

## Defining Appalachia: Film Representation of the West Virginia Coal Wars

Films have the ability to shape the public imaginary of what constitutes a particular place, people, and even culture. This ability has historically been a major part of the defining of rural areas for the “broader” public. Films such as “Matewan” produce an image of what rural Appalachia represents. However, such films lack a full understanding of the historical and culture understanding to offset the “other” label beset to these populations. This process leads to a perpetuation of the “hillbilly” or “outsider” label that has historically allowed the maltreatment of this particular group. By analyzing the “Matewan” film alongside the historical events of the West Virginia mine wars, scholars can discuss a snapshot in time in the development of a typology of how the rural “other” has come to be. A typology that historically and presently allows for continued neglect and unwarranted exploitation towards a large rural population.