mountain whites” or a potentially modernized class of white people.¹³¹ Appalachia is not uniquely homogenous. In fact, contrary to “the assumption” that American settler-colonialism completely removed “Indian peoples from the South,” there are Cherokee within the region which still claim some autonomy over their land.¹³² Further, “8.2 percent” of all Appalachians are Black, with some Southern Appalachian cities such as Birmingham holding some of the “largest concentrations” of Black people in the US.¹³³ Some scholars argue that the peripheral character of Black people or indigenous people in the Appalachian narrative is an issue of class

¹²⁹ William H. Turner, *The Harlan Renaissance: Stories of Black Life in Appalachian Coal Towns* (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2021), 9.

¹³⁰ Black in Appalachia, *Black in Appalachia 2021 Annual Report*, 12, accessed April 18, 2022, https://www.blackinappalachia.org/files/ugd/31c746_02e4b8d5b29547dda0eec5b3721da9bd.pdf.

¹³¹ William Goodell Frost, “The Southern Mountaineer: Our Kindred of the Boone and Lincoln Type,” *The American Monthly Review of Reviews* (March 1899): 1.

¹³² Andrew Denson, *Monuments to Absence: Cherokee Removal and the Contest over Southern Memory* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 54.

¹³³ Theresa I. Myadze, “The Status of African Americans and Other Blacks in Urban Areas of Appalachian and Non-Appalachian Alabama,” *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 12, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 37, accessed January 5, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41446747>.

or an issue of race rather than a “larger interplay of race and class.”¹³⁴ An understanding of the shared effects of colonization on indigenous peoples and Black people in the United States is integral to understanding the ways in which they are often a second thought in Appalachian narratives.

In a settler-colonial system there is an attempt to place one group of people, usually racially, over others which are utilized for their land or enforced labor and constantly kept under “close scrutiny” by the “police” or other institutions of the state.¹³⁵ In fact, especially in the Appalachian and Southern regions, Black and indigenous people overwhelmingly per capita are placed within “private prisons” which control and utilize their bodies and labor “for economic purposes.”¹³⁶ Although Black and white people are subject to the rigors of poverty, and many African Americans have achieved “economic wealth in spite of active discrimination,” American colonization at its core set out to “[disenfranchise] politically and socially” colonized indigenous and Black people.¹³⁷ Perhaps no image of the colonized nature of these peoples is more blatant than the stark repression faced by indigenous resistance to industry such as oil pipelines or the Black Panther Party’s armed defense programs. The Black Panther Party, formed in the 1960s as a revolutionary Marxist-oriented decolonial organization which called for “freedom” and the

¹³⁴ Smith, “De-Gradations of Whiteness,” 46.

¹³⁵ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 4.

¹³⁶ Lauren-Brooke Eisen, *Inside Private Prisons: An American Dilemma in the Age of Mass Incarceration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 47, accessed January 5, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/eise17970.1>.

¹³⁷ Ella Forbes, “African-American Resistance to Colonization,” *Journal of Black Studies* 21, no. 2 (Dec. 1990): 212, accessed January 5, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2784474>.

“power to determine the destiny” of Black people in America, organized and armed itself on the basis of community defense and placing the “means of production” into the hands of the “community” itself.¹³⁸ Indigenous organizations, such as the American Indian Movement founded around the same time as the Black Panthers, claim to “have never surrendered” to the American or Canadian state and the process of building “infrastructures “which lead to damage and loss of further dwindling indigenous land.¹³⁹ Both of these movements, the Black Panthers and the “movements among Native Americans” they helped to inspire faced state repression which sought to “systematically destroy” their credibility and viability.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, at least in the case of the Black Panther Party, its prominence proved short lived in no small part to blatantly state-sponsored “Counterintelligence” or COINTELPRO.¹⁴¹ By repressing the potential revolutionaries in the midst of the colonized, the American state conducts self-preservation. Further, placing the colonized or the racial minority as a periphery or a “passive, docile, and accommodating” group which history simply acts upon avoids the deeper and more uncomfortable truths within the United States.¹⁴² Focus on the poor or working whites as the

¹³⁸ Black Panther Party, *The Ten-Point Program* (Marxist History Archive: 2001), accessed January 5, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/workers/black-panthers/1966/10/15.htm>.

¹³⁹ Anne Spice, “Fighting Invasive Infrastructures: Indigenous Relations against Pipelines,” *Environment and Society* 9 (2018): 41, accessed January 24, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26879577>.

¹⁴⁰ Jessica C. Harris, “Revolutionary Black Nationalism: The Black Panther Party,” *The Journal of Negro History* 86, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 416;420, accessed January 5, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1562458>.

¹⁴¹ Harris, “Revolutionary Black Nationalism,” 415.

¹⁴² Forbes, “African-American Resistance to Colonization,” 202.

primary concern of history or attempts at modernizing Appalachia conveniently can avoid the question of colonialism or ethnic or racial disenfranchisement entirely.

This conscientious avoidance of potentially uncomfortable trends within a broad systemic process will serve to transition to another form of avoidance and obfuscation found within the Appalachian coalfields. Certainly, with the development of extraction in Appalachia, coal operators could not have been surprised to see labor disputes arise from often “horrendous living conditions” imposed upon people not accustomed to spending most of their lives under waged relations. As Harlan County coal operator Howard N. Eavenson testified against outside “agitators” charging him and his class as depriving miners “of most all of what we consider the necessities of life,” he assured that the companies were “doing the best they can” to operate and allow their workers “to keep themselves” even while taking “an actual loss” on sales.¹⁴³ Eavenson’s paternalistic confidence in the overall treatment and satisfaction of coal miners in his region perhaps will appear strange paired with another answer he gave to the United States Senate. He was asked about the role of union organizers in the coalfields. Seeming to assert that miners in Harlan County were treated fairly and could clearheadedly decide their own fates with the company and, simultaneously, that miners could also be easily duped by unionizers, Eavenson revealed he and other mine operators were indeed prepared for inevitable labor complications. Responding to how he would deal with union activities in his mine, Eavenson plainly stated “the only answer now is to buy machine guns” and to place them in the hands of hired “deputies” who may “drift in” from outside the state.¹⁴⁴ Further, Eavenson expanded this

¹⁴³ *Conditions in Coal Fields in Harlan and Bell Counties, Kentucky*, 207.

¹⁴⁴ *Conditions in Coal Fields in Harlan and Bell Counties, Kentucky*, 211.

answer to apply to “not only Harlan but southwestern Virginia and southeastern Kentucky.”¹⁴⁵ Plainly, one of “Harlan’s fairest operators,” even while asserting paternalistic loyalty to the interests of Appalachian workers, still understood that class conflict becomes an inevitability when a region’s extractive industry expands so rapidly and a society becomes so divided by social inequality.¹⁴⁶

Indeed, to assert that the owning classes of the time would have been surprised to see such bloody conflicts within their mining towns would be to assert that those with the money, resources, and leisure time would have been ignorant of industrial history and particularly the violent upheavals against capitalism within Europe after the turn of the twentieth century. Thus, the pre-invention of Appalachians as truly backward served the initial interests of implanting extractive industry. However, to protect the class interests of the owning industrialists, and more broadly the state, tactics of invention to fight the class conflict which ultimately arose needed to synthesize. This is not to say, however, that what coal operators acted upon arose from a hidden cabal or conspiracy against the working class. On the contrary, of course, some owners could stand to be remembered as kinder in their responses to conflict than others. However, industrial union power and the potential for mine workers to gain some control over the country’s economic conditions undoubtedly posed to decrease the power of the owners as a collective class. Thus, there remained a class struggle to be fought.

From this idea, many of the modern stereotypes and inventions of Appalachian workers, organizers, and radicals stem. Indeed, as labor organizing began to reach a fever pitch in

¹⁴⁵ *Conditions in Coal Fields in Harlan and Bell Counties, Kentucky*, 210.

¹⁴⁶ John W. Hevener, *Which Side Are You on?* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 17.

Appalachia, it would not be uncommon to hear terms such as “*Bolshevik* and *Redneck* used interchangeably and pejoratively.”¹⁴⁷ The notion that Appalachian workers could choose for themselves to form a union, to strike, or, challenging the owning classes, join a revolutionary organization indicated uncomfortable truths for many in the era of increasing labor disputes. Indeed, if one accepted that labor organizing came organically from Appalachian workers and not from “agitators, dues-hungry racketeers, radicals,” or “a northern conspiracy,” one would also need to come to terms with the fact that Appalachian workers indeed possessed the power to drive social change and that many within their ranks desired to do so.¹⁴⁸ However, undoubtedly, understanding the troubles within an industrializing Appalachia not as a genuine conflict of local classes but rather as a relatively backward population becoming duped by conniving outsiders lent the operators the ability to absolve themselves of responsibility and to simultaneously drum up paranoia and division among workers.

In a 1929 newspaper clipping taken from the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* regarding dissatisfaction and strikes which took place in Elizabethton, Tennessee, and Gastonia, N.C., dual narratives which unfolded on the topic of Appalachian class conflict arose. Before these articles are explored, the conflict which arose in Elizabethton must be understood. In early 1929, an Elizabethton textile mill worked by mostly women sparked a “spirit of protest” throughout

¹⁴⁷ Patrick Huber, "Red Necks and Red Bandanas: Appalachian Coal Miners and the Coloring of Union Identity, 1912-1936," *Western Folklore* 65, no. 1/2 (2006): 195, accessed August 8, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25474784>.

¹⁴⁸ Hevener, 27.

Central Appalachia.¹⁴⁹ “Refusing to work” because of “low wages, petty rules, and high-handed attitudes,” women workers demanded improved conditions and showcased that labor organization did not belong to a wholly male domain.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, going on strike, almost 5,000 women led workers called in the United Textile Workers to directly challenge the economic power of the mill managers and owners.¹⁵¹ Further than showing that Appalachian women possessed the capability of organizing themselves to vie for power in the workplace, their case also showcased the way in which attempts at discreditation by red-baiting could be reversed. In response to accusations of being puppets of supposedly anarchic communists, women representatives of striking Elizabethton workers quoted in Knoxville newspapers stated that “the mill owners and chambers of commerce of the south” acted as the “real instigators of so-called communism.”¹⁵² They assert that Appalachian women themselves only organized and responded to intolerable conditions that their bosses and government “allow to exist” and insist on solving said issues with “800 soldiers with machine guns,” attempting to liken these soldiers to the state’s own version of outside agitators.¹⁵³ Although the textile workers in Elizabethton had managed to get the mill owners to promise better conditions, there still remained the constant

¹⁴⁹ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South,” *The Journal of American History* 73, no. 2 (Sep. 1986): 355, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1908226>.

¹⁵⁰ Hall “Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South,” 354.

¹⁵¹ Theodore Draper, “Gastonia Revisited,” *Social Research* 38, no. 1 (Spring 1971): 6, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40970046>.

¹⁵² “Strikers to Appeal,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, May. 9, 1929.

¹⁵³ “Strikers to Appeal,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, May. 9, 1929.

painting of the women as agents of the “Red Menace” and the heavy-handed repression at the hands of mill owners and state apparatuses.¹⁵⁴ The inability to directly challenge the economic and social power used against the organizers left the United Textile Workers all but defunct in Elizabethton by the end of 1930.¹⁵⁵

The invention of organized labor as agents of Russian communists is apparent in news coverage of the subsequent strike in Gastonia, NC. The *Knoxville News-Sentinel* assured that a truck of North Carolinian striking textile workers, spotted heading towards a Washington appeals court and shouting the “‘International’ and other communist songs,” decorated their car “with red fire” and the paper especially focused on the name of the supposed outside leader “Carl Marx Reeves.”¹⁵⁶ Undoubtedly, as should hopefully stand as obvious from this clipping, Appalachian workers who challenged the power of their management or industrial owners they worked under could easily be painted as a frightening band of red-washed radicals under an outside agitator’s spell. The Gastonia textile mill strike itself, partly inspired by the Elizabethton strike, is indeed remembered for its militancy and its organizers’ willingness to challenge the deeper systemic inequalities of capitalism. In fact, reporters declared that Gastonia became an example of “raw” outright “class struggle.”¹⁵⁷ Due in no small part to the failure of the American Federation of Labor’s attempts at simply talking the mill employers into recognizing a union in Gastonia,

¹⁵⁴ “Strikers at Mill Return to Old Jobs,” *The Monroe News Star*, May 28, 1929.

¹⁵⁵ Draper, “Gastonia Revisited,” 28.

¹⁵⁶ “Union Head Tells Senate About Strike,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, May. 9, 1929.

¹⁵⁷ “Gastonia Goes to Trial,” *New Republic*, August 7, 1929.

American revolutionary Marxists indeed went straight to mill workers to organize a strike.¹⁵⁸ However, in contrast to the narratives which painted the Marxists involved in the strike as inciters of violence, the first workers involved in the formation of a union appeared “far more militant” than the early organizers.¹⁵⁹ In fact, it seemed, the conditions for union activity already budded before the “single Communist organizer” began handing out flyers to Gastonia mill workers in early 1929.¹⁶⁰ Far from finding Appalachian working men and women to be backward or intellectually “inaccessible,” the supposed conspiratorial revolutionary Marxists found a surprise in the “explosion” of labor militancy in North Carolina.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, anti-communist onlookers to the Gastonia strikes found some satisfaction when the strikers’ demonstrations were “clubbed and beaten in the streets” by the National Guard due to the supposed Marxist infiltration into the local labor movement.¹⁶² “The employers, only too willing to exploit” the presence of self-declared Marxists or communists among striking workers in

¹⁵⁸ *Investigation of Communist Propaganda: Hearings Before a Special Committee to Investigate Communist Activities in the United States*, House of Representatives, 71st Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1930), Part I, Vol. I, 89, accessed April 18, 2022, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=OhXkP-GZAz4C&pg=GBS.PA126&hl=en>.

¹⁵⁹ Draper, “Gastonia Revisited,” 11

¹⁶⁰ Draper, “Gastonia Revisited,” 11.

¹⁶¹ Draper, “Gastonia Revisited,” 28.

¹⁶² Tom Tippet, *When Southern Labor Stirs* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1931), 86-87.

Gastonia, similarly to Elizabethton the strike had all but been defused by force and by inciting public fears of communist conspiracies by 1930.¹⁶³

These two events and the public coverage of them, paired with the aforementioned Battle of Evarts explored at the beginning of this chapter, impart the ideological forces at work within early twentieth century Appalachia and the U.S. broadly. The Appalachian working class, rather than being considered capable of organizing radical social change, instead underwent portrayal as particularly childlike and in need of a paternal owning class to guide their affairs. Further, the owning class positioned itself as the opposition and protector against a supposed growing threat in Appalachia and the Southern United States. The “communist-led labor uprising” in Gastonia and the supposed infiltration of Elizabethton mills justified outright state repression of union activity.¹⁶⁴ No more was the Appalachian region home to independent, so-called, heroes and pioneers. Rather, Appalachia became a people in need of guidance away from a supposed archaic way of life, a people in need of heavily mediated work which kept them from radical sentiment, and a people supposedly without the ability to organically organize themselves within their workplaces.

¹⁶³ Draper, “Gastonia Revisited,” 18.

¹⁶⁴ Patrick Huber, “Mill Mother’s Lament: Ella May Wiggins and the Gastonia Textile Strike of 1929,” *Southern Cultures* 15, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 82, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26214226>.

III

Global Crisis, The New Deal, and the Solidification of State-Capital Cooperation: Appalachians and the Era of Counter-Revolution

“There is a group of men in this audience who have been overseas fighting to save the world for democracy, but we find the conditions here more hellish than they ever were over there.”

- C. F. Keeney¹⁶⁵

“‘Making the world safe for democracy’ is now one of the world’s best-known phrases. ‘Making democracy a safe thing for the world’ is also in the minds of many.... It has been impossible to fight Kaiserism abroad without some introspection at home, and it is perhaps natural that the minds of labor turn to their old enemy, capital, and hang on it all the iniquities of Kaiserism.”

- Josiah Keeley¹⁶⁶

There is a divide between historians on what the New Deal of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s administration truly represented in Appalachia. Generally, these arguments disagree over the charitable, or lack thereof, nature of the New Deal in the region. Whether these programs represented the destruction of “subsistence agriculture,” or simply a charitable response to the consequences of industrial capitalism’s own necessary dissolution of said practices remains a

¹⁶⁵ Testimony of Frank Keeney, *West Virginia Coal Fields: Hearings Before the Committee on Education and Labor* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921), 169.

¹⁶⁶ Josiah Keeley, "After the War," *Coal Age* 13 (Oct. 10, 1918): 868.

point of contention between scholars within neo-liberal and Marxist circles.¹⁶⁷ Putting a proverbial pin in this divide, the New Deal in Appalachia nevertheless came on the heels of one of the most politically radicalizing periods in recorded world history. In America, in the aftermath of World War I, a relentless crusade of propaganda pressed on workers to dedicate themselves to “make the world safe for democracy,” perhaps unintentionally leading many to turn that idea inward towards contemporary injustice.¹⁶⁸ As recorded by Appalachian historian David A. Corbin, particularly miners began to put forth an ideology of action, not “tongue or pen,” to achieve a worldwide “government of democracy” with help by “each and every one.”¹⁶⁹ Internationally, leading into the first world war, state leaders such as Kaiser Wilhelm feared “socialist agitation” as a consequence of a global conflict.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, one of the strongest periods of radicalization and crisis in global capitalism manifested. The First World War’s consequences brought a “tide of revolution” into Russia and into Germany.¹⁷¹ The crisis of war manifested in Russia as an anti-capitalist movement which aspired to a world under “one unified socialist

¹⁶⁷ Jerry Bruch Thomas, *An Appalachian New Deal: West Virginia in the Great Depression* (Morgantown, West Virginia: West Virginia University Press, 2010), 2.

¹⁶⁸ David A. Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922* (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2015), 189.

¹⁶⁹ Reporter for Thayer local, letter to the editor, *UMWJ*, Apr. 4, 1918, quoted in David A. Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922*, 190.

¹⁷⁰ Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (England: Allen Lane, 2012), 183.

¹⁷¹ William A. Pelz, *A People’s History of Modern Europe* (London: Pluto Press, 2016), 126.

republic.”¹⁷² In contrast, after a short-lived, Marxist-led upheaval, the “White Guard of capitalism” known modernly as fascism which sought to forcibly prevent further socialist movements also began stirring in Germany.¹⁷³ These upheavals which threatened the American style of capitalism paired with growing poverty and militancy in sections of the workers’ movement in general prompted a response from the American state apparatus and the capitalist class.

The response in question, of course, became what now is known as the New Deal programs. Much praise has been written on the nature of these reforms and even today many still romanticize and harken back to its terminology and heritage. During Barack Obama’s presidency, there existed a popular consensus within the administration and its supporters that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act represented a second New Deal which “saved the country from a second Great Depression.”¹⁷⁴ The New Deal still weighs heavy on the minds of modern American politicians. Even recent social democratic political candidates harken back to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a notable example being Bernie Sanders’s fireside chats during the 2020 presidential elections.¹⁷⁵ While much focus is given to FDR and the reforms which undoubtedly lessened the dire situations of American workers, the focus here will surround

¹⁷² Pelz, *A People’s History of Modern Europe*, 126.

¹⁷³ Antonio Gramsci, “The Two Fascisms,” *Ordine Nuovo*, 25 (August 1921), Marxists Internet Archive, accessed January 8, 2022, https://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/1921/08/two_fascisms.htm.

¹⁷⁴ Michael Grunwald, “Think Again: Obama’s New Deal,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 195 (2012): 46, accessed August 31, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41726891>.

¹⁷⁵ Bernie Sanders Campaign, “Fireside Chat with Bernie,” Bernie Sanders official website, <https://berniesanders.com/latest/fireside-chat-bernie/>.

changing material conditions, rises in world radicalism, and the dangers of revolution at home which led to and required a response partly in the form of the New Deal programs. Undoubtedly, the “market gluts, chronic losses, frequent bankruptcies, and low wages” experienced in Appalachia and the broader US in the 1920s also served as a serious impetus and rationale for the New Deal reforms.¹⁷⁶ As will be covered later, these reforms also served to solidify a state ideology regarding Appalachia as a permanent, disenfranchised charity case. What is often forgotten by historians of the New Deal is that, rather than simply being the receiver of aid, Appalachia formulated its own counter-hegemonic force which “stood ready to take whatever form of justice most satisfied them.”¹⁷⁷

The mine wars, culminating in the largest labor uprising in American history in 1921, was an era of unprecedented labor, state, and capital conflicts.¹⁷⁸ The early twentieth century was also an era of international radical upheavals. Fascism began to seize major capitalist states, such as Benito Mussolini’s Italy which utilized state power to “smash” the “unions, political organizations, and civil liberties” in order to protect the profits of the “large landowners and industrialists” in response to post-war recession.¹⁷⁹ Simultaneously, the Russian Revolution of 1918 positioned itself as a direct opposition to the global order of economic power being in the

¹⁷⁶ Thomas, *An Appalachian New Deal*, 8.

¹⁷⁷ Catte, *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia*, 46.

¹⁷⁸ Wess Harris, “What if we Really Won the Battle of Blair Mountain?” *Appalachian Heritage* 39, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 87, accessed January 8, 2022, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/what-if-we-really-won-battle-blair-mountain/docview/907243262/se-2?accountid=10771>.

¹⁷⁹ Michael Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism* (San Francisco, California: City Light Books, 1997), 3.

hands of “the wealthy few” and declared itself as a force which put “class power” into the hands of the “laboring masses.”¹⁸⁰ It should come as no surprise that Appalachia’s long eras of class conflict and its people’s participation in World War I also resulted into a potential revolutionary moment. Many historians focused on the material implications of the early twentieth century acknowledge that union organization, later paired with the economic downturn of the Great Depression, prompted capitalists to organize themselves into collectives of “local associations and a state association” to prevent further union efforts.¹⁸¹ The incentive for economic elites and the political apparatus of the state to cooperate following the armed movements of the early 1920’s, however, often falls short of direct focus. As painting the Great Depression as solely a result of individual capitalists misusing investments and stocks rather than a systematic decades-long process seems an inadequate explanation, the cartel-like behavior of the “alleged conspiracy” of coal bosses to collectively squelch organized labor seems almost overzealous when traditional union efforts stand considered as the main and only originators.¹⁸²

The example of the Battle of Blair Mountain and other militant labor confrontations in Appalachia, such as in Gastonia or Elizabethton, represented the potential for “obliteration” of the dividing lines of racial or sexual discrimination on a mass scale.¹⁸³ Undoubtedly, the prior militant strikes or work stoppages would have been seen as threatening to the economic owning

¹⁸⁰ Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds*, 26.

¹⁸¹ Thomas, *An Appalachian New Deal*, 9.

¹⁸² Thomas, *An Appalachian New Deal*, 9.

¹⁸³ Patrick Huber, “Red Necks and Red Bandanas: Appalachian Coal Miners and the Coloring of Union Identity, 1912-1936” *Western Folklore* 65, no. 1/2 (2006): 205, accessed January 9, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25474784>.

class or the state itself. Appalachians simply organizing themselves into labor unions certainly deserved consideration. Exemplarily, in places like Gastonia, union organization was completely subdued by arms of the state and owners of industry. However, at a time when white male workers were “most unwilling” to include Black workers within the union movements, the labor uprisings which became markedly interracial or women-led represented something relatively unseen in American labor struggles.¹⁸⁴ Even a magazine such as *The Liberator*, considered “the most important of American radical magazines of the early 1920s,” occasionally printed editorials which espoused racially discriminative terminology and opinions. Published as an investigative journalism piece on the Mine Wars of the early 1920’s, *The Liberator’s* editors and publishers did not seem to disavow the racial slurs and hostile attitude toward Black Appalachians expressed by Robert Minor in *The Wars of West Virginia*.¹⁸⁵ This normalization of racial discrimination and segregation presents the Battle of Blair Mountain, “where 2,000 African American men and women” actively fought with white miners, as something even more unique and potentially upheaving in the history of Appalachian labor.¹⁸⁶

Contemporary newspapers recorded that armed conflicts increased between coal company agents and unionizing miners in the late 1910s. The growing militancy in miners came at the behest of coal companies “evicting union miners and their families at the point of a gun,”

¹⁸⁴ Theodore Draper, “Gastonia Revisited,” *Social Research* 38, no. 1 (Spring 1971): 21, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40970046>.

¹⁸⁵ Robert Minor, “The Wars of West Virginia,” *The Liberator*, (August 1920).

¹⁸⁶ Catte, *What you are Getting Wrong About Appalachia*, 46.

relying on privately funded armed individuals to carry out these deeds.¹⁸⁷ Evictions reached such a fever pitch that Black and white miners were left to live in tent colonies with no other option than homelessness.¹⁸⁸ Unsurprisingly, disenfranchisement did not meet with passivity by workers affected by eviction. Primarily, the Battle of Blair Mountain was not a spontaneous and completely unexpected event in Appalachia. Rather, “as soon as the coal industry emerged in West Virginia, labor unrest began to break out,” especially armed marches of union miners becoming more commonplace prior to Blair Mountain.¹⁸⁹ Eventually, driven by mass evictions and outright murder in some cases, as in the case of Baldwin-Felts agents murdering miner sympathetic sheriff Sid Hatfield, the militancy of pro-union miners grew fiercer.¹⁹⁰ The militancy resulted in a sophisticated, organized, racially diverse, and class conscious army of West Virginian workers to formulate themselves, intending to “overthrow martial law and liberate their union brothers” in 1921.¹⁹¹ The exact details of the conflict itself, such as troop placements, conflict zones, or the “overall strategy” of its forces, will not be the focus of exploring this event.¹⁹² Rather, its causes, its impacts, and its significance as a challenge to American political

¹⁸⁷ “24 Men Facing Trial For 7 Violent Deaths in West Va. Labor War,” *The Washington Times*, Dec. 12, 1920.

¹⁸⁸ “24 Men Facing Trial For 7 Violent Deaths in West Va. Labor War.”

¹⁸⁹ Brandon Nida, "Demystifying the Hidden Hand: Capital and the State at Blair Mountain," *Historical Archaeology* 47, no. 3 (2013): 55, accessed August 31, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43491336>.

¹⁹⁰ “Lively, Held for Murder of Sid Hatfield,” *Labor World*, August 6, 1921.

¹⁹¹ David A. Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922* (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2015), 218.

¹⁹² Nida, "Demystifying the Hidden Hand: Capital and the State at Blair Mountain," 57.

and economic hegemony is most relevant to this work. This march ended in what truly remains one of the most significant events in Appalachian, and labor, history. “The maintenance of capital” as a societal pursuit revealed itself as directly conjoined with the authority of state.¹⁹³ For example, the opposition to the miners at Blair Mountain utilized destructive weaponry and employed the use of massive numbers of federal troops almost unprecedented on American soil.¹⁹⁴ The sheer firepower present on the side of the coal companies has even been commemorated by the National Rifle Association for encompassing “nearly every firearm produced in the United States” and representing a moment when “Logan County Defenders” had such weapons “when they needed them.”¹⁹⁵

Following the cooperation of the state and of capital to defeat the interracial march of unionizing miners, these Appalachians “exposed the state government’s anti-union proclivities and caused the miners to understand – and feel – the connections between the coal establishment and the state government.”¹⁹⁶ This moment, albeit not the only one, but likely one of the most explosive, revealed that “the hidden hand [of capital] has been and continues to be the iron fist of the state.”¹⁹⁷ The lesson the capitalist class and authorities of the state learned manifested in a requirement for an explicit and coordinated cooperation between boss and state official in not

¹⁹³ Nida, “Demystifying the Hidden Hand: Capital and the State at Blair Mountain,” 63

¹⁹⁴ Nida, “Demystifying the Hidden Hand: Capital and the State at Blair Mountain,” 63.

¹⁹⁵ National Rifle Association, “Guns of the Battle of Blair Mountain,” *American Rifleman* (March 13, 2014), accessed January 9, 2022, <https://www.americanrifleman.org/content/guns-of-the-battle-of-blair-mountain/>.

¹⁹⁶ Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields*, 211.

¹⁹⁷ Nida, “Demystifying the Hidden Hand: Capital and the State at Blair Mountain,” 63.

only outright suppressing Appalachian labor agitation, but later using their cooperative hegemony to attempt to permanently dull its revolutionary potential. This dampening process manifested through the Great Depression and New Deal Reforms. The New Deal, and its arguable descendent the Appalachian Regional Commission, “did not focus on blacks in Appalachia,” failing to cross racial lines in the way that was accomplished momentarily within the high points of the Appalachian labor movement.¹⁹⁸

Within the New Deal, there certainly arose much needed subsistence reforms in the face of immiserating poverty at least spurred on by overzealous stockbrokers which exacerbated the downturn of a boom-and-bust cycle. Nevertheless, naming “crashes after the triggers,” meaning the abuse of the stock market in the early 1900s, misses the economic processes in which crises arise.¹⁹⁹ As with all historical events, the depression was preceded by decades of buildup. In short, poverty and immiseration grew into the 1930’s and indeed, in the wake of mass uprisings in places like Appalachia, the capitalist and political classes understood there needed to arise some form of accommodation to stem the tide of potential revolution. According to Paul Mattick in a 1934 contemporary Marxist view, FDR garnered much support from American industry leaders, including coal leaders, due to his ability to present his reforms as entirely “benefits for

¹⁹⁸ Fayette A. Allen, “Blacks in Appalachia,” *The Black Family* 5, no. 9, (June 1974): 42, accessed September 8, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41065738>.

¹⁹⁹ Richard D. Wolff, “COVID-19 Was a Trigger, But Capitalism Caused the Economic Crash,” in *The Sickness is the System: When Capitalism Fails to Save Us from Pandemics or Itself* (New York: Democracy at Work Publishing, 2021), par. 2.

labor” “in spite of press-agency to the contrary.”²⁰⁰ However, several of Roosevelt’s proposals which directly relieved the destitute or set up public works employment which threatened “private enterprises” and “low wage structures of work” did meet direct opposition from some large business leaders.²⁰¹ This opposition to some of the New Deal helped to brand the program and FDR himself as potentially an opponent of the overzealous among the capitalist class, much to his frustration as he saw the program as a means to “rescue the capitalist system.”²⁰² Although this image of opposition to the capitalist class overtakes much of the popular image of the New Deal, the Great Depression also left major industries floundering and paranoid of “Labor’s growing militancy and refusal to obey” traditional union politics.²⁰³ So, therefore, the New Deal administration and the industry owners needed a compromise that simultaneously blunted the revolutionary potential of the labor movement and still upheld the profitability of major American enterprise.

The reforms in question, as described by a personal advisor to FDR, were “conservative policies” in that they were focused on the “safety” of the “economic order.”²⁰⁴ Raymond Moley,

²⁰⁰ Paul Mattick, “What’s Behind the ‘New Deal’?” *International Council Correspondence* 1, no. 3, (Dec. 1934), Marxists Internet Archive, accessed September 9, 2021, <https://www.marxists.org/subject/left-wing/icc/1934/12/new-deal.htm>.

²⁰¹ Michael Parenti, *Democracy for the Few* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2002), 63.

²⁰² Parenti, *Democracy for the Few*, 63.

²⁰³ Mattick, “What’s Behind the ‘New Deal’?”

²⁰⁴ Raymond Moley, *After Seven Years* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1939), 155.

FDR's advisor, reminisced that "capitalism was saved in eight days" by the New Deal.²⁰⁵ It is admittedly remarkable that the New Deal administration aptly implemented policies which upheld the American capitalist system. There are many examples of reforms which at once slightly benefited the working class in the short term and most definitely benefited the large capitalist class in the long term. The minimum wage and hour laws are pertinent examples of this proverbial double-edged sword. Undoubtedly, enacting minimum wages and hours, especially in Appalachia where, as Jerry Bruce Thomas argues, many people lived "trapped in futility and hopelessness" in regards to working conditions imposed upon them, at least lessened the misery of workers.²⁰⁶ Nevertheless, as Marx bluntly assessed in his time, "one capitalist always kills many" and there lies a tendency within the capitalistic system for there to always be a "constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital."²⁰⁷ Thus, with the enacting of workplace reforms, the federal government could posture to achieve progress for the working person that before required often violent struggle and simultaneously it eliminated the "small competitors who were only able to stay in the race by paying unbelievably low wages and working long hours."²⁰⁸ Increased wages, as a modern expert on the era argues, became "critical

²⁰⁵ Moley, *After Seven Years*, 155.

²⁰⁶ Thomas, *An Appalachian New Deal*, 27.

²⁰⁷ Karl Marx, *Capital* (Marx/Engels Internet Archive: 1999), Ch. 32, Marxists Internet Archive, accessed September 9, 2021, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/index.htm>.

²⁰⁸ Mattick, "What's Behind the 'New Deal'?"

to the economic health of the entire society.”²⁰⁹ Historian Michael Parenti argues that these reforms targeting workplaces were integral due to their “high visibility” and that they “helped dilute public discontent.”²¹⁰ Certainly, as academics concerned with the ideological intentions of federal reform have argued, the New Deal programs served their purpose of diluting popular discontent and were almost immediately subjected to the process of “slashing emergency relief measures” in the wake of the achieved “political stability.”²¹¹ Therefore, the New Deal programs, many indeed lessening the misery of the working class and of Appalachians specifically, intrinsically also served to hasten the onset of capital monopolization, exposed the hidden handshake of profit and the state, and laid the major groundwork for the coming neoliberal frameworks in US hegemony.

In Appalachia, the New Deal began the establishment of charity and federal or corporate paternalism as the preferred solution to economic immiseration, rather than “wrested concessions from the owning class and the state” to meet economic needs.²¹² Subsequent attempts to put forward something like a New Deal revitalization in Appalachia, for example John F. Kennedy’s Appalachian Regional Commission, firstly did not “meet peoples’ material needs directly or

²⁰⁹ Kim Phillips-Fein, “Top-Down Revolution: Businessmen, Intellectuals, and Politicians Against the New Deal, 1945—1964,” *Enterprise & Society* 7, no. 4 (2006): 688. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23700686>.

²¹⁰ Parenti, *Democracy for the Few*, 63.

²¹¹ Francis Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (Updated eBook Edition, New York: Random House, Inc., 1993), Ch. 3, Par. 60.

²¹² Parenti, *Democracy for the Few*, 65.

encourage them to organize.”²¹³ Jay Rockefeller, West Virginian Senator and great grandson of oil monopolist John D. Rockefeller, recounts that the ARC set out from the beginning to make “Appalachia more economically competitive with the rest of the nation.”²¹⁴ Further, it sought to make Appalachians suitable for “productive working careers” through a “network of vocational educational facilities and programs.”²¹⁵ From the perspective of scholars with an anti-Marxist viewpoint, these kinds of vocational training became an opportunity for the working class to develop into empathetic and effective workers that simply “develop a critique” and “[watch] over” the more excessive aspects of capitalist production.²¹⁶ The Marxist method posits that “training poor and working people” to be the quintessential worker simply is an attempt to instill obedience in a worker, or simply a temporary solution to economic insecurity as many of these trainings are for “industry that automates and mechanizes” more rapidly than workers fill positions.²¹⁷ As the New Deal sought to “[preserve] the profit system” through reforms which did not fundamentally rupture class power in America, the modern solutions to a supposed Appalachian economic backwardness follow suit.²¹⁸ Indeed, reformers in Appalachia often dress

²¹³ Tarance Ray, “Hollowed Out,” *The Baffler*, no. 47 (September 2019), accessed January 11, 2022, <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/hollowed-out-ray>.

²¹⁴ John D. Rockefeller IV, forward to *The Appalachian Regional Commission: Twenty-Five Years of Government Policy*, by Michael Bradshaw (KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1992), ix.

²¹⁵ Rockefeller IV, forward to *The Appalachian Regional Commission*, x.

²¹⁶ Joe L. Kincheloe, “Chapter 3: Building a Vision: Worker Identity and Good Work,” *Counterpoints* 7 (1995): 60, accessed January 11, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42974999>.

²¹⁷ Ray, “Hollowed Out.”

²¹⁸ Mattick, “What’s Behind the ‘New Deal’?”

the language of programs like vocational training or capital investments into non-profits as a step towards a “social revolution,” speaking nothing of class or colonial disenfranchisement.²¹⁹ A popular movement which places power into the hands of regular Appalachians, workers, and the colonized to challenge economic and “state power” and forming these individuals into a “class ‘for itself’” has not been successful in Appalachia nor the United States.²²⁰ Rather, what is preferred is a constant invention of Appalachia as victimized, backwards, or self-sabotaging. Further, when these tactics fail to address the inadequacies of solving economic conditions there, a distracting narrative of a scapegoat outsider or local villains must be established.

²¹⁹ Evelyn B. Powers, “Revolution in Appalachia,” *Appalachian Journal* 5, no. 2 (1978): 253, accessed January 12, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40932213>.

²²⁰ Cliff Slaughter, *Marxism & the Class Struggle* (New Park Publications, 1975), Marxists Internet Archive, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/en/slaughte.htm>.

IV

Necroeconomics, Hegemony, and Drugs in Appalachia:

Inventing Appalachia Laid Bare and the Responsibility of Scholarship and Class-Conscious
Appalachians

“What made UNITE so appealing to other areas around the country was the way it channeled the rage and fear of working- and professional-class individuals into something other than class struggle. For a brief time in eastern Kentucky, the War on Drugs was not only waged from above; it was a grassroots war, and everyone was pressured to take a side. Nothing less than the future of the region was at stake. This was a powerful idea in a place and time that had seen profound social and economic upheaval.”

-Tarence Ray²²¹

Materialist, Marxist, or otherwise anti-capitalist historical methodologies have thoroughly been on the fringes of acceptable scholarship within the United States. For example, prolific academics within the tendency of mainstream liberalism writing in the heat of the red scare openly advocated for the exclusion and control of the “cancerous growth” of Marxist “conspiracy” within universities.²²² Nevertheless, the analysis put forward in this work is still draped in an attempt at analyzing Appalachia’s social inventions through the methodology of an

²²¹ Tarence Ray, “United in Rage,” *The Baffler* no. 58, (July 2021), accessed December 4, 2021, <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/united-in-rage-ray>.

²²² Sidney Hook, *Heresy, Yes Conspiracy, No* (New York: The John Day Company, 1953), 26.

aspiring Marxist historian. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the Marxist historical method and the method Marxist historians deem the liberal or “bourgeois historiographer.”²²³ So, the purpose of the above quote, from the perspective of an Appalachian Marxist, is to illustrate the supposed difference in conclusions a materialist viewpoint and a bourgeois viewpoint will lend to Appalachian studies according to Marxist scholars. Prior to exploring some of the precepts a bourgeois history or a Marxist history utilize, an outline of the content this quote introduces is necessary.

There is likely no other picture of a modern Appalachia more familiar than the drug-addled Appalachia, reeling from the disappearance of “coal jobs caused by mechanization.”²²⁴ This loss and subsequent failure to bring about an industry to match it has been blamed on what some corporate executives reportedly have labeled as the region’s “poverty culture.”²²⁵ Sociologists have argued that the culture of poverty thesis originally maintained that poverty instills in the poor, those “damaged by the system” of capitalism, adaptive mechanisms which allow survival in an exploitative society and simultaneously the potential of determining “their

²²³ Ernst Nolte, “The Relationship between ‘Bourgeois’ and ‘Marxist’ Historiography,” *History and Theory* 14, no. 1 (1975): 59, accessed December 15, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2504604>.

²²⁴ Tarence Ray, “Hollowed Out: Against the Sham Revitalization of Appalachia,” *The Baffler* 47, (Sept-Oct 2019): 99, accessed December 9, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26779688>.

²²⁵ Amanda Laucher, quoted in Campbell Robertson, “They Were Promised Coding Jobs in Appalachia. Now They Say it was A Fraud,” *The New York Times*, May 12, 2019, accessed December 9, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/12/us/mined-minds-west-virginia-coding.html>.

own fate” within or without their social system.²²⁶ However, sociologists with a critical interest in ideology also argue that the poverty culture thesis is modernly used to simply “[blame] the victims of poverty for their poverty.”²²⁷ This supposed fatalism of Appalachia, still finding itself propped up even in medical studies of the region, as regionally inherent “attitudes and behaviors” hindering medical treatment there paired with its recent economic downturn is often argued to have ripened the region for an outbreak like the opioid crisis.²²⁸ Indeed, since the New Deal era, Appalachia was once again painted as a hapless victim of partly self-inflicted circumstance rather than experiencing with the rest of the nation the ramifications of what some scholars deemed the “necroeconomy” of “late capitalism.”²²⁹

A term such as necroeconomy requires an explanation due to its relative novelty and overt political connotations. Necroeconomies resulting from capitalism’s modern iteration, as historians labeling themselves anti-capitalist describe them, are long systemic processes where the state apparatus and capitalists themselves form a “state-corporate nexus.”²³⁰ This nexus

²²⁶ David L. Harvey and Michael H. Reed, “The Culture of Poverty: An Ideological Analysis,” *Sociological Perspectives* 39, no. 4 (1996): 467, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1389418>.

²²⁷ Harvey and Reed, “The Culture of Poverty,” 485-86.

²²⁸ David Royse and Mark Dignan, “Fatalism and Cancer Screening in Appalachian Kentucky,” *Family and Community Health* 34, no. 2 (2011): 126, accessed December 9, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44954148>.

²²⁹ Eve Darian-Smith, “Dying for the Economy: Disposable People and Economies of Death in the Global North,” *State Crime Journal* 1, vol. 10 (2021): 67, accessed December 9, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13169/statecrime.10.1.0061>.

²³⁰ Neve Gordon and Penny Green, “State Crime, Structural Violence and COVID-19,” *State Crime Journal* 1, vol. 10 (2021): 8, accessed December 14, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13169/statecrime.10.1.0004>.

results in government “under reach” which takes the form of conscious “deregulation and austerity measures” along with “evisceration” of public services and social securities.²³¹

Austerity, this process of lessening public infrastructure, has resulted in part for what the Appalachian Regional Commission has repeatedly labelled even prior to the traditional austerity movements of the 1980’s as the need for reinvestment in “human and social capital” within public infrastructure.²³² How this austerity process has affected the governmental and private corporate push to solve the “Appalachian problem” and the invention of the region most familiar to modern contemporaries will first follow a more detailed description of the aforementioned historical methodologies.²³³

To provide a totally nonbiased description of the different methodologies will prove troublesome in no small part due to the difficulty in separating the present author’s “physical and mental constitution” along with the contemporary “historical situation” from the “mental image” that is sought to be produced on these aforementioned historical methods.²³⁴ In short, it is acknowledged, in line with all others who foray into history, that “perceptions of events are inevitably influenced by past experience, dominant social beliefs,” and personal beliefs.²³⁵

²³¹ Gordon and Green, “State Crime, Structural Violence and COVID-19,” 4.

²³² *Appalachia: A Report by the President’s Appalachian Regional Commission* (Washington, D.C.: U.S Government Printing Office, 1964), 19.

²³³ *Appalachia: A Report by the President’s Appalachian Regional Commission*, 57.

²³⁴ Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science* (Moscow, Russia: Progress Publishers, 1947), Part 1 Section III, Marxists Internet Archive, accessed December 14, 2021, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/>.

²³⁵ Michael Parenti, *Inventing Reality: The Politics of News Media* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 51.

However, it is not claimed here that attempts at bringing forward truth are in vain. Indeed, for the historian to be willing to understand the biases of one's own time and the difficulty of putting forward complete objectivity will undoubtedly allow said scholar to understand the biased narratives found within historical sources themselves. In all, the approach to understanding ideology put forward in this piece is not attempting to "neutralize" the subjectivity of authorship.²³⁶ Rather, the difficulty in achieving true objectivity is acknowledged in an attempt to avoid unconsciously repeating the "social reality shaped by the dominant forces of society."²³⁷ As this work is focused closely on the nature of ideology and its tendency to form hegemonic precepts within people and institutions, it should also be acknowledged that academics are no exception to falling into uncritical acceptance of dominant ideas.

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist of the early twentieth century, and his conceptions of hegemony will be useful in bringing to light not only the Marxist and bourgeois perspective, but also something of the inner workings of Appalachia's history of social invention. The intellectual or academic, Gramsci theorized arises with "every social group" which holds a position "in the world of economic production" such as the owning class or the working classes.²³⁸ Intellectuals, he argued, serve to flesh out the "awareness" of a given class outside of solely their economic position, such as the "social and political fields."²³⁹ Not necessarily tied

²³⁶ Parenti, *Inventing Reality*, 51.

²³⁷ Parenti, *Inventing Reality*, 52.

²³⁸ Antonio Gramsci, quoted in Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1992), 5.

²³⁹ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, 5.

directly to a function within the economic base of a society, intellectuals, authors, and scholars are at least partially responsible for mediating and managing the “complex of superstructures.”²⁴⁰ This complex of politics, ideas, and narratives within a given system, according to Gramsci, requires proverbial “deputies” to maintain and formulate it in the form of the professional intellectual.²⁴¹ At bottom, Gramsci puts forward an analysis of a certain class coming to domination that is not overly focused on economic conditions. This line of thought explains the rise of the narrative producers, the political forces of “discipline,” and the professional intellectuals along with their role in the complex formulation of ideological and political hegemonies which formulate in a class system.²⁴²

Turning to bourgeois historians, Gramsci at least deemed them as those who “put themselves forward as autonomous and independent” of any ruling class and therefore holding no inherent biases.²⁴³ Of course, it must be asked: What does define bourgeois history and what are its ramifications for the Appalachian narrative? From the Marxist perspective, bourgeois history encompasses the focus on the primacy of the idea, individualism, and within the extremes of the vision the attempt at painting the “end point of mankind’s ideological evolution” as the global capitalist “liberal” state.²⁴⁴ However, it is not always the case that what Marxists consider

²⁴⁰ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, 12.

²⁴¹ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, 12.

²⁴² Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, 12.

²⁴³ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, 7.

²⁴⁴ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), xi.

bourgeois historiography considers itself as such. Indeed, as capitalistic ideas and narratives generally make up the global network of the “political element of the superstructure,” it is always possible that uncontroversial repetitions of preconceived cultural and systemic biases can be painted as non-biased, autonomous, or independent.²⁴⁵ Even an academic such as Mark Fisher, himself being far from a Marxist, in recent years has diagnosed the broad global ideology as being that of “capitalist realism.”²⁴⁶ In short, he understood that institutions from the United States Senate to films such as “*Children of Men*” are replete with the “narrative pretext” that capitalism is the highest and ultimate default of human existence.²⁴⁷ With this difficulty in mind, it is still possible to identify the Marxist notion of bourgeois history even if it does not present itself as explicitly loyal to capitalism’s dominance or colonialism’s inevitability.

Indeed, a quote from John Alexander Williams’s excellent narrative history of *Appalachia*, from a Marxist view, showcases the often unintentionally bourgeois nature of writings on Appalachia and the development of the American state. “The Cherokee Removal, both in the racism that underpinned the policy and the brutality with which it was carried out, now ranks as one of the saddest and least honorable events in American history.”²⁴⁸ Williams description particularly points out that the gradual removal of the Cherokee people from their

²⁴⁵ Michele Filippini and Patrick J. Barr, “Ideology,” in *Using Gramsci: A New Approach* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 7, accessed December 20, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1h64kxd.7>.

²⁴⁶ Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There no Alternative?* (Zero Books, 2009), 4.

²⁴⁷ Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 2.

²⁴⁸ John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 80.

ancestral lands in Appalachia is one of the “saddest” and “least honorable” actions taken by American political and economic leaders.²⁴⁹ He understands the “tragedy of the Trail of Tears,” the physical removal of thousands of Cherokees, as the notably brutal end marker for the close of the “first phase of Appalachian history.”²⁵⁰ Further, “after 1838,” he argued that the violent displacement of Native peoples gave way to an assimilationist “urban-industrial society.”²⁵¹ John Alexander Williams of course will not find significant challengers against the assertion that the Trail of Tears represented something of a brutal crescendo to physical expropriation of indigenous peoples in Appalachia. However, where the Marxist historian departs from Williams and attempts to analyze the bourgeois ideological elements within his writing is on his individualization of the events and his placement of the Trail of Tears as a remarkably reprehensible event in the context of broader American history.

The individualization present in this section of Williams particularly comes out with his labelling of Andrew Jackson’s presidency a “disaster” as his individual actions led to the following forced removals.²⁵² Where the Marxist historian parts with this analysis is the insistence that as long as a settler-colonial state is in place, if it is not resisted by the colonized, it will naturally trend toward further “expropriation of the mass of the people from the soil,” not

²⁴⁹ Williams, *Appalachia*, 80.

²⁵⁰ Williams, *Appalachia*, 81.

²⁵¹ Williams, *Appalachia*, 81.

²⁵² Williams, *Appalachia*, 79.

reliant solely on the actions of powerful individuals within the system.²⁵³ Meaning, specifically, settler-colonialism, as a protracted means of “primitive accumulation” once set in motion, constantly attempts to overcome the contradiction of the “capitalist regime” and the indigenous self “producer.”²⁵⁴ To utilize simpler language, every American presidency according to the Marxist historian in some ways is a proverbial disaster in its position as head of the settler-colonial order which works to build and preserve capitalism.

Although Williams does not claim that the Trail of Tears ended settler-colonialism in the United States, he does claim that it represented a proverbial “disaster” for the Cherokee in Appalachia.²⁵⁵ This event indeed led to unimaginable human death and suffering that undoubtedly Williams would agree represents wholesale disregard for human life by colonial authorities. Yet, the Marxist historian might point out that an overfocus on an event such as the Trail of Tears as a particular disaster potentially misses the proverbial forest for the trees. From the moment that the first white settlers began occupying indigenous land to present day environmental destruction of indigenous territory, the entire historical process of settler-colonialism parallels disaster. Specifically, as mentioned above, Marxist theorists understand settler-colonialism as a class and ethnically-based process which seeks to “linger on” in holding

²⁵³ Karl Marx, *Capital* (Marx/Engels Internet Archive: 1999), Ch. 33, Marxists Internet Archive, accessed December 24, 2021, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch33.htm>.

²⁵⁴ Marx, *Capital*, Ch. 33.

²⁵⁵ Williams, *Appalachia*, 79.

the colonized under the power of the state and its profit-making institutions.²⁵⁶ While it is true that acts such as the Trail of Tears have little if any modern equivalent and many indigenous communities may indeed have the appearance of “sovereignty” within the confines of state-appointed reservations, Marxist and colonized scholars generally agree that indirect “economic or monetary” methods of control still are utilized against indigenous populations.²⁵⁷ For example, oil pipelines and “critical infrastructures of government and industry” directly built through indigenous land in the United States and Canada is insisted to actually represent an indirect method of further destruction and “expropriation” of the continuously decreasing sovereign indigenous territories.²⁵⁸

It is important to make clear that the concept of bourgeois historiography is not intended to become any form of ideological weapon or dismissive agent in the slightest. Rather, the terminology is used to clearly delineate the distinction that is drawn between Marxist methodology and the method that it deems itself as contrary. The quote included at the beginning of this chapter from journalist and East Kentuckian writer Tarence Ray is intended to not only exemplify the recent supposed crisis of opioids in Appalachia, but also the aforementioned contradictions found between Marxist influenced writing and the broadly liberal viewpoint. Ray understands the modern “epidemic” of opioids and the supposed war against it in Appalachia as

²⁵⁶ Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 1965), Introduction, Marxists Internet Archive, accessed December 24, 2021, <https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/nkrumah/neo-colonialism/introduction.htm>.

²⁵⁷ Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism*, Introduction.

²⁵⁸ Anne Spice, “Fighting Invasive Infrastructures: Indigenous Relations against Pipelines,” *Environment and Society* 9 (2018): 41, accessed December 24, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26879577>.

a continuation of a protracted process of inventing Appalachia's story as a "static battle of good vs. evil" and a constant place of hapless victimization from powerful entities such as "Big Pharma," the process of industry, or simply outside "villains."²⁵⁹ Further, Ray postulates that while narratives that pharmaceutical companies purposely tore apart Appalachia may be "well-intentioned" or partially correct, they fail to take into account the material conditions which fall outside of this easy narrative.²⁶⁰

Indeed, the crisis of the waning of the "coal industry" and the influx of women into the expanding "service and health care industries" which posed to challenge political and social dynamics prior to the Oxycontin panic had the potential to open working people and their politicians up to deep questions of change. These social changes in the 1990's coupled with the spark of opioids entering the market, Ray argues, created intense anxiety for those "whose social class had been disorganized by years of economic ruptures."²⁶¹ This combination of crises in Appalachia, supposedly, held the potential to open demands for solutions to them which would require concessions from politicians and private industry in the region. Indeed, to Ray, fighting for access to rehabilitation, raises in living standards for workers burned by coal's decline, or higher wages for the women entering service work would fall into a process of "class struggle" to squeeze these concessions from the powerful people in the region.²⁶² However, what did occur was supposedly more of a distraction. Working class individuals were encouraged to join such

²⁵⁹ Ray, "United in Rage."

²⁶⁰ Ray, "United in Rage."

²⁶¹ Ray, "United in Rage."

²⁶² Ray, "United in Rage."

groups as UNITE which, in short according to Ray, served as an auxiliary to law enforcement and sought to further punish and seek “retribution” against those affected by opioids.²⁶³ In all, Ray understands the opioid crisis in Appalachia as a manifestation of the centuries-long process of strengthening the punitive hands of the state and ever-expanding the *lumpen-proletariat* or “surplus” army of the disenfranchised and invalid rather than the result of a few individuals in power or a new strict segment of history.²⁶⁴

Tarence Ray utilizes a class-based, Marxist, analysis to understand this period of modern Appalachian history. However, how exactly does this outlook differ from the methodology utilized by Williams in understanding the Appalachian Cherokee removals? Tarence Ray summarizes it himself neatly near the end of his article. Ray does not understand the opioid crisis as a strictly new historical era simply ushered in by a handful of powerful individuals. Rather, he postulates that drug use itself anywhere in the country is simply a “social relation,”²⁶⁵ meaning that people define drug use or anything else they encounter through the lenses of their “political and economic realities,” or material conditions.²⁶⁶ In all, Ray rejects that the opioid crisis can be blamed on the tragedy of “capitalism gone wrong,” also rejecting that if a “few tweaks” had been made to the “existing order” by individual capitalists or corporations that something like the opioid epidemic could have been avoided in the deeper crises running through Appalachia

²⁶³ Ray, “United in Rage.”

²⁶⁴ Ray, “United in Rage.”

²⁶⁵ Ray, “United in Rage.”

²⁶⁶ Ray, “United in Rage.”

prior.²⁶⁷ Indeed, the Marxist viewpoint understands these crises as symptoms of a deep systemic process of building social “infrastructure” which, Tarence Ray argues, affects the entire country, not just the supposed victimized of Appalachia.²⁶⁸

Through exploration of not only Gramscian conceptions of social invention and hegemony, but also the methodological divides which convalesce around writing Appalachian scholarship, one thing reveals itself as very clear regarding Appalachian history itself. Whether it is the state or individuals with economic or narrative power in the nation, both have produced convenient descriptions of Appalachia which coincide with dominant ideas and national pursuits for centuries. Their convenient narratives have repeatedly identified the region called Appalachia as a place distinctly apart. This interest proved both essential to disenfranchise indigenous populations and to paint it as a troubled place which constantly “lags behind the rest of the nation.”²⁶⁹ It is hoped here that at the very least it is clear that Appalachia is not a fundamentally separate place from the rest of the United States. In fact, when an analysis of class, colonization, and the inner workings of industrializing capitalism are applied to the region, a great portion of the Appalachian experience is proverbially the American experience.

To demonstrate the utility of the Gramscian method as applied to more than just Appalachia, the Marxist methodology can pinpoint instances of upholding ideological hegemony and destabilization of radical movements in recent memory. The French Marxist, Guy Debord, is

²⁶⁷ Ray, “United in Rage.”

²⁶⁸ Ray, “United in Rage.”

²⁶⁹ Appalachian Regional Commission, *About the Appalachian Region* (Appalachian Regional Commission Website), accessed December 29, 2021, <https://www.arc.gov/about-the-appalachian-region/>.

credited with conceptualizing the modern idea of “capitalist society” as “the spectacle.”²⁷⁰ Debord himself was not a proclaimed follower of Antonio Gramsci. Nevertheless, his contributions to Marxist thought are integral to understanding the process of Gramscian hegemony in the modern world. The spectacle, Debord argues, is “both the result and the project of the existing mode of production.”²⁷¹ Specifically, it is that which makes up the “total justification of the existing system’s conditions and goals,” be it political punditry, advertising, or “direct entertainment consumption.”²⁷²

A modern iteration of what Debord called in his time “ruling ideology” trivializing and sterilizing “subservice discoveries” of a given economic system arose in the heat of the American Black Lives Matter movement.²⁷³ “On June 5, 2020, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser revealed a large mural” depicting the words Black Lives Matter across “two blocks.”²⁷⁴ Mayor Bowser stated that it represented D.C.’s opposition to “racism, white supremacy, and state-sanctioned violence.”²⁷⁵ Paradoxically, in late 2021, Mayor Bowser reportedly requested that the

²⁷⁰ James Trier, “Guy Debord’s ‘The Society of the Spectacle’” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 51, no. 1 (2007): 69, accessed January 28, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40015547>.

²⁷¹ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Guy Debord Archive: Marx/Engels Interent Archive, 1967), Ch. 1, Section 6, accessed January 29, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/debord/society.htm>.

²⁷² Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, Ch. 1, Section 6.

²⁷³ Guy Debord, *Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency’s Conditions of Organization and Action* (1957), par. 6.

²⁷⁴ Brandi Thompson Summers, “The Chocolate State,” *Washington History* 32, no. ½ (2020): 21, accessed February 11, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26947509>.

²⁷⁵ Summers, “The Chocolate State,” 21.

D.C. city council increase the police budget by “more than twice” the amount proposed by the council itself.²⁷⁶ Further, after protestors added “‘Defund the Police’” to the aforementioned mural, a core slogan of Black Lives Matter, Mayor Bowser ordered it removed and repaved the following August.²⁷⁷ In the middle of 2020, a radical interracial and Black-led upsurge in challenging white supremacist and colonialist violence gained notoriety.²⁷⁸ Dubbed loosely as racially oppressed and working class coalitions of activists under the banner Black Lives Matter, massive demonstrations formed which sought to outright “‘abolish’ or ‘defund’” police.²⁷⁹ In the language more commonly heard among the early radicals of the protests, the demand was to abolish the force utilized for “racially motivated agendas” to keep “people of color” under the control of a modern colonialist state.²⁸⁰ In the juxtaposition of these more radical demands and Mayor Bowser’s actions, politically and performatively, using Debord’s and Gramsci’s models these events represent the pacification of actual challenges to the “class division” at the base of

²⁷⁶ Michael Brice-Saddler, Julie Zauzmer, and Perry Stein, “D.C. Council Passes 2022 Budget; Curbs Bowser’s Request for More Police,” *The Washington Post* (Aug 3, 2021), accessed February 11, 2022, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/dc-council-passes-2022-budget-curbs-bowser-e2-80-99s-request-for-more-police/ar-AAMTYKu>.

²⁷⁷ E. Ethelbert Miller, “My Life: Then and Now,” *Washington History* 32, no. 1/2 (2020): 39, accessed February 11, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26947515>.

²⁷⁸ Anthony O’Rourke, Rick Su, and Guyora Binder, “Disbanding Police Agencies,” *Columbia Law Review* 121, no. 4 (2021): 1327, accessed February 11, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27021389>.

²⁷⁹ O’Rourke, “Disbanding Police Agencies,” 1329.

²⁸⁰ Douglas Husak, “Calling the Police as a Disproportionate Force,” *Public Affairs Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (2021): 38, accessed February 11, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27009634>.

society's "concrete unfreedom."²⁸¹ The Black Lives Matter uprisings which represented potential confrontations with the core of capitalism's economic exploitation, colonialism, and state institutions of oppression can be "proclaimed by the spectacle" as an "unreal unity" which pushes said radicalism into the abstract and externalities of society.²⁸² This unreal unity utilized by D.C.'s political leadership to pacify a radical movement in a time of crisis, as FDR's New Deal "saved" capitalism from socialism and economic collapse, has been and continues to represent the key to upholding the legitimacy of the American political and economic landscape.²⁸³

The American version of Debord's spectacle, itself a production of a centuries long systemic process of building and upholding a settler-colonial, capitalistic, state, has found critics within liberal and Marxist scholarship alike. As shown above, those akin to generally mainstream liberalism and the Marxist-oriented writers both have sought to understand the events which have come to define Appalachia. However, with the long history of American social hegemony in mind, looking forward there is a responsibility and possibility offered to those who take up places in the world of education, be it academics, teachers, or otherwise. Is it simply the responsibility of the scholar, within Appalachia or without, to only understand the prevailing social conditions and spectacles which come to fruition? Rather, it is necessary that the professional scholar and academic reject some of the seclusion of academia and take some

²⁸¹ Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, Ch. 3, Section 72.

²⁸² Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, Ch. 3, Section 72.

²⁸³ Moley, *After Seven Years*, 155.

part in attempts to “invent the future.”²⁸⁴ Social inventions and ideological hegemony as shown here have been utilized repeatedly to justify the ends of the state or of profitable ventures, whether outright damaging or not. As the intellectual class, especially those residing in Appalachia, it is an outright necessity to directly approach the history of Appalachia’s inventions. Not only is it important to understand the power in building a hegemonic ideology of a region and its people, but it is also imperative to willingly combat exploitative accounts and craft narratives that put the exploited first and foremost.

²⁸⁴ Thomas Sankara, *Thomas Sankara Speaks: The Burkina Faso Revolution, 1983-87*, trans. Samantha Anderson (New York: Pathfinder Publishers, 1988), 144.

Conclusion

Some who write on Appalachia frame themselves as simply trying to understand and explain the region. Figures such as J.D. Vance, author of *Hillbilly Elogy*, style themselves and their writings on the region as simply firsthand stories of themselves and the Appalachian “working-class white Americans of Scots-Irish descent.”²⁸⁵ However, Vance’s work has found itself referenced in media such as the *American Conservative* newspaper as evidence that the poor are often lacking the “moral self-discipline” to keep themselves from the supposed moral destruction of poverty.²⁸⁶ J.D. Vance is not a scholar or an expert on the Appalachian region and is flatly discredited by much of the scholarly world. Yet, his intellectually fallacious attempts to extrapolate his “difficult teacher “of personal “experience” to place a proverbial target on an entire region still has earned Vance a place in the world of politics and narrative production.²⁸⁷ Certainly, even if not overtly stated, the production of narratives is not made in a vacuum. Attempts to supposedly just understand and explain may spiral into helping to justify damaging narratives against the disenfranchised. The *National Review*, recounting their interpretation of *Hillbilly Elogy*, wrote that “the white working class has followed the black underclass and Native Americans” into cultural “disintegration” and many other forms of “self-sabotage.”²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ J.D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elogy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (NY: Harper/Collins Publishers, 2016), 3.

²⁸⁶ Rod Dreher, ‘*Hillbilly Elogy*,’ *Class Conflict, & Mercy* (The American Conservative, November 25, 2020) accessed December 29, 2021, <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/hillbilly-elogy-class-conflict-mercy/>.

²⁸⁷ Vance, *Hillbilly Elogy*, 5.

²⁸⁸ Mona Charen, *What Hillbilly Elogy Reveals About Trump and America* (The National Review, July 28, 2016), accessed December 29, 2021,

Undoubtedly, even those who deem themselves as ideologically neutral can become tools of ideologues for “intellectual platforming.”²⁸⁹

The argument presented in this work is aimed to show that the role of ideology, even from those not deemed scholars such as Vance, has affected and continues to damage the Appalachian region’s people. Vance is a living example that, as long as it proves in line with the interests of dominant economic or political interests, material facts do not have to underly narratives of those affected by exploitative conditions outside their control. The fact is that, in Appalachia as in much of the country, poor people are reeling from decades of austerity. This austerity, as evidenced by economic researchers’ interviews in Appalachia, leaves the “structure of public funds and the disbursement of public monies” and the agency people feel regarding public needs as fundamentally “flawed.”²⁹⁰ As is evidenced by countless reform-minded and, occasionally revolution-minded, organizations that are in Appalachia, the region is rife with “environmental and social justice groups” that actively seek to address the problems of regular Appalachians.²⁹¹ Appalachians are not to blame for their conditions. On the contrary, countless regular people in Appalachia are entrenched in a deep struggle to change their conditions for the better.

<https://www.nationalreview.com/2016/07/hillbilly-elegy-jd-vances-new-book-reveals-much-about-trump-america/>.

²⁸⁹ Catte, *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia*, 61.

²⁹⁰ Betsy Taylor, Dan Taylor, Bill Price, and Andrew Munn “Economic Transition in Central Appalachia: Knowledge/Power Mapping for Bottom-Up Policy,” *Practicing Anthropology* 36, no. 4 (2014): 15, accessed April 8, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24782446>.

²⁹¹ Taylor, *et al*, “Economic Transition in Central Appalachia,” 16.

These narratives put forward by Vance, by coal operators in the twentieth century, or even land speculators in the early days of colonization, all place people in Appalachia into a place of subservience to dominant economic interests and as people devoid of autonomy or a desire to better their conditions. These narratives are incredibly damaging as they inherently play to the interests of economic classes which do not share interests with regular Appalachians and, often, work against said regular people. Indeed, even in early 2022 with President Joe Biden's extremely milquetoast but absolutely necessary Build Back Better plan targeted at strengthening the social safety net after decades of strict austerity, Appalachian political elites such as Joe Manchin actively "stalled" its passage through their "opposition."²⁹² With the understanding of hegemony and its relation to class interests put forward in this thesis, these developments are not simply the actions of particular individual elites or the result of the supposed self-sabotaging of poor people. Rather, these developments are a result of a struggle for the control of society's economic trajectory and the arena of ideas which generate from said struggle. While politicians like Joe Manchin actively work against miners while claiming themselves as "[coming] up in life with the miners" and pundits like J.D. Vance justify the poverty of Appalachians because of their inherent cultural degeneracy, regular Appalachians in conjunction with people all over the country actively struggle against these narratives and their imposed conditions.²⁹³

These hegemonic narratives must be combatted as anyone interested in factual narration and truthful analysis will find these aforementioned hegemonies are directly contradicted and

²⁹² Mark Gruenberg and John Wojcik, "Miners Press Manchin to Choose Between Them and the Coal Bosses," *People's World*, January 11, 2022, accessed April 8, 2022, <https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/miners-press-manchin-to-choose-between-them-and-the-coal-bosses/>.

²⁹³ Gruenberg, "Miners Press Manchin to Choose Between Them and the Coal Bosses."

challenged by material reality, yet they are held as almost common knowledge or common sense in the national narrative. A common picture of Appalachian workers is that of the hard headed white men “in mining coveralls and hardhats” loyally following the dogmatic desires of conservative politicians to empower and entrench coal companies and restore the “golden age of coal in Appalachia.”²⁹⁴ Extrapolating from these popular images of the backward and dogmatically reactionary Appalachian to the entire region would result in a major contradiction when contrasted to actual factual developments in the recent world of the Appalachian worker. With an understanding of hegemony, this image can be understood for what it is as a partial one stretched to appear as the whole of the region. Indeed, far from docile and subverted by the coal companies, miners in Harlan County, Kentucky directly blockaded a “train loaded with coal” in order to demand compensation for unpaid work in 2019.²⁹⁵ If Harlan County miners truly and dogmatically believed in the sanctity of coal and the necessity for coal companies to become as profitable and successful as possible, direct blockades on the industry’s produced commodities seems contradictory to such an ideology. Further, as of April of 2022, a local grassroots organization known as West Virginia Rising began the process of directly blockading the “Marion County coal-fired power plant” seeking to directly challenge coal’s supremacy and Senator Joe Manchin’s own blockade of climate change legislation and economic interest in the

²⁹⁴ Will Kurlinkus, and Krista Kurlinkus, “‘Coal Keeps the Lights On’: Rhetorics of Nostalgia for and in Appalachia,” *College English* 81, no. 2 (2018): 87–88, accessed April 8, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26773414>.

²⁹⁵ The Associated Press, “Kentucky Miners Block Coal Train Over Missed Paychecks,” *ABC News*, January 13, 2020, accessed April 8, 2022, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/kentucky-miners-block-coal-train-missed-paychecks-68258361>.

maintenance of coal.²⁹⁶ These developments, organized by the very people supposed to be culturally degenerated or dogmatically self-destructive, show fully that hegemonic and untruthful narratives about Appalachia are in force and without an analysis of the process in which they arise countering them accurately remains elusive.

A way forward for the academic, scholar, or otherwise who is conscious of class, ideology, and the way in which supposed neutrality can become justifications for oppression may lie in the form of Critical Pedagogy. In short, the idea of the method is that it is a pursuit of scholarship and education which analyzes the “cultural and historic process” and “relations of power” students, educators, and the entire society find themselves entrenched within.²⁹⁷ However, it is also integral to confront the aforementioned tendencies of narrative production as they present themselves, with a strong analysis of the systemic economic class conflict and ethnic disenfranchisement present within the United States. Specifically, the necessity that is argued for the Critical Pedagogy needed to counter the social inventions of groups and regions of people is that of avoiding simply understanding something of a social system but simultaneously failing to challenge its inefficiencies. Of course, past political thinkers who carried out counter-hegemonic movements understood that “without revolutionary theory” and scholarly inquiry,

²⁹⁶ Mike Tony, “Activists Prepare to Highlight Manchin’s Millions in Coal Profits and Opposition to Climate Legislation with Plant Blockade,” *West Virginia Gazette-Mail*, April 6, 2022, accessed April 8, 2022, https://www.wvgazettemail.com/news/politics/activists-prepare-to-highlight-manchins-millions-in-coal-profits-and-opposition-to-climate-legislation-with/article_8ac0f1ae-3337-593a-bb21-f4e768ad42d1.html.

²⁹⁷ Jeffrey M. Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell, “Contemporary Developers of Critical Pedagogy,” *Counterpoints* 285 (2008): 23, accessed December 29, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42979868>.

“there can be no revolutionary movement.”²⁹⁸ This maxim still insinuates that the counterpart of theorizing and inquiry is action, and vice versa. Indeed, if the modern field of academia and education reflects the bourgeois desire to produce “a curriculum and pedagogy that produces compliant, pro-capitalist workers,” then it is also necessary to produce a pedagogy which places an analysis of class-based and ethnically based conflict at its core.²⁹⁹

The critical pedagogy necessary for intellectuals to combat the hegemonic forces which are laid out in this work must be based on “concrete situations” and material experiences.³⁰⁰ It must be a process of divorcing scholarship from its sole partnership with the abstract and immaterial nature of traditional academic work. One cannot hope to counter narratives which seek to misrepresent and further exploitation in Appalachia if the proverbial battle is fought with an ignorance of history of class and racial struggle or without physical involvement in the struggles of Appalachians. Indeed, Appalachia has been deemed a region apart and disconnected with the rest of the nation. To accept this premise and to practice pedagogy from the perspective of the outsider looking in rather than the perspective of the regular Appalachian and those that struggle with them, it succeeds only in furthering the mythology of the region. The point is not an analysis based in total subjectivity, only analyzing the superstructural elements of Appalachia. Nor is the point of critical pedagogy to analyze only the objectivity, to only concern oneself with

²⁹⁸ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *What is to be Done? Burning Questions of our Movement* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), Part I, Section D.

²⁹⁹ Peter McLaren, “Critical Pedagogy and Class Struggle in the Age of Neoliberal Globalization: Notes from History’s Underside,” *International Journal of Inclusive Democracy* 2, no. 1 (September 2005): 5.

³⁰⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Press, 2006), 37.

the economic mechanisms of the region. Rather, “a dialectical unity” must be achieved in combatting harmful narratives between the economic interests which produce hegemony and the superstructure of hegemony itself.³⁰¹

Undoubtedly, there are significant doubts directed toward this overtly Marxist method utilized to produce such analyses of economic base and hegemonic superstructure. Certainly, the influence of past Marxist thinkers, historians, and theorists have more than influenced the work presented here. Then, perhaps, a cohesive justification is in order to elucidate the necessity of a Marxist analysis in an academic world which generally considers Marxist methodologies “dated formulae.”³⁰² Certainly, academics have inherited a culture that is deeply paranoid and anti-Marxian to a default. Taking a selection of academic books published on American Marxism in the mid-twentieth century, one would easily stumble across large swathes of discreditations, dismissals, and biting diatribes against the method. For example, one book taken from the university library from which this piece was formulated, labels itself as the solution to *The Communist Problem in America*. Within the book, there are attempts to separate “Marxian ideas” from radical movements and to paint Marx’s analysis as only useful as a critique against some of the excesses of the capitalist mode of production.³⁰³ Further, the author argues that Marx’s

³⁰¹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 38.

³⁰² George Shulman, “Marx’s Nightmare: Marxism, Culture, and American Politics,” *New Labor Forum* 21, no. 2 (2012): 31, accessed February 11, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43681975>.

³⁰³ Edward E. Palmer, *The Communist Problem in America* (New York: Crowell Publishing, 1951), 7.

analysis has been perverted and turned into “weapons” turned against the American people.³⁰⁴ Regarding Marxism and its presence in education and academia, the author compiles multiple outside articles in arguing for removing such a methodology from educational institutions. In very plain language, the author acknowledges that the academic culture of his time ensures that avowed Marxists do not have “the slightest chance of faculty appointment” nor can they feasibly pursue “academic work.”³⁰⁵

A more recent academic example of this heritage is Francis Fukuyama’s *Political Order and Political Decay*, written as something of a follow up to his iconic thesis on *The End of History*. As he argued in his original work, Fukuyama believes that the practical application of Marxism, be it in a scholarly sense or a political sense, is a dogmatic “substitute for religion.”³⁰⁶ Further, he contends that an analysis of class and how economic struggle drives historical change is simply a non-starter as classes simply “are intellectual abstractions.”³⁰⁷ He showcases his blatant misunderstanding of Marxism as applied to history through an argumentation that, since political parties which have led historical movements have had participants across class lines, there is no such thing as class struggle. Rather, the struggle is simply between “autonomous political actors.”³⁰⁸ Relevant to this thesis, he argues that evidence of the lack of true class

³⁰⁴ Palmer, *The Communist Problem in America*, 12.

³⁰⁵ Palmer, *The Communist Problem in America*, 183.

³⁰⁶ Francis Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2014), 42.

³⁰⁷ Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay*, 408.

³⁰⁸ Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay*, 409.

interests in society can be found within the American Republican Party. He argues that, since the Republican Party undoubtedly works in favor of “business interests” yet still holds “working-class voters” in its support base, then the realm of politics and history cannot be the realm of competing class interests.³⁰⁹ Yet, as has been hoped to have been evidenced in this work, a Marxist understanding of economic base, superstructure, and Gramscian hegemony easily rebuffs this claim. Certainly, evidenced by the broad support held for Presidential candidate Bernie Sanders in working class West Virginian communities, the commandeering of Kentucky coal trains owned by the aforementioned mentioned business interests, or the outright mass protests against conservative policies in at least Appalachia should showcase the inherent fragility of Fukuyama’s claims of mass working-class loyalty to conservative political parties. Even if this claim is granted, it is entirely within the interests of Fukuyama’s named business interests to have a political party which utilizes superstructural hegemony to absorb proletarian support for a party which materially supports the bourgeoisie. Class does not disappear simply because political parties dominated by a ruling economic class need to appear to represent the interests of subaltern classes. As arguably fallacious as they may be, academic works such as Fukuyama’s nevertheless cast a shadow of discreditation over scholarship done on a basis of Marxist analysis.

Considering this inheritance of American academia towards Marxism, how is it viewed today in a popular sense? In a recent non-academic and extremely fear-mongering book by Fox News pundit Mark Levin, Marxism is a mass of “interlocking movements” and is almost omni-

³⁰⁹ Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay*, 409.

present.³¹⁰ Indeed, some of those most opposed to what they want their audiences to think Marxism is which are currently publishing appear to be speaking not only from a complete misunderstanding of the method, but also from a view of dogmatism that Marxists themselves are accused of being blinded by. To more vocal supposed critics of Marxism the ideology is simultaneously, “progressives,” “Critical Race Theory,” “the Democratic Party,” and, somehow, “the Oval Office.”³¹¹ Further still, in contradicting anyone who may have recently spent time on a college campus, apparently “there is no limit to how professors can and do use Marxism as a doctrinal tool” to turn students into radical Marxists.³¹² Perhaps more blatantly than usually manifests in the mainstream, this poorly researched and ideologically incoherent book showcases the dogmatic misrepresentation of facts which is utilized to frighten regular people into supporting the interests of conservative economic ruling interests which underlays the hegemonic process. Undoubtedly, there are major attempts at dogmatic portrayals of any institution or social manifestation which is not devoutly conservative as plain “Marxist dogma.”³¹³

How then, in the face of dismissal as simply a defunct subject of study from general academia and outright venom against anything even nebulously associated with it from popular conservative opinions, can Marxism stand as a valid methodology? Soon after the death of Karl

³¹⁰ Mark R. Levin, *American Marxism* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2021), Ch 1, Par. 29.

³¹¹ Levin, *American Marxism*, Ch 1, Par. 3-4.

³¹² Levin, *American Marxism*, Ch. 3, Par. 6.

³¹³ Levin, *American Marxism*, Ch. 1, Par. 3.

Marx himself, defending his theory against the “doctoring of Marxism” to fit ideological dogmas which either “[blunt] its revolutionary edge” or label that which is not revolutionary as full-blooded Marxism has been repeated innumerable.³¹⁴ As has been repeated time and time again in pursuit of this defense, Marxism as a tool of scholars and regular people is as relevant as it has ever been. At the time of writing, the world is in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis which has claimed “so much wealth and human life.”³¹⁵ In June of 2020, there existed a consensus among many capitalist leaders and politicians that the profit-based system could successfully end the pandemic by “September, December, or next March.”³¹⁶ Yet, as of February 2022, the CDC estimated almost a million deaths to be reached within the next several months.³¹⁷ Further, those with the most power within the capitalistic system experienced a much different pandemic than the rest of the world. Oxfam, an international organization that works with world leaders and scholars, released a report which found that “the wealth of the world’s 10 richest men has doubled since the pandemic began.”³¹⁸

³¹⁴ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (Lenin Internet Archive, 1999), Ch.1, Section 1, accessed February 11, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch01.htm>.

³¹⁵ Richard D. Wolff, *The Sickness is the System* (New York: Democracy at Work, 2021), Part 1, Section 4.

³¹⁶ Wolff, *The Sickness is the System*, Part 1, Section 7.

³¹⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Forecasts of COVID-19 Deaths,” *CDC Forecasting* (Feb. 9, 2022), accessed February 11, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/forecasting/forecasting-us.html>.

³¹⁸ Oxfam International, “Inequality Kills,” *Oxfam Policy Papers* (Jan. 17, 2022), accessed February 11, 2022, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/inequality-kills>.

In Appalachia, the COVID-19 crisis further showcases the inherent utility of a Marxist analysis. A recent study conducted within hospitals controlled by the Appalachian Regional Healthcare system found that Appalachia’s rural population, often older, are at a significantly “heightened vulnerability to adverse outcomes” from the disease.³¹⁹ Paired with the structural issues prevalent in the region, not least of them being exposure to “air pollution” or austerity stricken “housing quality,” rural Appalachians face a risk that is artificially more dangerous and potentially fatal.³²⁰ The study also concludes that a lack “of health insurance, education, access to health care,” and general health issues inhibited people from access to COVID-19 resources such as vaccines or ventilators.³²¹ Another study conducted in the Central Appalachian region found a significant hesitancy towards COVID-19 vaccines due to what is believed to be a result of “low education attainment levels” in the region.³²² Importantly, the study found that healthcare workers who had access to news outside of the mainstream media channels were more likely to “accept the vaccine.”³²³ Although it is not explicitly stated in this study, the damaging

³¹⁹ Huzefa Bhopalwala, *et al*, “Predictors of Morality for Patients with COVID-19 in the Rural Appalachian Region,” *International Journal of General Medicine* (Feb. 27, 2022), accessed April 8, 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8893147/>.

³²⁰ Bhopalwala, *et al*, “Predictors of Morality for Patients with COVID-19 in the Rural Appalachian Region.”

³²¹ Bhopalwala, *et al*, “Predictors of Morality for Patients with COVID-19 in the Rural Appalachian Region.”

³²² Tuong Vi C Do, *et al*, “COVID-19 Vaccine Acceptance Among Rural Appalachian Healthcare Workers (Eastern Kentucky/West Virginia): A Cross-Sectional Study,” *Cureus* (Aug. 2, 2021), accessed April 8, 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8410864/>.

³²³ Tuong Vi C Do, *et al*, “COVID-19 Vaccine Acceptance Among Rural Appalachian Healthcare Workers (Eastern Kentucky/West Virginia).”

effects of divisive hegemony is present. Meaning, there is some responsibility held by those who run mainstream media outlets which frequently spread doubt about vaccine safety and efficacy. Perhaps, one can understand the damaging effect that post-austerity infrastructure and divisive political pundits has on Appalachia without a Marxist viewpoint. Yet, without an analysis based in a Marxian idea of hegemony, the means to understand the origins of COVID-19's devastation in the region and the tools to combat it seem illusory.

As the wealth of those Marxists deem the bourgeoisie grows, unemployment claims, housing loss, and general immiseration of white, Black, and indigenous working people have reached highs almost unprecedented in American history.³²⁴ As living agents in a historical epoch wherein those in ownership positions over society's economic production can make it through one of the world's worst crises significantly better off than before, there must be some credence given to the analysis which from the beginning calculated that as capitalism continues "labor produces for the rich wonderful things – but for the worker it produces privation."³²⁵ If one were to accept the argument given over the course of this work that capitalism as a social system establishes a spectacular hegemony, then it should follow that there truly exists an undercurrent of "political economy" which gave rise to such manifestations.³²⁶ The scientific approach to history, as synthesized by Marx and Engels, is more than equipped to not only

³²⁴ United States Department of Labor, "Report r539cy," *Employment & Training Administration* (1967 – 2022), accessed February 11, 2022, <https://oui.doleta.gov/unemploy/wkclaims/report.asp>.

³²⁵ Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959), First Manuscript, Section 4, accessed February 11, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>.

³²⁶ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, First Manuscript, Section 4.

understand the ever deepening social chasms in the modern U.S., but to provide the analysis for its overcoming. In the face of an ideological consensus of the insufficiency of Marxism, the world's crises themselves show that the "accumulation of capital in a few hands" is not steering humanity towards a secure future.³²⁷

In the last analysis, it is argued here that the social invention of Appalachia has been intertwined with said accumulation of capital and land into the hands of private capitalists and a colonialist state. Perhaps, then, as narrative producers and stewards of history, academics also have something of a responsibility to critically approach these processes and borrow some of the methods laid out by the Marxist method which has been deemed locked in "a vault marked 'antiquity.'"³²⁸ It is certain, given what is known of its past, that more inventions of Appalachia which do not fairly represent nor include the input of its poor, disenfranchised, and colonized will be developed. With this in mind, then, the task of the intellectual and the academic seems to be intrinsically connected with the potential of wresting the levers of hegemony from the powerful into the hands of those deemed "subaltern."³²⁹ A quotation from Marxist academic Michael Parenti seems an appropriate addendum to this work which has attempted to synthesize how a region and its scholarship are the consequence of the international process of systemic development and the development of history itself. "Our task is not to wage a class war but to

³²⁷ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, First Manuscript, Section 4.

³²⁸ Peter McLaren and Ramin Farahmandpur, "Critical Pedagogy, Postmodernism and the Retreat from Class: Towards a Contraband Pedagogy," *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, no. 93 (June 1999): 99, accessed December 29, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41802115>.

³²⁹ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, 55.

realize that class war is being waged against us constantly” and that “the ruling classes have taken the struggle to the international level and we must meet them there to prevent our standard of living, our sovereignty, our rights, and indeed our planet, from being sacrificed to a rapaciously profit-driven, monopoly capitalism.”³³⁰

Why is this quotation important and what exactly is the argument laid out in this thesis? There is a broad question that undergirded this work: what is Appalachia? At first glance, this question seems a simple one. Yet, once answers are formulated, the complexities of ideology bubble to the surface. If one were to ask a mainstream media analyst during the 2016 United States elections, Appalachia is a fatalistic self-sabotaging mass of conservative white voters. If one were to ask the commonwealth attorney W.C. Hamilton in the 1930’s, Appalachia is a place in need of the modernizing hand of capital and the protection of state power against communist infiltrators aimed at leading the easily duped mining class astray. To understand how these narratives come to dominate popular consciousness, the mind of the American ruling class must also be conceptualized.

As laid out in this work, Appalachia’s people, its conditions, and its purpose has remained in a state of flux for the land speculating class, the industry barons, and the modern capitalist class. However, the constant invention has always maintained that history acts upon Appalachians, or that Appalachians are a tool for progressing the interests of a dominant economic interest. Indeed, while race, ethnicity, and class have all been utilized as a weapon to justify exploitation in the region, placing these at the fore of scholarship allows for turning the narrative of the benign or autonomy-less Appalachian on its head. Hegemony existed in

³³⁰ Michael Parenti, *America Besieged* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 94.

Appalachia. The process was utilized to justify the expropriation of the indigenous peoples there, to absorb the settlers into extractive industry, and reduce it to a collective charity case.

Hegemony as a process within the mind of the American ruling class still exists in Appalachia and Gramsci's theory still finds application in a national sense. Modernly, hegemonic processes are complex and reflect the turbulent times which Appalachia finds itself within. From spectacularizing the War on Drugs in the region, to painting it as once again needing the help of venture capitalists to modernize it, Gramscian hegemony in Appalachia is constantly reinforcing the narrative validity of the prevailing economic order. Now, then, the task at hand is not to simply understand the narratives which have accompanied the region until today. There is a requirement for the scholar and the Appalachian activist alike to compose a counter-hegemony of the subaltern groups within it, and to invent the future.

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