AN APPALACHIAN TRAIL: A CRITICAL GEOGRAPHIC STUDY IN VISUAL REPRESENTATION AND LANDSCAPE PRODUCTION

by

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DEDICATION

To my family, thank you for your enduring support, with a special thanks to my editor, who dedicated countless hours to fine tune her stubborn son’s long work.

I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!

_Ulysses_, Alfred Lord Tennyson, 1833
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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the role of popular visual media representations in the development of the Appalachian Trail, between 1921 and 2014. The Appalachian Trail is an iconic footpath stretching more than 2000 miles (3200 kilometers) along the Appalachian Mountains of the east coast of the United States. Visual media including photographs and maps have been key to the public awareness and perception of trail’s development since it was first proposed in 1921. The purpose of this research is, therefore, to critically appraise these materials, and illuminate how they serve to solidify meaning, enshrine power, and mediate user experiences. My findings suggest that through breadth of coverage, powerful imagery and cartographic discourse, institutional promoters of the trail, such as the National Geographic Society have infused an evolving set of their own values into the trail landscape. In the process this has influenced how the viewing public understands, uses, and seeks to shape the landscape of the Appalachian Trail.
I. INTRODUCTION

Many people know the Appalachian Trail (AT) as an iconic long-distance hiking trail bisecting the mountains and communities of the eastern United States, however it is much more. It is an evolving cultural construction, comprised of dynamic physical environments, unique lived experiences, and complex symbolic representations. This last element, the historical use and evolution of visual representations to promote the AT is the focus of this dissertation. From its earliest days, promoters of the AT skillfully used photographs and maps published in popular magazines to inform and persuade the public of its relevance. In many ways the existing AT is a product of these successive decades of visual representation. My purpose in this dissertation is to deconstruct and evaluate this material to better understand the contemporary trail and the discourse underlying its development.

Visual representations in popular media simplify the world and reduce immense spaces, times, and messy contradictions to discrete narratives. These stories create a human experience of the world that is meaningful in particular ways. Visual imagery makes landscapes not just intelligible, but visible.

Landscape photographs are often simply taken at face value, however the editorial attributes of such images are documenting messages and publishing them is inherently value-laden. Collectively these representations create anticipation and influence the ways people experience, understand, and communicate their participation in landscapes like those found along the AT.
Figure 1. Map of the Appalachian Trail Route in 2016 (USGS 1968; Mackenzie 2016).
The contemporary AT is a continuously marked footpath following the spine of the Appalachian Mountains in the eastern portion of the United States. This protected right-of-way runs approximately two thousand miles (thirty-two hundred kilometers) from Georgia to Maine. The trail, consisting of the footpath, signage, and system of shelters, is maintained by volunteer associations, managed by the nonprofit Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and protected by federal statute. Hundreds of thousands of overnight and day hikers use the AT annually, and each spring a few thousand hikers set out to walk the entire length of the trail. A dedicated group of trail maintainers and administrators – both volunteers in the associated regional trail clubs and professionals with the ATC, National Park Service (NPS), National Forest Service (NFS), and Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) – has also grown over time, helping to offset the impacts of these recreationists. Along with local residents of adjacent communities and trail enthusiasts throughout the country, the users comprise the “AT community.” The combination of community, history, scale, and accessibility has made the AT one of the most popular, well-trodden, and iconic recreational trails in the world. Collectively the organization and resources needed to maintain the trail are immense, and since the formative years of the project in the 1920s, media has been employed to promote its use. In the century since the AT was first proposed, American and international audiences have come to know the trail landscape vicariously through the popular media that have constructed that space.

Drawing from discursive formation and gaze theory (Foucault 1963) and the social construction of space (Lefebvre 1991), the AT can be thought of as a social phenomenon composed of interacting material and imagined components. It is simultaneously a planned physical artifact that is under continuous construction, a lived experience of trail use constantly created, and a set of imagined ideas and meanings that is creatively renewed.
These ideas have been iteratively transmitted through the symbolic language of culturally imbedded representations (Hall 1997), which, in turn, induce a set of cultural performances that constitute the AT (Barenholdt 2004). Representation and performance engage cyclically through “gaze,” a process in which images influence action that then directs subsequent imagery and action (Urry 1990). Ultimately, these images shape the material formation of the landscape itself (Davis 2005). In this dissertation, I use these theories of representation, discourse, gaze, performance, and social construction of space and place to investigate the process by which meanings of the AT have been transmitted, reinterpreted, performed, and retransmitted to successive generations of participants, each collectively working to reconstitute the AT.

I selected visual data from prominent sources, which at the time of their publication represented contemporary authoritative information about the AT. Therefore, much of the data were acquired from the National Geographic Society (NGS), one of the most consistent and prolific media promoters of the AT. Additional material was selected from other popular print media outlets including Backpacker Magazine, Life magazine, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) magazines, and Reader’s Digest, Appalachian Trail Conservancy and National Park Service publications.

This research was undertaken to understand how the AT has been constructed through media, and how social power structures were established and reinforced through the visual medium. I bring these to light to focus our attention on the conflicts between the publically stated purpose of the AT as a designated site of resistance and recreation, and the promotional visual discourse that assimilates contemporary perspectives on race, sex, gender, and socioeconomic status into the myth of the place to make it a public space that is more for some than for others. I have been and continue to be a strong proponent of the AT,
and it is my intention that through this research I may help to shape a better, more inclusive trail for future generations.

### 1.1 Research Questions

My research is based on critical constructivist geographic theory and uses three visual analysis techniques to investigate AT-supportive visual media to understand the role of visual discourse in its creation. Understanding this is important as visual discourse directs how the trail is understood by the public by helping to reveal the “unseeable” and to convey how participants should perform in and relate to the trail environment. Emerging from this perspective, I ask:

1. What people, places, and activities of the Appalachian Trail have been promoted through the NGS images published on the AT?
2. What underlying myths about the AT do these representations promote?
3. How does this visual discourse frame and construct a particular AT?

The first question is addressed in a content analysis of NGS images that facilitated the identification of and quantification of themes across the diverse set of images. The second question is evaluated through a representational analysis of a subset of prominent published photographs and through a critical cartographic analysis of AT maps from NGS and other sources. The final question is addressed by aggregating my conclusions from these analyses with insights accumulated through the process.

### 1.2 Significance of Study

This study is timely and significant for several reasons. First, the AT has become an important, popular iconic landscape that has set precedents in both culture and design for national and international networks of similar long-distance trails. These trails are not only
personally and communally meaningful, they provide a diverse array of people with first-hand experience in a unique environment. They serve as dispersed generators of economic activity. And they demonstrate alternative models for socio-spatial organization within existing political-economic frameworks. A greater understanding of the development of the AT can inform the designs of and management of other trails and other forms of novel land use.

Second, few have explored this topic geographically. Numerous popular writers and other scholars have produced books, magazines, films, and internet-based multimedia that document the culture and practice of using the AT, but none has examined the discourse itself to understand how it has constituted and constructed the AT. This research is a meta-analysis, an effort to look back at the looker and understand how they came to their understanding of the place. It probes both the superficial and the elusive aspects of geographic visualization. By shining a light on the process of landscape formation, I reveal not only some of the past blind spots of geographers, but also the distressingly darker spots we have helped to create and maintain.

Third, this study demonstrates the application of three qualitative, visual research methods. These methods – visual content analysis, representational analysis, and discourse analysis – were adapted from Rose (2012) and Wood and Fels (1986) and have otherwise been seldom used by geographers to study the formation of landscape. I anticipate that their value will increase as digital forms of visual data become more widely available and more commonplace components of communication.
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 History of the Appalachian Trail

The contemporary AT is known primarily as a backpacking footpath that winds its way through the forested landscapes of the Appalachian Mountains of the eastern United States. Millions of visitors visit its parts each year for public recreation and it serves ecologically as a conserved habitat corridor. It is a link between mountain communities and is also a bridge to the nation’s past with many preserved historical sites and artifacts. The AT is a relatively recent feature in this landscape, borne from the utopian planning movement of the early 20th century.

Benton MacKaye articulated his vision for the AT in an article entitled “An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning” which appeared in the October 1921 issue of the Journal of the American Institute of Architects. MacKaye allegedly started developing the idea around the turn-of-the-century while he was an undergraduate working as a forester in New Hampshire’s White Mountains (King 2000). In the ensuing years, he was a graduate student under Gifford Pinchot at Yale, worked for the NFS, and became involved in the growing regional-planning and hiking movements in the northeast. The enthusiasm of these movements and his professional connections facilitated the rapid evolution of the trail from idea to reality. By 1925, an organization, the Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC), was established to construct and maintain the ambitious trail project (King 2000). Over the next decade, MacKaye’s vision was incrementally advanced despite the laborious process of mapping, ground-truthing, and trail building. By August, 1937, a brigade of volunteer laborers and organizers completed a continuous 2,025-mile (3260-kilometer) trail from Maine to Georgia (King 2000).

With the initial goal achieved the community shifted to what was to become its ongoing
challenge corridor protection and maintenance lay ahead. In the years leading up to U.S.’s involvement in World War II, conflicts emerged between the AT and other development projects. Both Skyline Drive, running through Shenandoah National Park, and the Blue Ridge Parkway, displaced hundreds of miles of trail, and once marginalized by the war, the trail fell into disrepair through lack of maintenance (King 2000). But after the war, efforts were redoubled to restore and protect the AT. In 1945, federal legislation was proposed to establish a national trail system with the AT as its standard. Despite initial Congressional torpor on the legislation, it presaged how the emerging landscape project might eventually become officially federal and protected. But the post-war years were not entirely idle times for the AT. The ATC oversaw continued maintenance and occasional relocation of the trail.

In 1948, the improbable was accomplished when Earl Shafer walked the entire length of the trail, becoming the first official “thru-hiker” (Shafer 1981, 2004). Shafer later suggested that the publicity surrounding his accomplishment “along with stories about the trail in National Geographic and Reader’s Digest and mention in numerous books and magazines, helped revive interest in the Trail Project” (Shafer 2004, p.1). Thru-hiking eventually became an institution on the AT, and, by 2008, 10,000 people had walked the entire length of the trail (ATC 2013). The trail was not solely or even primarily intended for such ambitious ventures. In fact, most visitors use the trail for only a few hours or a few days. The notoriety of Shafer’s hike, and ongoing publicity of ambitions walks by others, eventually raised awareness of the AT project to the national level, culminating in the codification of the AT as the standard for the National Trail Systems Act, which was signed by President Lyndon Johnson in 1968 (King 2000).

Growing awareness of the trail was also reflected in increased use. By the end of the 1970s, the trail was attracting three to four million hikers per year (King 2000). Ironically,
the impacts of this popularity and encroachment by adjacent development raised new concerns about the diminishing wilderness character of the AT. The resulting strategy to address the problem has been at the heart of the ATC mission ever since and involved two main components: an ongoing publicity regime to promote the trail to new generations and to instill practices of minimal impact by these users, and to aggressively acquire property and development rights to establish a permanent trail corridor. The latter component was a partnership that the ATC began in the early 1970s with federal and state agencies. By 2000, only 20 miles (?? kilometers) of the more than 2000 miles (kilometers) along the trail remained unprotected (King 2000).

A strong public-private partnership remains the cornerstone of the trail’s management today. Volunteers working with the ATC, NFS, NPS and 31 local trail clubs, committed 220,000 hours per year to maintain the AT’s 2180 miles (3500 kilometers) of footpath and 250 shelters (ATC 2013a). The change in name of the ATC from the Appalachian Trail Conference to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) in 2005 symbolized the shifting nature of the AT project from construction to conservation. Acquisition of additional buffer lands and evolving forms of user education remain the main tasks, while new concerns – for example, the impact of climate change on the trail’s ecosystems – are evolving challenges for the land use project.

2.1.1 Contemporary Appalachian Trail Research

One other effect of the growth in public awareness and use of the AT has been a small but steady stream of research. The resulting scholarship ranges widely in focus but can be grouped into a few broad categories, history, ethnography, recreation, and representation. Other than this last category, very little of it is relevant to this study and I conclude that much research is needed to understand how the AT has come to be such an
successful and iconic American landscape planning project.

The first category of AT scholarship comprises academic and lay histories about the AT’s development and the cultural regions through which it passes and accounts for the largest number of publications. Notable works in this category include Manning’s (1984) history of the journal of the AMC; Mittlefehldt’s (2010, 2013) political environmental histories of the AT’s development; Solnit’s (2000) narrative cultural history of recreational walking; the AMC’s (2012) official ATC history of the AT; and McNeely’s (2011) investigation of the actual route taken by the first thru hiker Earl Shafer. Their relevance to this study is that they tend to reinforce a number of prevalent AT discourses.

The second category includes ethnographic studies of trail users. An example of this type of study was undertaken by Rush (2003) combining the ethnographic emersion of a thru-hike with interviews and field data collection to investigate participants “ecological literacy.” As he defines it, this is the ability to read the environmental features and convey their meaning through different “modes of meaning making.” Rush examines the linguistic, audio, visual, gestural, spatial, and multimodal forms of communication used by thru-hikers. He assesses the extent of their literacy and suggests ways in which his discoveries can be used to improve environmental literacy in classroom settings.

A third category is comprised of outdoor recreation research that is concerned with the mental and physical effects of long-distance walking. One example of this work is Boulware’s (2004) comparative analysis of the physiological effects of long-distance backpacking on women and men. Notably this study concluded that women and men experience similar physical impacts from the activity, a finding that tends to counter historically prevailing cultural assumptions men are physiologically more predisposed endurance sports.
The fourth, final and most relevant category of scholarship with respect to this research reflects a critical post-structural perspective on the landscape-formation process. An older example is Marshall’s (1998) *Story Line: Exploring the Literature of the Appalachian Trail*, a “narrative” that intertwines a survey of literary writing associated with the regions along the AT with an account of his personal experiences walking the AT. The product is partly a travelogue and partly a review of popular literature, highlighting the linkages between the discourses and regional identities.

Another provocative study is Redick’s (2009) “Wilderness and Communitas: Pilgrims on the Appalachian Trail.” Redick likens the AT experience to a pilgrimage that is contextualized within the “sacred wilderness” discourse of American naturalism. While the paper’s framing theory and literature are well conceived, the substance of the actual research conducted is unclear, and calls for a more thorough development. Finally, Kates (2013) traces the substantial impact of newspaper coverage and journalists’ boosterism during the AT’s formative years. Kates’s focuses on the text of popular press journalism and the interactions of activists, journalists, and the AT. That study generally parallels this dissertation research, and provides a groundwork for critical understanding of the interplay of trail and discourse.

### 2.2 Post-structural Geographic Thought

As the writers in poetry and fiction borrow their several materials from outward object, and join them together at their own pleasure, there are others who are obliged to follow Nature more closely, and to take entire scenes out of her. Such are historians, natural philosophers, travelers, geographers and in a word, all who describe the visible objects of a real existence.

Joseph Addison, 1712

This passage by Joseph Addison reflects three perspectives that are important for understanding the conceptual approach of this research. First, it demonstrates the
longstanding tension between the legitimacies assigned to art and to science. Rather than recognizing the abstract nature of both art and science, the passage reproduces the cultural myth that the category called “science” is a more real and meaningful epistemology than the category of “art.” More than three hundred years later, this assertion remains central to the debate in the discipline of Geography between human, qualitative, and interpretative frameworks on the one hand and physical, quantitative, and empirical traditions on the other.

Second, while Addison conveys the underlying cultural beliefs of his time, he is also constructing a social reality. From a poststructuralist perspective, he is in effect creating a social power structure between two ways of knowing the world through the textual representation of these “self-evident” assumptions of the era. These power structures affect subsequent social interactions. The epistemologies and ontologies of a time are defined through the cumulative work of discourses such as this. Third, Addison bridges his narrow view to the poststructuralist perspective that underlies my research. No matter the discipline, as we “describe the visible objects of a real existence” we are essentially interpreting them into representational symbols. While artists, historians, natural philosophers, travelers, and geographers each work under different sets of rules that govern this process, all come under the sway of the culture in which they were created. In each translation one can see traces of the assumptions of the age. Ultimately the purpose of this research project is to understand how the representations, made by historians, geographers and travelers, about the AT have come to infuse their own worldviews into the collective representation as they bring it into the social consciousness.

The excerpt by Addison reflects a widely held perception that Laser (1998, p. 9) identified as a “naturalist” social science philosophy, which elevates the status of objective-empirical research over an “interpretivist” research. By contrast, I will ground this research
in a constructivist, post-structural paradigm, which sees the search for knowledge as a process of identifying and interpreting social meanings on a continuum that stretches from “real” existence to “fiction.” Any hard definition of the two ends eventually quivers and fades, as each creates the other.

To further refine my approach, I turn to Halfacree’s (2006) three-fold model inspired by the work of two theorists, Henri Lefebvre and Michael Foucault. The model is premised on the idea that socially constructed spaces, such as the AT, are brought into being as ongoing interactions between material localities, people’s everyday lived experiences, and prevailing media representations (Figure 1). Within this understanding, visual representation powerfully mediates individuals’ perceptions of this “real existence.” Imagery, rather than being just a mirror of this “real” world, is a selective interpretation that is vested with unseen cultural assumptions that reconstruct our mental image of the world and direct actions that shape the landscape itself.

2.2.1 Social Construction of Space

Our engagement with our environments is guided by how we understand and express our understanding through visual symbols. In other words, discourse affects physical and social realities. This theoretical position is founded on the work of several scholars of geography. One, Henri Lefebvre (1974, 1992), expanded our understanding of the social construction of space. Lefebvre, a French Marxist theoretician working between the 1930s and 1980s, highlighted that “space” had a central role within capitalist society as it was both a product and producer (Soja 1989). He stressed that space is an agent in the creation of social systems, and is as well the material product of people within these systems. The spaces that we inhabit and produce enable the foundational spatial inequities that facilitate society. This idea, which Soja (1989) named the “socio-spatial dialectic,” was clearly a
principle component in the work of Benton MacKaye in his proposal for the AT. He explicitly framed the AT as a space removed from urban capitalism in which new social forms would be possible. According to Soja (1989), this was a realization that was occurring at this time in other central planning programs, most notably in the avant garde urban designs of the Soviets.

More directly relevant to my research is Lefebvre’s three-part theoretical model conceptualizing how social-space is continuously produced. He asserted that spaces are composed of a triad, or network, of three dialectically interacting components: representations of space, representational space, and spatial practice (Lefebvre 1991, p. 38). Soja (1989) coined the term “spatialities” to represent the resulting social spaces of this interaction. Considered in this light the AT is a spatiality continuously brought into being thorough the interaction of material localities, such as the trail, signage, shelters, and forests; visual representations including magazines, newspapers, radio, TV, video, the internet, and social media; and the visceral lived experiences of backpackers, trail maintainers, administrators, foresters, tourists, and local residents. In the context of rural geography, Halfacree (2006) has translated and clarified these somewhat confusing terminologies, respectively, as representations of the rural, rural locality, and lives of the rural. In perhaps the most lucid synthesis of these ideas, Woods interpreting Halfacree (2011, p. 10) proposed that “rural space is imaginative, material, and practiced.” He said that lives of individual people in rural areas have been impacted by formal agricultural, forestry and preservation policies, and other persuasive, representational systems of power, leading to diverse impacts on the physical and social environment. These have looped back and have generated response and resistance.

The triadic model linking the cultural representations of the AT to the social
experiences and process of physically constructing the AT is the core theory of this dissertation. One outgrowth of this is the notion that discourse is the central object of study.

![Triadic Model of the Construction of Social Spaces](image)

Figure 2. Triadic Model of the Construction of Social Spaces.

### 2.2.2 Discourse

Discourse is a particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood, and how things are done in it… Discourses are articulated through all sorts of visual and verbal images and texts, specialized or not, and also through the practices that those languages permit…A specific visuality will make certain things visible in a particular way and other things unseeable.

Rose, 2012

“Discourse” is an important idea for this dissertation, because it establishes a connection between representation and landscape formation. As Rose articulates, *discourses* are the assumptions undergirding social relations in a given culture at a point in time. Michael Foucault (1973,1977,1978), a leading proponent of this theory posits
that, visual discourses operationalize power by showing people who they are in relation to others and the world. In this exchange, image producers exert power over viewers, by controlling the way the world can be understood. Grounded in this perspective, 

*discourse analysis* is the investigation of how power is constituted in particular instances by producing society as it represents it.

Foucault’s writing on representational systems in social construction is fundamental to this research. His main goal was to demonstrate how language establishes power in relationships. He provided specific historical examples from the medical profession (Foucault 1973), prison systems (1977), sexuality (1978) that he termed *discursive formations*. Each formation operated under its own *regime of truth*, a self-supporting logic that disciplined participants’ comprehension and action (Hall 1997).

Visual representations of the AT signify specific attributes of the landscape to its viewers. The collective weight, logic, and power of these visual signs, constitute the discursive formation. These discourses are often difficult to discretely identify as they are both naturalized within broader culture discourses and diffused through representations across space, time and media. Their functions however are critical to the stability of landscapes, such as the AT, because they subtly direct understanding and action in them. Rose (2012) suggests that the power of visual discourses is that they circumscribe how the world is knowable; they make some things visible and others invisible. Woods (2011, p.14) asserts that discourses are composed of all the signifying practices in which people engage, and therefore a discourse “is not just a representation of reality, it creates reality by producing meaning and setting the boundaries of intelligibility.”

Representation and discourse link the photographs and maps of the AT its formation and make the landscape intelligible in very specific ways. As the images circulate through
the trail community and the public, they provoke particular anticipations of the trail experience. How this process works is explored in the sections entitle “Systems of Representation” and “Representations and Landscape Production,” below.

2.2.3 Critical Theory

The quest for truth was not an objective and neutral activity but was intimately related to the ‘will to power’ of the truth-seeker. Knowledge was thus a form of power, a way of presenting one’s own values in the guise of scientific disinterestedness.

J.B. Harley, 2001

From a postmodern perspective what is of primary importance is to identify whose or what knowledge is the dominant or most powerful in the social construction of the problem and suggestions for possible solutions.

John Barry, 1999

Critical theory is the epistemological stance that our activities in the world are not value-neutral. The preceding sections have presented a theoretical groundwork underlying this research, but critical theory is the philosophical lens through which these theories will be applied to a reading of the AT. Whether developing new technologies, building material interventions in the landscape, creating works of art, or engaging in our day-to-day routines, the activities we undertake are positioned within a social context that is replete with, and predicated on, social inequalities. These activities reaffirm and perpetuate inequity or refute the legitimacy of these taken-for-granted micro-aggressions. Cumulatively, these thoughts and actions coalesce into disparities of status, power, knowledge access, standards of living, and others that define our social environment. The implications of this perspective for representation, production of space, and performance are significant. These fields demand that we first integrate reflexivity into our research to attempt to identify taken-for-granted cooption in perpetuating this social violence and then to make our positions on the issues at
hand explicit. If neutrality is a myth and we are continuously enmeshed in explicit and implicit power structures, then we should investigate how we both work and are worked by these structures. Critical theory exposes an obligation we have as agents in the discourse to be the change we want to see in the world.

A few subjects have come to the forefront of critical social research, including extensive research on the construction and inequities surrounding sex and gender, race and ethnicity, and the natural environment. Rose was a pioneer in the study of critical issues of sex and gender in geography and visual discourse studies. Rose (1988, p.11) found systematic gender exclusion by white heterosexual males throughout the discipline of Geography, and asserted that,

Woman is a masculinist fantasy figure [that]… offers a subjective position to women and one which is extraordinarily difficult to escape from entirely, even though many of the oppressions women face in masculinist society occur because women are expected to fulfill the role of Woman.

McNiel and Fondren (2012) suggests that constructions along gender lines are also an active part of the AT landscape. They found that advertisements in two prominent outdoor-lifestyle periodicals repeatedly represented women as either passive and conforming to stereotypical gender roles or as exceptional individuals well outside the norm. The constructed nature of these gender identities is underscored by other research on the physiology of AT backpackers. In a study of 280 long-distance hikers, Boulware (2004) found no significant differences between the physiological impacts of extended treks on women and men, however she did document both a significantly skewed balance ratio of male to female participation (74 percent to 2 percent respectively) and a higher tendency for women to fail to meet their hiking goals. This corresponds to the survey records of the ATC (2013) which report that only 25 percent of the almost 14,000 people that have walked the
entire length of the AT were female and underscores the socio-spatial dimensions of gender socialization. Given these facts, I will attempt to identify the gender discourse in the visual media’s representation of the AT.

In a parallel way, critical studies of race and gender, highlight the ubiquitous if elusive diffusion of these constructions. For instance, Van Dijk (1987 & 1991) found that racist representations in Europe and North America have become subtler, working either through omission or association (between minorities and crime, for instance) to transmit, perpetuate, and normalize negative characterizations of minorities. Gusa (2010) calls this systematized undercurrent of racism “White institutional presence.”

Today’s PWI’s [predominantly white institutions] do not have to be explicitly racist to create a hostile environment. Instead, unexamined historically situated white cultural ideology embedded in language, cultural practices, traditions, and preconceptions of knowledge allow these institutions to remain racialized. Soja (1989) maintains that human cultural spaces, imbued with ideology and power obscure social consequences. One such consequence of an unexamined racialized environment is that PWI’s become alienating space of hegemonic power. When Whites neglect to identify the ways in which White ideological homogenizing practices sustain the structure of domination and oppression, they allow institutional policies and practices to be seen as unproblematic or inevitable and thereby perpetuate hostile racial climates.

Gusa, 2010

Gusa’s provocative critique is a condemnation of the institutions that tacitly accept the absence of participants of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. That participation data and a review of images published by the ATC foreshadows the notion that the AT closely adheres this type of social structure. Shifting the focus from participation to material formation, Clowney (2012) argues that space itself can function as a materialized form of racism. Much like other symbolic systems, a landscape becomes a sign that stands for the historical and contemporary injustices of society. Given the enduring racial segregation of some localities through which the AT passes and the
continuing absence of people of color engaging with the trail itself, this research will provide a window into larger trends in American society.

The questions Clowney (2012) raises about landscapes of inequity have been extended by environmental advocates in two significant ways. The environmental movement has opened up a lively debate about equity by integrating other species and future generations into this calculus. The critical elements of environmentalism focus attention on how power is manifested in discourses about and relationships between humans and the natural world (Campbell 1996). I reflect upon the effects of these discursive formations across visual representations and I have highlighted conceptualizations of the non-human “physical” environment and ecosystem and how they have changed over time.

Each of these critical assessments suggests that as a socially constructed space the AT is not outside the inequities resident in the broader culture. To the contrary, despite its explicit rhetoric that the ATC is “committed to supporting and sustaining a diverse organization that is fair, inclusive, and respectful,” it continues to be discursively constructed as a public space that serves some segments of the population more than others (ATC 2013b).

2.3 Representational Hermeneutics: Semiology & Iconology

From at least the seventeenth century onward, European map makers and map users have increasingly promoted a standard scientific model of knowledge and cognition. The object of mapping is to produce a “correct” relational model of the terrain. Its assumptions are that the objects in the world to be mapped are real and objective, and that they enjoy an existence independent of the cartographer.

J.B. Harley, 2001

Representational hermeneutics is the study and interpretation of symbols and systems of signification. Two closely aligned branches of this discipline are semiology and
iconography. According to Cosgrove (1984, 1998, p. xxv), the subtle distinction between these is that semiology is a theory of how symbolism communicates and iconography is a structured method of interpreting symbolic representations. In fact, there is such substantial overlap in the methods and end goals that semiotic and iconographic interpretations are often difficult to distinguish. Their academic origins – semiology from linguistics and iconography from art history – suggest the reasons for their differences. From its inception, semiology was intertwined with inductive theorizing. Iconography was grounded in the deductive process of deciphering intentionally symbolic historic works of art. In this research, a hybrid approach will be adopted by taking what I have determined to be the applicable strengths from each method.

### 2.3.1 Semiology

The representational theories of semiology can be traced to two scholars: Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Peirce. Saussure theorized that language was a dyadic system of signifiers (gesture, spoken words, marks on a page, or pictures) that represented the meaning or concepts to which they referred (MacEachren 1995). Peirce developed a triadic theory of signs that incorporated the signifiers and signified components of Saussure’s system and added the referent or “real” material object in the world. In this model, the referent links Saussure’s representational system to the world and enables investigation into signifiers-signified couplings and analysis of the strength and nature of the connections between symbols used as signifiers and their “real-world” counterparts (MacEachren 1995).

Saussure suggested that the signified (a mental image, concept or meaning) is not inherently related to the referent (the “real” thing) or to the signifier (a symbol). Rather, within a particular language system, one or more words (or signs) become associated with both the “real” thing and the conceptualization of that thing. Every culture has a system of
codes that arbitrate these dynamically stable relationships between signified, signifier and referent which allows members to communicate (Hall 1997). Saussure was regarded to be a structuralist for the emphasis that he placed on the social structures of rules and codes (*langue*) that bridge signs and meanings (for example, word order) and allow us to compose coherent expressions. He suggested that, while these rules were culturally negotiated and therefore relatively inflexible, the rules contained many aspects that could be manipulated to allow individuals to create an infinite number of unique expressions or *parole* (Hall 1997). This development shifted the understanding of the working of signifying systems and yielded the fields of semiotics and iconology.

Semiology (commonly used interchangeably with the term semiotics) is the study of signs and its primary goal is to understand the relationship between signifiers and the signified (MacEachren 1995). More specifically, semiology is the study of the cultural meanings associated with graphics and images within the contexts of place and time. All visual media (photographs, illustrations, text, maps, etc.) can be analyzed for semiotic representations. The literature of semiology is rich with methodologies to employ.

The study of structure and system was advanced through the work of Barthes (*Mythologies* (1957), *Elements of Semiology* (1964) and *The Fashion System* (1967)) as he applied the concepts of Saussure to a number of subjects related to advertising and the fashion industry. His contributions are not only that he expanded and applied the field of semiotics, but that he developed simple yet rigorous matrices with which representative text could be analyzed (Allan 2003). Possibly his most insight was that semiotic systems operate on not just one, but on two levels. The first level is the function to communicate in the form described by Saussure. But just as important is that this language system is elevated and incorporated into a myth-making system. This “second order semiological system” abstracts
the particular to create a meta-narrative for any form of text. Barthes (1957) sees in image of
a black French soldier saluting the French flag both straightforward linguistic elements and
the complex myth they construct about French imperialism, racial harmony and patriotic
duty. This myth relies on the visual text’s communicative function and emerges as a subtle
overlay of meaning that is implicit.

From Barthes’s insights, Bertin (1983) *Semiology of Graphics* distills the elements of
representation used in cartography into “visual variables.” These attributes – planer
dimensions, size, value, texture, color, orientation, and shape – can have an infinite number
of configurations, but each attribute can most effectively communicate meaning when it is
used to reflect certain “perceptual properties.” Bertin’s elements instruct ways to improve
the directed translation of an author’s conceptualization into graphic symbols that may be
more easily interpreted by the viewers/readers to understand precisely what was intended.
For example, the size of a graphic on a map or in an image may be understood to stand for
quantitative, qualitative, selective, or associative properties, while shape usually denotes
only associative properties (Rod 2001).

Bertin’s contributions generated a fixation on perfecting symbolizing systems that
minimized translational error. In fact, a strong association can be seen between the Peircean
view of language and the one advanced by Joseph Addison. Both are focused on the degree
of objective similarity between abstraction and the “real” world. By contrast, post-
structuralism represents a significant intellectual shift away from a search for accuracy and
precision and toward the more rebellious tendencies of Barthes through analysis of social
construction of the meaningful understandings of the world and the activation of power
through representational systems.

Bertin, like Saussure, focused on clarifying the transmission of meanings through
signs. As cartographers construct maps with visual variables, their denotative task is to
decide upon which shapes, textures, and sizes to use and where to place them within the
structural logic of the map. Their fundamental goal is effective communication. A
“communication model” of analysis is concerned with how a map represents. Another way
to look at maps is to regard them as a discourse and to analyze what the map is representing,
who is author (or the authoring institution) and who are its audiences. In discourse analysis,
the map, an image, or a text is no longer regarded an objective distillation of the external
world, but is a socially produced discourse that creates a particular worldview. Through the
processes of selection and representation, the external world is remade for the map-reader
through the meanings and myths created by the map. Harley (2001) argued that the reason
this conceptual shift did not occur until relatively recently is that mapping has long been
seen as a symbolic system grounded in the mathematics of projection and the objectifying
process of spatial indexing. In this respect, maps are master works of subtlety, because they
simultaneously provide discrete utility to users, and transmit ideologies as rhetorical social
texts (Harley 2001).

Harley elaborates that maps work dialectically within their social and cultural
contexts to reinforce the hegemony of the institutions (imperialists, explorers, militaries, and
government planners) that produce them. Maps work this way on two levels. First, they
provide the spatial orientation and inventories that facilitate exploitation. Second, they work
cognitively to create a particular representation of the world while erasing other worlds
(Harley 2001). Therefore, analysis of maps as social texts can reveal motivations,
assumptions, and power structures at the cultural moment of their creation. MacEachren
(1995) calls these two levels the denotative and connotative meanings of a map. Signs
function both denotatively and connotatively with relation to meaning. On a denotative
level, signs use explicit, commonly understood, superficial symbol-meaning relationships. Signs also operate by employing connotative, implicit, or deeper level of meanings of symbols.

Wood and Fels (1987) formulated a detailed process to identify denotative and connotative codes in maps, which they called intrasignificant and extrasignificant respectively. This two-phase methodological rubric looks first for meanings in maps or intrasignificant codes (iconic, linguistic, tectonic, temporal, and presentational) to identify what constituent parts the map has used to make a meaningful representation. The second phase regards the more complex and subtle extrasignificant codes (thematic, topical, historical, rhetorical, and utilitarian) of the map, to establish an idea of what ideologies or worldviews are being solidified and how.

![Figure 3. Woods and Fels Model of Intrasignificant and Extrasignificant Map Codes.](image)

**Extrasignificant Codes**
- Thematic
- Topic
- Historical
- Rhetorical
- Utilitarian

**Intrasignificant Codes**
- Iconic
- Linguistic
- Tectonic
- Temporal
- Presentational

Figure 3. Woods and Fels Model of Intrasignificant and Extrasignificant Map Codes.
2.3.2 Iconography

Iconography aligns with the work of semiology by providing a structured method of interpretation. Erwin Panofsky (1934) the father of modern iconology defined it as the study of complex symbols-meaning systems (icons) within the context of the cultural period of their creation. The primary difference between iconography and semiotics is that iconography is concerned with the context in work is created vis-à-vis the interpreter’s understanding from his or her cultural position and it confines its analysis to the works themselves (van Leeuwen & Jewitt 2001). In both fields but especially in scientific realist portrayals such as the maps and photographs that will be analyzed in this dissertation, the symbolic nature of the representations has been internalized and seems to be taken for granted (Panofsky 1934). Therefore, the argument that the images are merely representations and are not symbolic underscores how much they are taken for granted. These images are not really reality. Rather they are highly refined rhetorical symbols that function as both uncritical depictions of places and carriers of complex cultural meanings. The goal of both semiotics and iconography is to uncover and make explicit these meanings.

Methodologically, iconography involves a three-step process. Panofsky (1972, p. 9) identified these as the pre-iconographical description, iconographical analysis, and iconographical interpretation. The pre-iconographical description first delineates all aspects of an image (e.g., person, lake, street, or table) that are recognizable to an average person in a specific place and time. Iconographical analysis then identifies the themes, concepts, or allegories associated with the identified objects or actions. This requires a well-developed understanding of these historic linkages, a skill usually developed by investigating the common themes and patterns across media sources from
the historical period (Rose 2012). Iconographical interpretation examines the context of the construction of the image to decipher the messages that it projects. The analyst becomes an interpreter that moves from identifying the more explicit image meanings to reveal the allegory of symbolic ideas the image displays. It is in this final phase that iconographical research departs significantly from the methods of seminology. Van Straten (1994) suggests that Panofsky’s approach implied a fourth step that he called iconological interpretation. The investigator turns focus from the individual image to the cultural context from which it emerged to identify the reasons the work was constructed in this way at this time, the nature of the ideas or experiences that influenced the work’s creation, and the way in which the work contrasts with later imagery.

Panofsky’s well-developed methodology for iconographic interpretation has been applied in studies of an array of media including: Euro-American images of Africans (Pieterse 1992); cross-media depictions of London’s East End (Newland 2008); cartography and its effects on colonization and land use change (Harley 2001); impacts of representation on landscape perception (Cosgrove & Daniels 1988); and the iconography of the AT’s environmental features (Redick 2012). The works of Cosgrove, Daniels, and Harley had paradigm-shifting influences. Harley’s The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography deconstructed the representational aspects and cultural assumptions underlying maps. It advanced the practice of critical cartography. In effect, Harley shifted cartographers’ attention from simply trying to increase of representational accuracy and precision to undertaking interpretive analysis of the permeation of cultural meanings in the process and product of cartography (2001). From this view, maps – like photographs, text, and the material environment itself – can be considered to be rhetorical propaganda, directed not by
objective science but rather by the cultural and social values, and the positional stature
of their creators. Similarly, Cosgrove’s *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*
(1984, 1998) and Cosgrove and Daniels (1988) *The Iconography of Landscape* focus on
the cultural and symbolic construction of landscapes, which can be read as dynamic texts
of power and meaning. These precedents provide the methodological foundation for this
research project.

2.4 Representations and Landscape Production

[M]ountain mythology is embedded with romantic notions of
exploration, journey and searching… Brochures and, increasingly,
electronic media are important reference points for adventure tourism.
When we buy a holiday we are paying for the expectation that we will
gain something: a suntan, greater knowledge, new experiences, and
new (perhaps temporary) social identities for example. This process of
commodification has always included distinctive places such as
cultural foci and beaches, but mountains too are increasingly viewed
from this mechanistic and economic perspective.

Beedie, 2003

Visual representations, such as photographs, text, and drawings, are culturally
encoded systems of communication (Hall 1997). Like other forms of language, visual
representations (signs) are conventionalized practices of constructing and transmitting
meaning. Once learned, these systems allow people to interpret figurative marks (signifiers)
as stand-ins for objects or ideas (signifieds) (Barthes 1972, 1967). Visual representations of
the AT are a powerful means of signifying specific attributes about the landscape to viewers.

The collective weight, logic, and power of these visual signs used to represent a
given subject in a unified way constitute a *discourse, or discursive formation* (Foucault
1971, 1972). These discourses are often difficult to discretely identify, as they are both
naturalized in a given culture, and diffused through representations across space, time, and
media. However, their function is critical to the stability of landscapes, such as those of the
AT, because they subtly direct ways of seeing, understanding, and behaving in a place. These ideas of representation and discourse link the photographs and maps of the AT to the formation of the AT landscape by making the landscape intelligible in very specific ways. As the images circulate through the trail community and public at-large, they promote anticipations of particular trail experiences.

As a tourist landscape, the AT was specifically developed to be a place to accommodate specific cultural practices that were different from those of “home” or “work.” Representations of the AT have been keenly edited to facilitate perceptions of, actions toward, and conceptual understandings of the place itself. The concepts that describe the processes that connect representations of the AT to participants’ experiences and mental formulations of the AT landscape involve “tourist gaze,” “performance,” and “material formation.”

2.4.1 The Tourist Gaze

In *The Tourist Gaze*, Urry (1990) theorizes a connection between visual discourse and place perception. He calls the process “tourist gaze,” and he argues that it links representation, discourse, and place-making. It is the socially mediated way in which specific recreational places are anticipated and seen by visitors. Compelling discursive regimes of tourist media train us to see some things and to not see others. They influence the way in which we evaluate and associate meanings with these “things” (Woods 2011). Within a given institution, such as the AT, gaze becomes enculturated as “the way its members learn to see and to project preferred versions of reality, and historically, the way that such seeing and projecting privileges certain persons and their inheritances, and subjugates certain others” Hollinshead (1999, p.9).
Maria Mansson (2009) argues that tourism is inextricably associated with the pervasive media of contemporary culture. Tourists actively select media to consume, and that media functions to simultaneously make them aware of the destination and to provide the raw materials from which conceptualizations of the place begin to take shape. The media, including text, images, maps, and videos, functions in this process as self-selected propaganda. As people engage with and share this media, they internalize the underlying assumptions and values embedded within it. The represented place becomes increasingly meaningful as a spatial signifier of these values, and is programmed as a site within which
these values can be enacted. Taking it a step further, Todd (2010) asserts that the all-consuming nature of visual discourses actually render the *in situ* destinations invisible. Tourists become so completely engulfed by their mental image or the conceptualization of what the landscape should look like, that they become blind to the actual place.

2.4.2 Performance

Rurality is not only constructed discursively and materially, it is also performed. The performances of people in the countryside, both residents and visitors, turn discursive representations in practice, and become ways of structuring life in the countryside. The routinized performance of everyday practices naturalizes discourses or rurality and the social relations contained there in.

-- Woods, 2011

Ways of thinking lead to ways of acting, so gaze leads to performance. Rose (1999) states that spaces are relational assemblages, brought into being at specific times and locations through their performance. Rose draws the same conclusion about space that feminist Judith Butler drew about gender: the thing does not exist in advance of its performance. Even more, spaces such as the AT do not arise out of a singular act of creation, but are meaningfully stabilized and substantialized through the iterative repetition of these performances. By performing the AT again and again, by successive actors playing various roles, the AT is brought into existence (Rose 1999).

-- Baerenholdt et al. (2004) use the example of building a sand castle on a beach to illustrate tourism as performance. Constructing a sandcastle is a quintessential act of tourism, often assumed to be the thing to do on a beach. But, reflected upon, it can also be understood to be the enactment of a spatially fixed cultural script. Through this shared activity, groups of people are able to sediment not only sand and shells, but also meaningful memories into places and times. The beach, with all its associated values, emotions, and connotations, is performed into existence from the raw stuff of the intertidal zone.
(Baerenholdt et al. 2004); precisely articulate are the implications of seeing the production of place as a set of performances.

What we say of the sandcastle here can be generalized. Other places rely on such a transformation of landscapes, sites, attractions, cities, buildings and so on into social spaces. Neither the material existence of a physical place nor the memory of particular pleasurable visions makes tourist places come into being. These are nothing but potentials, possibilities, dreams, anticipations. Places however only emerge as ‘tourist places’ when they are appropriated, used and made part of living memory and accumulated life narratives of people performing tourism, and these performances include embodied and social practices and traces of anticipated memories. Tourist places produce particular temporalities. They are inscribed in circles of anticipation, performance, and remembrance.

Baerenholdt et al. 2004

In much the same way, the AT is both a place arising out of performance and the proper enactment of a social script. It materializes for participants the moment they first read about or saw a photo of it, but it only became real as a place when it is experienced. The conceptualizations become embodied as performance, then remembered and ultimately transmitted to others through representation. In this way, the AT is continuously assembled as an on-going place, perpetually realized into being.

In practice, performances take many forms, however all are mediated by what is internalized by the participant as socially acceptable. As Edensor (2000) points out, various “social actors produce distinctive gaits, way of speaking, dress and demeanor which articulate shared forms of understanding.” Central to his association of tourism with performance is this idea that each performer and each place and time is subject to different regulations. This scripting is both compelled by the attributes of the tourist “stage” and by expectations within socio-cultural structures as to what performance is acceptable for an individual based upon characteristics such as socio-economic status, gender, and race (Edensor 1998). Cresswell (1998) scrutinizes this latter category of social-scripting in an
investigation of the role of gender and social status in constraint of mobility and self-determination among female tramps. Reviewing both laws and reported incidents of female hobos in the late 19th century, he found that while these women were routinely subject to sexual and social violence, their social deviance enabled them to challenge “the core values of American society in ways that even the male tramp could not” (Cresswell 1998, p. 187). This underscores the complexity of travel and tourist landscapes. On the one hand, tourists conform to highly scripted performances. On the other, despite these expectations, tourist actors maybe more than in other settings routinely challenge these hegemonic controls.

Gregson and Rose (2000, p. 443) define this continuous dialectic tension in performance between playing the part and redefining assumed role to be played as “performativity.” They draw on the idea of “second gaze,” which unlike the disciplining aspects of gaze reviewed above, is an understanding by performers that seeing is not always believing (MacCannell 2001). It is a suspicion that the roles that we are compelled to play and scenes designated for our viewing, need not necessarily be followed. It is the activation of agency in the face of structure.

Edensor (1998) explores this idea from a spatial perspective and theorizes a distinction between “enclave” tourist spaces which are highly programmed, regulated, and contained, and “heterogeneous” spaces which can be either integrated into the large fabric of everyday lived spaces or are set in locations where monitoring and control are functionally not possible. While the AT may appear at first glance to be the quintessential embodiment of a heterogeneous tourist space, I contend that it falls somewhere between the two. While long-distance backpacking trips are themselves a form of prolonged social rebellion and unstructured self-determination is a cornerstone of the culture from within which individual performers act, these “performances may articulate a meta-social commentary which
reproduces the centrality of social norms and conventions” (Edensor 1998, p. 64).

Implicit are the workings of power, not only among the actors but also between the actors and the material environments, that produce and are produced by tourism. These power structures may be overt or extremely subtle. An example of subtlety is the performance of skill as performance of power. Edensor (2000, p. 326) suggests that within tourist spaces such as the AT where the “disciplining gaze of co-participants and onlookers” structures performances, power resonates through “[t]he skill of the performer in conveying the intended impression…developing the right body-image and acquiring techniques through training.” Such performances link hikers, locals, and “brokers” (such as media outlets and trail management institutions) in networks of power (Cheong and Miller 2000 p. 378). Representation, gaze, power, and positionality coalesce in performance; they are brought together as they work to affect the material formation of specific places in specific ways.

2.4.3 Landscape and Material Formation

Landscapes are the symbolic environments created by human acts of conferring meaning to nature and the environment, of giving the environment definition and form from a particular angle of vision and through a specific filter of values and beliefs. Every landscape is a symbolic environment. The landscapes reflect our self-definitions that are grounded in culture.

Greider and Garkovich, 1994

A “landscape” is a historically situated way of understanding, seeing, and being in a place. Over the course of American history various ideas of what the land is or should be – Eden, Arcadia, nature, wilderness, environment and ecosystem – affected how land has been used. The notion of landscape promoted by Greider and Garkovich above suggests that landscapes become meaningful and knowable through representation and discourse. Others like American geographer Carl Sauer (1925) argued that landscape was born from a
dialectical exchange between a culture and the physical environment.

In some respects, the contrasts between these perspectives is “chicken-and-egg” matter as landscapes are fluid and change with cultures over time. These ideological currents are tied to representations and trends in art and the media. For example, since the colonial period, the evolution of thinking about the American environment was influenced by European texts, illustrations, and maps that established impactful mythologies of America as both Eden and wilderness (Mugerauer 1995).

When Fredrick Jackson Turner declared “the frontier” closed in the 1890s, he invigorated a national struggle between the preservationists, whose ideals embodied the Arcadian myth necessitating protection of the preexistent natural sublime, and the conservationists who held a more pragmatic view of wise-use and sought to transform what they saw as an unruly wilderness into a shining city on the hill (Runte 2010). This ideological battle continues, institutionalized in the NPS’s preservationist approaches and the NFS’s conservation management practices, and having significant influence on the development of the AT (Nash 2001).

At some point, representations of landscapes transitioned from merely representing an idea of a place into active agents in the debate. Davis (2005) calls this process discursive material formation. A number of studies have demonstrated this effect by noting the importance of visual representations in the formation of landscapes. Woods (2011) illustrates how rural landscapes are an amalgam of raw material environments and cultural concepts of “rural.” Todd’s (2010) and Beirnart and McKeown’s (2009) analyses of African landscape representations in popular media, suggest that as tourists act on these ideas through safari tourism, they materially change these places. Enright (2008) explores the implications of the historical shift of the framing of the tropical landscape from jungle to

Others have shown the role that promotional materials have played in convincing the public of the need for planning and wilderness preservation. Examples include posters produced by the railroads (Runte 2010; Wycoff and Dilsaver 1997), newspapers (Kates 2013), and other evolving media, from maps and paintings to landscape photography (Mugerauer 1995). The power of these discourses is also reflected in the continued importance of the writings and imagery of John Muir, Henry David Thoreau, Fredrick Law Olmsted, Fredric Remington, and Ansel Adams; as they have passed to successive generations they employ emotion and reason to shape our understanding of “the land.”

From a more general inquiry into tourism, Welk (2008) scrutinized the roles that Lonely Planet travel guides play in directing backpackers’ choices of travel locations and behaviors, as well as in the resulting place-formation. He concludes that because of the ubiquity of these “travelers’ bibles”, seemingly minute editorial decisions, such as map toponyms, can impact readers and localities significantly. Davis (2005) goes even farther, suggesting that the social power structures, expressed as successive generations of discourse on “deserted isles” of the South Pacific, have directly contributed to the wholesale alteration of the physical environment of that realm. These studies illuminate the diverse, and at times elusive, connections between media representations and alterations of the material environment.

2.4.4 The AT and Media Discourse

In 1921, Benton MacKaye initiated the AT’s development, by publishing an article entitled “An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning” in the Journal of the American Institute of Architects. The article contained no photos, but a map and evocative
prose laid a vision that began the construction of a landscape. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, MacKaye and others tirelessly promoted the trail through general media outlets such as the *New York Evening Post* and *New York Times* (Kates 2013), as well as in outdoor journals like *The Mentor, Nature Magazine*, and *Scouting*, each of which had narrower readerships. This publicity had several effects. It greatly increased public awareness of AT. It generated direct participation, political support, and material resources. And the promotions framed the project as the creation of a wholesome American recreational landscape. Collectively media attention facilitated the completion of a trail stretching along the spine of the Appalachian Mountains from Georgia to Maine.

Despite the disruptions caused by the onset of the second world war, the AT ascended into national consciousness in the 1940s through feature articles published in *LIFE Magazine* in 1941 and *National Geographic Magazine* in 1949. These articles used a montage of images to underscore the scenic beauty of the rural landscape and the carefree recreational experiences of the landscape consumers. In ensuing decades, many other nationally recognized magazines frequently published articles about the AT including *Sports Illustrated*, *Readers Digest*, *Backpacker Magazine*, *Outside* and *Boys Life*. Each outlet exposed new generations and more diverse cohorts to the trail and expanded awareness serving as entry points for future consumers and together created a robust body of popular literature on AT. Books like *Appalachian Hiker: Adventure of a Lifetime* (Garvey 1971), *Walking with Spring* (Shaffer 1983), *Walking the Appalachian Trail* (Luxenberg 1994), *The Appalachian Trail Reader* (Emblidge 1996), and *A Walk in The Woods* (Bryson 1998) became classic texts within the AT community and provided a greater depth of information than the articles could alone. In the late 1990s, the Internet provided new opportunities for sharing AT media. Trail-focused social media sites, such as *Trailjournals.com,*
Postholer.com, and WhiteBlaze.net, emerged as interactive forums, allowing the public to share their own AT narratives and access those of others. This shift from print to digital media was also paralleled by a growing number of downloadable and streamable forms of video documentaries, including Appalachian Impressions (Flagler Films 2000), 2000 Miles to Maine (Appalachian Adventures 2004), Appalachian Trail (National Geographic 2009), as well as other video-streaming sites like Youtube.com and Vimeo.com.

2.4.5 Examining National Geographic Discourse

From this sizable body of material, the focus will be limited to only a subset, specifically the photographs of the NGS. There are three reasons for this. First, the NGS has published a large number of AT articles over a long period of time: between 1949 and 2013, the NGS published a dozen articles and two books, produced a documentary, and maintains an array of online media that promotes the AT, spanning a period that both predated and influenced more contemporary media representations. Second, the NGS has cultivated an enormous national and international readership. In 1920, National Geographic Magazine reached about 700,000 (NGS 2012). By 1980 membership was up to 30 million. And by 2014, the NGS’s publications were viewed by more than 500 million people per month (NGS 2015). Reflecting their growing diversity of media outlets, their web site nationalgeographic.com hosted 28.26 million unique global visitors in 2014, and their videos received more than 1.3 billion views on Youtube.com (NGS 2015). Over the decades a large and growing population has viewed these images. Third, it is well established that the NGS has become a uniquely influential American media institution that provides millions of Americans a perspective on the world (Allner 2000; Hawkins 2010; Lutz and Collins 1993; Pauly 1979; Rothenberg 2007; Schulten 2000). The NGS has cultivated their iconic status by building up a reputation for nonpartisan science-based reporting. Thus their
depictions of subjects like the AT are believed to be accurate and authoritative reflections of the actual landscape. Taken together these aspects, extensive ongoing coverage, broad readership, and reputation of scientific legitimacy, elevate the NGS images to a prominence within the discourse and make them particularly attractive for critical analysis.

Table 1. Publications by The National Geographic Society Between 1949 and 2014 Focusing on the Appalachian Trail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>PUBLICATION &amp; TITLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>National Geographic Magazine: Skyline Trail from Maine to Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>National Geographic Society Book: The Appalachian Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>National Geographic Magazine: A Tunnel Through Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>National Geographic Society Book: Mountain Adventure, Exploring the Appalachian Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>National Geographic Traveler: Hiking hut to hut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>National Geographic Traveler: Appalachian Reunion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>National Geographic Adventure: Grail Trails: AT, PCT, CDT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>National Geographic Traveler: Appalachian Trait Tidbit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>National Geographic Video: The Appalachian Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>National Geographic Society: Wall Map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>National Geographic Traveler: Hiking an American Treasure: Step-By-Step on the Appalachian Trail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, it is not surprising that NGS publications have been studied by others.
Employing various visual analytical methods, scholars have critically examined how these discourses have influenced the public’s perceptions. From its start, the NGS has explicitly set out to educate about what Americans need to know to be properly American, by framing the world they deem worth American curiosity, and by providing a model for the way to relate to other cultures (Hawkins 2008). Many have criticized the NGS for portraying non-western peoples and places as “exotic others” in need of development and modernization (Hervik 1998; Schwartz-DuPre 2010; Hyndman 2002; Parameswaran 2007; Tuason 1999; Roy 2007). Similarly, Jansson (2003) has argued that the NGS has even framed regions within the U.S. such as the American South as an “internal others,” perpetually subordinate to mainstream American culture. Others have reproached the NGS for promoting a discourse of paternalism, racism, and exclusion of women (Bloom 1993; Neuhaus 1997). In the process of framing non-westerners, the magazine has provided viewers with a western gaze, distancing and othering its subjects. Hyndman (2000, 2002 p. 48) asserts that the NGS established a pattern by which its photographers and writers have become “literally and symbolically the whitest and most masculine great hunters/adventurers…bravely roaming, observing and evaluating”. These publications become a script for the performance of scientific exploration, adventurous recreation (Todd 2010), and “strenuous heroic adventures of romance” (Hawkins 2008, p. 42). Most damning of all are accusations that these discourses were historically promulgated by a Board of Trustees composed of some of American’s richest and most powerful men, who used the magazine to bolster a self-serving rhetoric of nationalism, militarism, and expansionism (Allner 2000).

Despite these critiques, others have noted that the NGS has also been instrumental in promoting environmental awareness and multiculturalism (Brunn 2010; Remillard 2011). In her book *American Iconographic*, Hawkins (2010) reflects on the NGS’s co-evolution with
changing American values. While acknowledging the magazine’s shortcomings, she proposes that the visual icons it produces have generated a much greater degree of cultural reflexivity and ethical debate than the critics suggest. These issues are important foundations to inform my analyses of the NGS’s depiction of the AT.
III. METHODS & RESEARCH DESIGN

To investigate the construction of the AT landscape through images in popular magazines, I developed a three-part research design, comprised of individual content, representational, and cartographic discourse analyses. These were done sequentially, with each section providing a different lens through which I could analyze the media discourse.

The goal of these diverse methods was to triangulate answers to the following research questions: (1) What people, places, and activities of the Appalachian Trail have been promoted through the NGS images depicting the AT? (2) What underlying myths do these representations promote about the AT? (3) How has this visual discourse framed and constructed a particular AT? I chose these methodologies to strategically answer each of these questions: the content analysis is to address the first question, the representational and cartographic discourse analyses address the second question, and insights from all three techniques provide data to answer the third question.

I used content analysis to review and categorize a large set of NGS images. While providing a comprehensive perspective and quantitative results, this was limited to a fairly superficial analysis of the images. A more rigorous review of a subset of the images was undertaken in the representational analysis wherein I systematically identified and interpreted the symbology of these images. Finally, I employed a cartographic discourse analysis framework to analyze the components of a selection of an array of historical maps of the AT.
Promotional images of the AT have not been analyzed previously as texts or as significant contributors to the trail’s development. The focus on images in this analysis is important for a number of reasons. First, images are sign systems that are legible across a wide range of cultures, ages, and literacy levels. Second, unlike text or oral testimony, visual images are largely uncontested. Maps and photographs are often interpreted as vectors of fact and are taken at face-value (Hall 1997). These images are edited and biased representations of a particular worldview, however, and this warrants a more critical investigation. Finally, these particular images have been widely disseminated over time and therefore have contributed significantly to the AT discourse.

My research relies on qualitative methods and is premised on the assumptions inherent in the methods of such a form of knowledge discovery. From a qualitative perspective, theory, research questions, researcher positionality, and methodology are tightly bound in the investigative process. At the center of this, the researcher integrates and filters
diverse sources of data into a coherent narrative. Denzin and Lincoln (2013) suggest the work of qualitative researcher is analogous to that of the quilt maker or of the film editor. In the piecing together of quilts or the montaging of video scenes, the essential act of qualitative research is to creatively weave together the ephemeral substances of a world into a meaningful narrative. It is important to note that all three of research methods used here are centered around a situated researcher making informed decisions. With this awareness I have attempted to maintain an awareness of my positionality. As it is a qualitative research project, I recognize that all attempts at understanding the human condition within the world are necessarily bound up in the messy flow of cultural history. In this research, despite attempts to generate normative rather than subjective interpretations, the final product is a window into the world from my own perspective.

Reflexivity has been a recurring theme, if not a central preoccupation, within this process to ensure that I am producing sound interpretations of the representations. This was done in two ways: first, the research was grounded in the work of similar projects, and second, by cross-referencing my process, interpretations, and final text with other researchers and peers who are familiar with qualitative research. The underlying goal of this, like other qualitative investigations, has been to ensure internal validity, a well-structured inquiry, and that my interpretations are supported by the data (Tonkiss 1998). While qualitative research such as this has been criticized as little more than a post-positivist regime of objective truth-finding, the strength of this approach is that it allows for a renewed creativity and energy not only in the investigative process, but ultimately in the composite interpretative texts that are produced (Denzin and Lincoln 2013).

3.1 Part One: Content Analysis

This method bridges qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to
categorize bodies of images representing particular phenomena. By determining the frequency of specific photographs within the larger discourse, I identify emergent quantitative patterns that reveal significant qualitative themes. Other researchers, employing this technique, have analyzed a range of geographic subjects including photographs from state tourism brochures (Hummon 1988), railroad promotion of Glacier National Park (Wyckoff & Dilsaver 1997), postcards of Grand Canyon National Park (Youngs 2012), international marketing of South African tourism (Cornelissen 2005), gender in wilderness recreation advertising (McNiel et al. 2012), and images of Canada by the NGS (Beaudreau 2002). Commonly these studies involve a three-step process including: subject and image selection, code development and coding, and generation of findings and analysis.

For this research I compiled an image dataset by collecting all of the unique photographs published by the NGS in their articles about the AT and video documentary (Table 1). Because I used the entire population of images, there was no sampling for quantitative purposes. Duplicate images were counted only once, and images were grouped by time period according to natural breaks in the data. The documentary was included in the analysis, by subdividing the video into unique scenes for analysis.

I adapted an initial coding scheme from six other similar studies (McNiel et al. 2012; Hummon 1988; Cornelissen 2005; Beaudreau 2002; Wyckoff and Dilsaver 1997; Lutz and Collins 1993). Once this was compiled I performed a pre-analysis screening on a subset of the images. Based upon the results, I developed a second coding scheme, which was used by a small group of qualitative researchers to code ten images. For participation request instructions see APPENDIX A. Content Analysis Assistance Solicitation. I compared their results with my own with the purpose of attempting to ensure externally derived validity. Drawing from this and their feedback I developed a final coding matrix. Finally, I performed
a pre-analysis coding of twenty-five images and repeated the same process two weeks later, in order that I might ensure internal consistency. The results were fairly consistent, however discrepancies reflected difficulties with categorizing visually obscured attributes and those at the borders of categories. As a result, I created an “unidentified” category, to avoid false categorization in instances where coding decisions required a high degree of inference.

Throughout this process I routinely documented by thought and decision making process in “process journals”. While this did not necessarily produce a perfect solution to any issue, it helped me to explicitly delineate why and how I did what I did. For examples of this process of qualitative decision making see APPENDIX B. Content Analysis Process Journaling Example.

I coded each photo and scene of the complete data set and compiled the results. I found that the locations of these images were commonly identified, 81 percent of photos, and 57 percent of the video scenes. Using this information, I mapped the spatial distribution of these images along the AT (Tables 2-13 and Figures 7-12).

3.2 Part Two: Representational Analysis

The content analysis provided a comprehensive, if only superficial, overview of the AT image set. By contrast, the second step employed representational analysis to more thoroughly scrutinize a smaller set of images. These two techniques are by no means incongruous; in fact, they are often used in tandem. Wyckoff & Dilsaver (1997) followed a robust content analysis with a semiotic analysis of some of the more common representations. By coupling these two techniques, I identified common visual themes and then deconstructed the themes of the messages images transmitted.

A review of studies using similar methods revealed that there is no prescribed formula for choosing the images to analyze (Rose 2012). Rather, images are often chosen to
meet theoretical justifications and the degree of provocation they display to the researcher. The images selected are not a statistically representative sample, though they may be meaningfully representative to the researcher. An important consideration for selection is the fit of an image in the messages broadcast by the creator about a place-phenomenon (Rose 2012). In representational analysis, the central focus is on the integrity of the analysis rather than on rigorous image-selection criteria. For this study, I selected a subset of twenty-six photographs, including six place images, fourteen participant images, and six performance images, based upon common four criteria: alignment with themes identified in the content analysis, visual clarity, potency as messengers of symbolic meaning, and relevance to my research questions.

In the analysis, I employed a hybridized iconographic and semiotics approach. Van Straten’s (1994) four step process was employed as a model of iconographic investigation. The four steps are: (1) A detailed description of all independent elements depicted by the image; (2) Identification of the themes or interactions between these elements; (3) A historically-informed interpretation of the deeper meanings in the image; (4) Speculation about why the image was created in this way at this time and place. The strength of this particular process is that its straightforward stepwise framework is readily intelligible and it provides for the research of historical context to support symbol-meaning interpretations (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001, p. 101). For my analysis I adopted the first three steps.

Semiotic analyses follow a similar process of identification and interpretation. This two-step method identifies the denotative or superficial meanings of an image and then interprets how these reinforce the connotative or conceptual-mythological level of meanings. Enumeration of these deeper values and myths can be done by cross-referencing other images from the same pool (Nelson 2005) or by taking a more iconographic approach.
that reaches beyond the images to the broader associations of symbol-meanings (for example, the meanings of refugee, veil, and femininity in Western culture) (Schwartz-DuPre 2010). There are two common differences between iconography and semiology. First, semiology is more often applied to contemporary works of representation, especially those that are explicitly designed to be ideological tools to shape people’s thinking, such as those found in advertisements, propaganda posters, and tourist brochures (Rose 2012). Second, semiology has traditionally been more concerned with the content of works rather than their context. I undertook a representational analysis, by combining elements of these two methods. The representational analyses of Rose (2012) deconstructing an advertisement and Schwartz-DuPre (2010) a *National Geographic* cover image provided the closest template for the method I ultimately adapted. Other elements are drawn from Parameswaran’s (2007) thematically structure, and detailed written descriptions layered with supporting information that justifies his interpretations; and Eright’s (2008) evaluation of changing ideas and representations of tropical forests.

**Figure 6. Representational Analysis Process (See APPENDIX C. for full size documents).**

1. A detailed description of all independent elements
2. Identification of the themes or interactions between these elements
3. A historically-informed interpretation of the deeper meanings in the image
I performed each of the representational analyses by first listing all of the individual denotative or commonly discernible features (persons, objects, landscapes and the activities) within each image, and the common meanings associated each. Figure 6 provides an example of this description process, which is similar to the common qualitative research tool of meaning field documentation and analysis. Also see APPENDIX C. Sample Representational Analysis Process Sheets for a sample set of the image deconstruction documentation. To expedite this process, I imported the images into Adobe InDesign, and created separate layers for each step in the process. For this first step I illustrated atop each image using red linear symbols. Second, in a separate InDesign layer I marked the interaction between denotative image symbols in yellow, and then wrote descriptions of these interactions (Illustrations 1-26). Third, I provided my interpretation of the image as one unified symbolic representation, i.e. the connotative/iconological layer of analysis. Here I synthesized the denotative symbols to suggest how the image worked as an allegory representing cultural concepts and myths. I was looking beyond the image to the larger cultural narrative from which it was drawing. Because of the way I organized the images into three groups or themes, this final step also included a discussion of how it fit into the theme, either as part of a narrative progression, icon of place or reflection of historical moment.

To increase external validity and sharpen my research design process I continued to document by decisions though journaling, as well as generate external feedback by working with a group of students and qualitative researchers. For an example of my deliberation over developing a representation analysis framework see APPENDIX D. Representational Analysis Process Journal. It is evident that the final themes I ended up selecting were borne
of a long string of decisions and compromises. I also sought to strengthen and fine tune my process by holding a trial run with a group of students and faculty to deconstruct a set of images. I solicited interested individuals and provided a pre-meeting background reading (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt. 2001, p.95-101). Once gathered I went over my representational analysis framework, and had them work through five images. Based upon this experience and their feedback I felt prepared to proceed with the representational analysis.

3.3 Part Three: Cartographic Discourse Analysis

For the third component of my research, I used a cartographic discourse analysis framework to identify how maps work in a similar capacity to photographs in the discursive construction of the AT. Between 1921 and 2013, major media institutions published more than twenty overview maps of the AT, six of these by NGS. By applying Wood and Fels’s (1986) coding scheme to a set of six well known historical maps of the AT, I was able to deconstruct the messages these works promoted about the AT landscape.

Discourse is the social manufacture of meaning or power structures through which people are shown who they are in relation to others and the world. Harley (2001) asserted that maps should not be regarded as objective distillations of reality, but rather as ideologically informed discourses. My objective in this third and final analysis is to turn my gaze outward, looking through six maps to critically examine how their producers have legitimized and perpetuated the construction of a particular AT (Figures 13-18). Many of the contemporary visual discourse analyses focus on photographs or illustrations, but the theory and process for cartographic materials remains much the same. For example, the broad-to-narrow methodology used by Todd (2010) and the content and context method of Rose (2012) developed for photographs, are similar to Wood and Fels (1986) process applied to a state highway map. In fact, cross-media discourse analyses employing multiple media
formats are common, examples include an investigation of representations of Africa (Beinart & McKeown 2009), representations of India and the people of Indian (Roy 2008), discursive formation of Bikini Atoll (Davis 2005), indigenous sexual customs in Lugu Lake, China (Qian et al. 2012), and journalistic construction of the AT (Kates 2013). I also drew from working examples of discourse analyses to constrain their focus to a single subject and within a narrowly proscribed outlet, including South Africa in soap operas (Ives 2009), Derbyshire’s Dark Peak region in hiking club literature (Tebbutt 2006), and NGS’s treatment of the American South (Jansson 2003), the Maya (Hervik 1999), and tribes of the Philippines (Hyndman 2002).

Informed by these studies, I employed Wood and Fels (1986) and Wood (2010) method for my cartographic discourse analysis. I used their two-part structure of intra-significant and extra-significant codes to guide my interpretation of the surface (denotative) and deeper-level meanings (connotative) of each map. I first identified and described the map elements aligning with intra-significant codes: iconic, linguistic, tectonic, temporal, and presentational. Each of these focus on an aspect of the map’s representation. Iconic codes link the graphic representations to the places for which they stand. Linguistic codes are the written text used within the map. Tectonic codes are used to translate space between maps and the places they represent. Temporal codes are used to convey a sense of when the map was made and what period of time it represents. Finally, presentational codes draw all of these together into a coherent whole. By identifying these codes in each map I was able to characterize how it was constructed as a meaningful representation of the AT.

In the second step, I identified the extra-significant codes: thematic, topical, historical, rhetorical, and utilitarian (Wood and Fels 1986; Wood 2010). Whereas intra-significant codes provide a superficial representation of the AT as the maps’ subject, extra-
significant codes dig deeper into the worldview created by the map. Understood in this way the map becomes a discursive lens through which the viewer is guided to understand the world beyond. Thematic codes are the subjects of the discourse articulated through the map. These codes are organized as follows: topical codes work to transcribe the real world space into the place, as directed by the ideology of the map; historical codes work on time or era like topical codes work on space; rhetorical codes are the social position through which and by which the map gains/projects legitimacy; and, the utilitarian code is the ideological and political purpose for which the map is put work in the world. I used this coding framework to systematically decipher the map. I then provide my interpretation of how each may have contributed to the AT discourse, within the historical sequence.
IV. FINDINGS

4.1 Content Analysis Findings and Discussion

Visual content analysis provided a means of identifying quantitative patterns in a large set of images. While the technology and cultural context of these images shifted over the course of sixty years, several characteristics were consistently present. The resulting quantitative and spatial findings are presented in Tables 2 to 13 and Figures 7 to 12. In the process of analyzing these quantitative figures I identified six prominent landscape themes. Three of these, wilderness, exclusivity, and recreation, emphasized qualitative landscape characteristics. The other three: linear, scenic, and symbolic, were more spatial in nature, becoming evident when the images were mapped. Collectively these themes reflect the way in which the NGS portrayed the AT in its media publications between 1949 and 2013.

4.1.1 Qualitative Content Themes

Wilderness Landscape

The collective impression projected by these images is that the AT is a wilderness landscape. It is the kind of place where the visitor could expect to encounter wildlife and natural ecosystems – a wilderness preserve undeveloped by humans, save for small valley towns and suitably picturesque agriculture. Urban areas are referenced, but only at the far periphery. Furthermore, this condition is framed as the native state and natural land use of this landscape.

The NGS overwhelmingly represents the AT as a natural space. 80.7 percent of images are set in nature, 14.2 percent in settlements of various kinds, and 2.9 percent in an agricultural setting (Table 2). The depiction is also decidedly an outdoor space 69.6 percent of images are outdoors without human structures, 10.5 percent include structures but are outside of them, with only 4.2 percent inside of structures (Table 3).
Table 2. Content Analysis Findings: Place Depictions of the Appalachian Trail by the National Geographic Society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>1949 (%)</th>
<th>1972 (%)</th>
<th>1987 &amp; 88 (%)</th>
<th>1993-2013 (%)</th>
<th>2009 DOCUMENTARY (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE (n=)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>412</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Some images depict multiple places

Table 3. Content Analysis Findings: Space Depictions of the Appalachian Trail by the National Geographic Society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPACE</th>
<th>1949 (%)</th>
<th>1972 (%)</th>
<th>1987 &amp; 88 (%)</th>
<th>1993-2013 (%)</th>
<th>2009 DOCUMENTARY (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indoors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoors</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjacent to Structure</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE (n=)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>411</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some images depict multiple spaces

Two other figures further reinforce these patterns. First, in 56.1 percent of the images there are no human constructions. That is there are no buildings, roads, power lines, etc. of any sort. These images range in subject from undeveloped forests, to frogs in ponds, but are characterized by a complete absence of human impact (Table 4). Second, orienting signs appear in only 20.6 percent of images. Such as way markers, including painted blazes, directional signs with text and mileage, road signs, and the multitude of commercial and transportation orienting signs in settled areas, are another feature of development (Table 5). Their presence suggests an overlay of human customs and lands use, and their absence indicates the opposite.

Table 4. Content Analysis Findings: Human Constructions Depicted in National Geographic Society Images.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSTRUCTIONS</th>
<th>1949 (%)</th>
<th>1972 (%)</th>
<th>1987 &amp; 88 (%)</th>
<th>1993-2013 (%)</th>
<th>2009 DOCUMENTARY (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE (n=)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>406</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Content Analysis Findings: Human Constructed Signage Depicted in National Geographic Society Images.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIGNAGE</th>
<th>1949 (%)</th>
<th>1972 (%)</th>
<th>1987 &amp; 88 (%)</th>
<th>1993-2013 (%)</th>
<th>2009 DOCUMENTARY (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE (n=)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>406</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collectively these NGS images present the AT as a natural environment, free from human development. The implication is that the trail is essentially different from other places. It is a wilderness preserve, without the artifacts of civilization. This wilderness condition exists on multiple scales, from the intimate mosses, ferns, and fungi of the molding forest floor, to the sweeping panorama of rock and krummholz vegetation of high elevation mountainscapes. This impression is repeatedly emphasized by two visual-spatial tropes. The first is the landscape vista of mountains stretching to the horizon, which in some contemporary representations takes the form of aerial imagery. These depictions suggest the great representable breadth of this landscape and the vast scale of a mysterious world beyond the full perception of humans. The second trope is the intimate images of animals, from black bear to butterfly, suggesting the typical denizens of this wild realm. These animals often exhibit anthropomorphic characteristics ranging from the bear in a zoo (1949) and the “bold” and “venturesome” raccoon (1988) to the threatening, yet lime-disease-controlling, rattlesnakes and copperheads (2009). Notably, several of the publications employ stock images of wildlife. Their inclusion highlights the priority NGS places on visual story telling of particular landscape themes vis-à-vis strict documentation of AT landscape.

One effect of this framing is that it establishes an assumed relationship between the viewer and the landscape. The collective weight of these images projects an intended way of
appreciating and engaging the AT. The 1949 image of a bear cub as a zoo attraction sets up and solidifies a paternal relationship indicative of the period. Later depictions, such as a scene in the 2009 film on the protection of the once endangered peregrine falcon, reflects an evolution of this relationship. Human management of the natural landscape remains a central element, but it is tempered by a greater reflexivity. Antithetically, the panoramic vista images, such as the 1988 cover image, assert the opposite message. These visions of a vast natural world underscore the extent of the natural world, and by comparison human insignificance, transience, and sublime contemplation.

Recreational Landscape

The NGS’s images depict the AT as a landscape of leisurely and adventuresome summertime recreation. In more than three-quarters of the images people along the trail are portrayed engaging in recreational activities (Table 6). This takes various forms, including hiking, camping, organized sport, ceremony and festival participation, as well as more passive socializing such as pick-nicks and conversations. To a much lesser degree people are portrayed working in both paid employment, such as service, agricultural, and environmental monitoring, and in volunteer trail pursuits such as management, trail-construction, and education.

Table 6. Content Analysis Findings: Human Activities of the Appalachian Trail in National Geographic Society Images.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>1949 (%)</th>
<th>1972 (%)</th>
<th>1987 &amp; 88 (%)</th>
<th>1993-2013 (%)</th>
<th>2009 DOCUMENTARY (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Some images depict multiple activities

Framing the activities in the perpetual glow of a contemporary summer day further supports this atmosphere of leisure. The vast majority of images, 82.6 percent, represent the landscape during daylight hours. Images at dawn and dusk account for 9.85 percent of the
total, but vary significantly by period, from 3.2 percent in 1949 to 15.7 percent in 1972.

Overall only 2.7 percent of images are of the trail at night (Table 7). The seasonal
distribution of images presents a similarly skewed framing of the AT. Images set in summer
represent 76.3 percent of the total, fall 9.8 percent, spring 6.8 percent, and winter 2.8 percent
(Table 8). With only a few exceptions images were set in the present contemporary to their
respective publication. There were no representations of the future in these publications, but
starting in the 1987-1988 period, there were a select few images of the past (Table 9).

Table 7. Content Analysis Findings: Time of Day Depicted in National Geographic Society Images.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME OF DAY</th>
<th>1949 (%)</th>
<th>1972 (%)</th>
<th>1987 &amp; 88 (%)</th>
<th>1993-2013 (%)</th>
<th>2009 DOCUMENTARY (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dusk/Dawn</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE (n=)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>406</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Content Analysis Findings: Season Depicted in National Geographic Society Images.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEASON</th>
<th>1949 (%)</th>
<th>1972 (%)</th>
<th>1987 &amp; 88 (%)</th>
<th>1993-2013 (%)</th>
<th>2009 DOCUMENTARY (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE (n=)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>406</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Content Analysis Findings: Time Period Depicted in National Geographic Society Images.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME PERIOD</th>
<th>1949 (%)</th>
<th>1972 (%)</th>
<th>1987 &amp; 88 (%)</th>
<th>1993-2013 (%)</th>
<th>2009 DOCUMENTARY (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>97.9</td>
<td>98.1</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE (n=)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>406</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three less quantitatively prominent, yet noteworthy points warrant discussion here.

First, the NGS positions the landscape for recreation, by underscoring its most aesthetically
pleasing elements in each season. Similarly the visual narratives transport the viewer
through regionalized spaces populated by colorful characters, charismatic mega-fauna, and emersion in scenic grandeur, insinuating that these can be experienced firsthand when the viewer becomes a real AT hiker. This adventure comes complete with dangerous animals (snakes, bears, and ticks) and elemental trials (steep climbs, heat, rain, and cold) as well as emotional and technical obstacles (loneliness, exhaustion, injury, and the need to procure food, water and shelter) but always with a can-do framing and an implicit assurance of safety and enjoyment for the appropriate type of adventurer (i.e., white, male, and able bodied). To facilitate this recreational success, the landscape has been physically and culturally sculpted to the needs of the recreationalist, without compromising its wilderness character.

Second, agriculture is repeatedly depicted, both as an active occupation and as the landscape setting of the AT. Especially in 1972, working the land is a major theme of the publication. Depictions of regionally iconic agriculture, such as maple syrup production in New England and a poor overall-clad dirt farmer in Georgia, are used to demonstrate the local color that the AT transects. When other types of workers are present, they are commonly working in the service of recreation, either by directly serving the tourists or hikers or by serving the trail itself as managers and maintainers. This reinforces a relationship in which locals, cheerful service workers (often young, attractive females), and even other tourists valorize the AT hiker.

Third, across the breadth of these images, there is a small, yet notable, number of Christian and military images. Their presence is noteworthy because they seem so obstinately out of place. On the one hand, they are few and far enough between to pass superficial scrutiny and, on the other hand, their mere inclusion suggests an intended message. Through these images, the NGS links its representations of the AT to conservative
cultural structures. This has the effect of mainstreaming the AT as both wholesomely religious and patriotic, while downplaying any counter culture associations.

**Exclusive Landscape**

One of the most prominent themes projected by the NGS images is that the users are largely white, male, and youthful. The implication is that the AT is a place of homogeneity, designed as yet another landscape for white able-bodied men to perform the role of the wilderness adventurer.

The NGS images frame the AT as a highly gendered landscape. In total, 508 people appear in these images, 162 women, 360 men and 86 unidentified. These identifications were made through reference to physical features and dress. Where identification was difficult because of small size, poor lighting, or obstruction, text was referenced for additional information. If this failed to yield a conclusive result the figures were categorized as unidentified.

Collectively, men are depicted nearly twice as often as women along the trail, 59.2 to 26.6 percent respectively (Table 10). When the category is drawn more narrowly to only include actual trail users this disparity widens to 24.3 percent women and 60.8 percent men. Furthermore, this trend has steadily increased from period to period. In 1949, men were 1.4 times as likely to appear as women; in 1972, men appeared twice as often as women; in 1987-1988, men appeared 2.5 times as often; and, between 1993 and 2009, men appeared more then three times as often as women. These findings and the increasing imbalance in representation was especially surprising given the increased attention to gender parity over the course of these decades.
Table 10. Content Analysis Findings: Subjects’ Gender Depicted in National Geographic Society Images.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>1949 (%)</th>
<th>1972 (%)</th>
<th>1987 &amp; 88 (%)</th>
<th>1993-2013 (%)</th>
<th>2009 DOCUMENTARY (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE (n=)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Racial disproportionality is a hallmark of these images. This characteristic is immediately evident on even a casual review of the photographs (Table 11). The analysis identified that on average between 1949 and 2009, 88 percent of participants pictured were white. Startlingly this imbalance peaked in both 1949 and 2009. In these publications only 5 percent of AT participants were not light skinned. In total out of the 608 people pictured, 513 are light-skinned, 73 were of an unidentified skin tone, 12 were of a medium skin tone, and 10 were of a dark skin tone. This stark absence of diversity is notable given that the trail lies in proximity to half the American population, and with few exceptions it is freely open to the public in all seasons.

Table 11. Content Analysis Findings: Subjects Skin Tone in National Geographic Society Images.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SKIN TONE</th>
<th>1949 (%)</th>
<th>1972 (%)</th>
<th>1987 &amp; 88 (%)</th>
<th>1993-2013 (%)</th>
<th>2009 DOCUMENTARY (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dark</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>94.9</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE (n=)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>621</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age is another notable characteristic of the participants depicted. Young adults and adults making up 81 percent of depicted participants compared with 9 percent elders and 9.5 percent children and youths (Table 12). Paralleling this was a nearly complete absence of participants with physical disabilities.
Qualitative visual elements further reinforce the development of an archetypal young, white, male, able bodied AT protagonist. Signifiers such as the bearded shirtless hikers mounting a boulder or mountain summit, routinely intertwine representations place, gender, and performance. Prominently featuring the committed AT hiker in this way strongly asserts the preeminence of masculinity, in both the hike and the landscape.

The NGS’s depiction of race on the AT is equally stark. In the 1949 publication, the photos show only white-skinned people on the trail. By 1972 a few token photos depict people of color, backgrounds to the AT hikers. These representations, a disabled African American artist, two females on “a two-day expedition to the park,” and a Cherokee husband and wife who subsist off the land and make money by dancing in costume for tourists and producing handicrafts, seem intentionally divisive. In 1988 the presence of African Americans is reduced to one family, with a qualifying caption asserting that they are urban tourists, distinct from the serious white hikers pictured elsewhere. Between 1993 and 2013, a single image depicts a hiker of color.

From a critical perspective this discursive construction of gendered and racial exclusivity is perhaps the most noxious contribution the NGS’s work has contributed to the AT. Segregating the public space of the AT in this way establishes, or at the very least strongly reaffirms these social classifications within this landscape.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>1949 (%)</th>
<th>1972 (%)</th>
<th>1987 &amp; 88 (%)</th>
<th>1993-2013 (%)</th>
<th>2009 DOCUMENTARY (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baby</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child/Youth</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE (n=)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>621</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.2 Spatial Content Themes

The majority of images published by the NGS were identified by location, see Figure 12. In Eighty-one percent of photographs and fifty-seven percent of video scenes location was identifiable (Table 13). Generally this process of spatial identification serves to legitimize the messages these images convey. By grounding these representations in real places, their content become integrated into a rational spatial structure, lends them validity. Beyond this the mapping revealed three spatial patterns: a clustered-linear landscape, scenic landscape, and a symbolic landscape.

Table 13. Content Analysis Findings: Location Identification of National Geographic Society Images

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>1949 (%)</th>
<th>1972 (%)</th>
<th>1987 &amp; 88 (%)</th>
<th>1993-2013 (%)</th>
<th>2009 DOCUMENTARY (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL (%)</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specifically Named</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State or Region</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE (n=)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>406</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clustered-Linear Landscape

The first and least surprising was that the content of the photos largely fell along the trail route. An unanticipated finding was that the majority of the images were clustered around a small set of places (Figures 7-12). The densest photo clusters occurred at the northern and southern termini and the halfway point, combining to account for nearly 20 percent of all images. The northern terminus located on Mount Katahdin in Maine’s Baxter State Park was depicted 43 times, substantially more than any other location on the trail. The southern terminus on Springer Mountain and the nearby Blood Mountain/Neels Gap were picture 18 times. The symbolic middle point of the trail at Harpers Ferry, home of the ATC, was pictured ten times. The latter two are particularly notable because both were relocated from their original planned locations, the southern terminus was moved to Springer Mountain in 1958; and the ATC moved its headquarters from Washington, D.C. to
Harper’s Ferry in 1972. Therefore earlier publications do not emphasize these places.

The repetition of these locations serves an important symbolic purpose; it allows the performance of the AT to fit into a narrative arc. The sites become stations on a ritual progression, which is dependent upon, but was not an inevitable development out of, the AT’s linear form. Seen in this way Springer Mountain marks an initiation, Harpers Ferry a milestone and cultural epicenter, and Mount Katahdin an ultimate goal. Repeatedly emphasizing these places compounds their symbolic importance and solidifies the cultural performance of the trail as a journey. It allows the landscape to be infused with an assortment of other narratives that align with narratives of wilderness, pilgrimage, adventure, and progress and achievement. It makes the AT not only an appealing activity but also a socially acceptable one, in an American culture steeped in the idea of achievement. In this framing participants are not wayward vagabonds, but bold adventurers. The AT hike has become a sanctioned institution in which people of various stations may step out of their lives and communities, “do the AT,” and return home, having achieved a defined social accomplishment.
Figure 7. Content Analysis Findings: Mapped Locations of Images Published by the National Geographic Society in 1949.
Figure 8. Content Analysis Findings: Mapped Locations of Images Published by the National Geographic Society in 1972.
Figure 9. Content Analysis Findings: Mapped Locations of Images Published by the National Geographic Society in 1987 & 1988. Multiple images may occur at one location.

Appalachian Trail Route in 2016

Figure 9. Content Analysis Findings: Mapped Locations of Images Published by the National Geographic Society in 1987 and 1988.
Figure 10. Content Analysis Findings: Mapped Locations of Images Published by the National Geographic Society 1993 to 2009. Multiple images may occur at one location.

Indicates location of Images published by the National Geographic Society 1993 to 2009. Multiple images may occur at one location.

Appalachian Trail Route in 2016

Figure 10. Content Analysis Findings: Mapped Locations of Images Published by the National Geographic Society 1993 to 2009.
Figure 11. Content Analysis Findings: Mapped Locations of Video Scenes Published by the National Geographic Society in 2009. Multiple images may occur at one location.

Indicates location of video scenes published by the National Geographic Society in 2009. Multiple images may occur at one location.

Appalachian Trail Route in 2016
Figure 12. Content analysis Findings: Mapped Location Clusters of all published material by the National Geographic Society Between 1949 and 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Images (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Northern Terminus, Baxter State Park, Mount Katahdin</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>White Mountain National Forest</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Great Smokey Mountains National Park</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Roan Mountain</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Southern Terminus, Springer Mountain, Neels Gap</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Shenandoah National Park</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bear Mountain State Park &amp; Bridge, Hudson River Valley</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Harpers Ferry, VA, Half-way Point, ATC Headquarters</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Damascus, VA</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another aspect of the spatial distribution of these images is that they largely focus on locations of notable scenic beauty, which are use to stand in for regions of the AT. This is a form of Synecdoche, in which a small symbolically rich part is used to represent a larger place or region. Take for example Mount Katahdin repeatedly used as a symbol of elemental wilderness and the landscape of Maine as a whole. This technique is repeated in several other photo clusters. The White Mountains serve as an icon of the rugged adventure-scape of the northeast and its long association with elite outdoor recreation. The Great Smokey Mountains represent the eminent high point in the South and the habitat for notable ecological diversity. Roan Mountain’s grassy bald summits and flowering rhododendrons are used to signify a more constrained gentile nature, while of Springer Mountain stands in for the rolling forested mountains and intimate hollers of the larger southern Appalachian region. Shenandoah National Park symbolizes the long forested ridges of the mid-Atlantic, transected by gaps of egress and expansive vistas of the settled lands below. The Hudson River and its river valley reference one of the earliest American landscapes to be transformed into a symbol of native beauty and wildness, ready for the civilizing hand of the west. This older narrative is often suggested by both the Bear Mountain Bridge spanning the river and by the trailside zoo, caging and protecting the once freely-roaming wildlife. Harpers Ferry marks the trail as a landscape of history and converging waters. Finally Damascus functions as a caricature of small town Appalachian: quaint friendly, and hospitable.

The repeated use of this small subset of images transforms these places, the regions with which they are associated, and the AT as a whole into a series of icons. The AT becomes an almost archetypal landscape of natural scenic splendor. In the reproduction the
NGS’ constructs the trail landscape as a series of distinct regions. Through images of people, activities, communities, and ecosystems these regions are saturated with local color. The result is that the viewer is directed to see the AT as a mountain wilderness paradise in which they might escape their humdrum world. NGS’s adroitly crafted discourses make visible a stage set in which the epic performance of the AT hiker may unfold. The key difference between this and many other landscapes is that the viewer can actually participate as the hero of this mythology.

**Symbolic Landscape**

A third and final spatial aspect of these images is that they largely represent places of existing cultural significance. By portraying iconic places such state and national parks, the NGS links the AT with a targeted set of symbolic American landscapes. For example, Great Smokey Mountains National Park, depicted thirty-three times, is much more than the sum of its components. Over the decades it has become a symbol of dramatic terrain, diverse ecology, the power and forethought of the federal government, the history and craftsmanship of extensive CCC construction, the carnival-esque recreational landscapes of Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge, nature and recreation. The NGS reemphasizes these characteristics, and then folds them into its vision of the AT. The NGS repeats this over the length of the trail, and in the process entrains their essential meanings in its mythology of the AT. Images of parks such as GSMNP to capture the spirit of these places and entrain them collectively, through this linking of symbolic landscapes, the What emerges is a super-symbolic landscape, one that intertwines the fundamental American mythologies of movement, nature, and space. In the process these three ideas become the core message of NGS’s rendering of the AT.
4.2 Representational Analysis Findings

This second part of my research involved a deep analysis of the symbolic or representational elements of twenty-five images. See APPENDIX A. Representational Analysis Process Sheets, for full size examples of deconstruction process. These images were identified over the course of the initial image collection and content analysis phases. It became clear to me through these investigations that images had been used to transmit messages about many elements of the AT. Drawing on my research questions I ordered these into three general categories of representations: place, participants, and performance. I have arranged each of these categories in a slightly different manner, aligning with the narrative form from which I extracted them. First, under the title Visions of a Wilderness Landscape, I present deconstructed images of the AT as a Place. Here the sequence or order is not of importance. These images represent types, which I consistently observed spanning the study period. Second, under the title Representations of AT Participants, Conformity and Resistance, I present deconstructed images of the AT as an evolving set of representations of people. In this section chronology is important, because it reflects a definite evolution in who is being represented participating and personifying the AT. Finally, under the title Performance, A Visual Mythology of Pilgrimage, I present deconstructed images of the AT represented as a sequential performance. I observed images of this type starting with the NGS 1949 publication, and their prevalence seemed to track the growth long-distance hiking on the AT. While their order is symbolically important to the narrative structure of their presentation, the images are not historically chronological.

4.2.1 Representational Analysis Part One: Visions of a Wilderness Landscape

In the following section I analyze six place images and discuss their roles as recurring tropes in the discourse of the AT landscape, see Illustrations 1-6. My central research questions under investigation are: what meanings have visual media discourse assigned to the AT, and how have these changed over time? With respect to the AT as a
particular kind of place, media representations have been notably consistent across time and publications. The AT has regularly been linked with a natural environment of wooded mountains, native wildlife, and grand scenery. However, this pervasive depiction of the AT as Wilderness is repeatedly contrasted with representations of the AT as the site of Progress. This equally powerful mythology of American rural development takes numerous forms including depictions of agrarian communities, small town commerce, park tourism, and the utopian project of the AT itself. In short, the AT has been represented as a place in which Wilderness and Progress mythologies are in dialectic tension on a landscape scale.

The six images considered here serve two functions. First, each is a discrete photographic illustration composed of symbolic signifiers that circulate cultural meanings to tell specific narratives about AT places. Second, each individual image stands for a larger theme observed in representations of the AT. I will first summarize my interpretations of each individual image’s connotative mythology and then discuss the broader themes for which they stand, and their role in contributing to Wilderness and Progress mythologies.

4.2.1.1 Place Image One: American Naturalism

Illustration 1. depicts the AT landscape as an amalgam of urban, agrarian, and natural spaces. Through the action of the hiking figure, and the layering of foreground, middle ground, and background, the image functions to support a mythology of rejecting the city, civilization, and social structure, for the freedom and recreation of Nature. The perspective contributes to an Olmsteadian moral hierarchy moving from the wanting urban center, up and out through the Pastoral and Picturesque, with the anticipation of reaching the summit of the Sublime, which is suggested but not revealed in the image.
Symbolic use of visual space to convey progression is a technique with lineage in representations of the American landscape. Landscape artists, notably those of the Hudson River School 1825 to 1875, produced some of the most enduring visual icons of the American natural landscape. Much like Illustration 1., multiple ideological functions were embedded in these representations.

“The “classic” phase of the New York [Hudson River School] landscape style involved...incorporating a narrative dimension into landscape, imbuing the mute geography of nature with a cultural program. In this “sequential” landscape specific temporal correlates were assigned to the organizing planes within the image, imbedding historical meaning in the very structure of natural space itself.” (Miller 1980)

The allegorical function of Illustration 1. is reinforced by an accompanying caption
explicitly stating its the intended message. “Far Below and Forgotten Lie Town and Everyday Troubles. Ahead is the High Country Clean and Carefree!” The industrial town located somewhere between banality and corruption has been transcended by the hiker. She has climbed “one of the steepest [slopes] in the East,” and in the process nearly reached the Promised Land. The AT, as the ultimate summit, is the landscape of Re-creation, the “High Country Clean and Carefree” where the aspirant gains a literal and symbolic expansive vision of the world and liberation from a troubled life.

In this way, the AT is made to be a place apart from the world, the location of escape, and a space onto which people dissatisfied with their lives may project their fantasies of a natural paradise. This message is logically reinforced by two attributes of which the viewer will have been informed. First, no one lives on the AT; it is a space reserved solely for recreation. As such it is not controlled by an individual or group, but rather is held in trust for everyone equally. Functionally this allows users the freedom to utilize the space in whatever way they see fit. Second, there is no work-for-pay on the AT. In this respect it is a complete anomaly, a distinctly iconic American landscape that is dedicated to recreation without capitalism. Together these qualities throw viewers’ and participants’ expectations into enough confusion that they become more inclined to accept at face value a wide range of discursive representations of the trail.
Illustration 2. Representational Analysis Place: A Picturesque Trail (ATC 2014).

Illustration 2. is filled with the suggestion of possibility. The AT, identified boldly by its white blaze, meanders through the scene and vanishes into the mist and dense green vegetation. The AT mythology takes on picturesque quality—a raw, wild natural beauty, of mystery and verdant vegetative fecundity. The title and text link the AT’s connotative
meaning with the legitimizing symbols of the ATC, Bill Bryson, and America, each providing a sense of assurance that this mysterious forest is certified for safe adventures.

To an even greater extent than Illustration 1., this image portrays a subject-less space, ready to be filled by viewers’ imaginative projections. The image’s Point-of-View perspective allows the reader to inhabit the image as the subject, experiencing the trail firsthand. This absence of central subject, coupled with the obscuring fog, is, in effect, a blank natural canvas. It is clearly a natural space but rendered neutral enough to function as the stage set for a wide variety of performances.

4.2.1.3 Place Image Three: The Shelter

“Hikers’ Appetites Need No Whetting. All Hands Pitch In To Cut Short The Time till “Soup’s On!”
Trail walkers have moved in for the night at Old Rag Lean-to, built of squared native chestnut logs at 2,000 feet on Old Rag Mountain.”


In Illustration 3., the unique cultural artifact of the Shelter distinguishes the AT from its Wilderness context. The AT Shelter serves two potent functions, as a place and as a
symbol. As a place, it orders the spatial landscape of the trail by exerting a powerful
deterministic force on participation. The Shelter stands in contrast to the woods, both
physically and psychologically. As its name implies, it serves in both of these capacities to
provide protection from the natural environment. In so many ways these buildings serve as
cabins in the wood and therefore are easily co-opted by participants as stage sets for
particular performances of domesticity. Illustration 3. provides a window into one such
performance.

On the AT, with its prevailing visual discourse of natural wilderness, the Shelter
comes to symbolize the cabin in the woods, an interface of civilization and wilderness, and a
fixture of the mythology of the frontier pioneer life.

4.2.1.4 Place Image Four: Appalachian Trail Wildlife


"Rare sight for Appalachian Trail hikers, a red fox kit surveys its world. Animals Animals/Zig Leszczynski"
This photo of a fox kit is but one example of the repeated inclusion of plant and animal images that function to anthropomorphize the ecology of the AT. A mythology of scientific fascination and harmlessness, possibly threatened, Nature is established through the “direct address” between the big-eyed charismatic object and human viewing subject. This representation reiterates the message that this landscape is a natural one, composed of ecological cycles and wildlife with which humans empathize and protect.

4.2.1.5 Place Image Five: The Sublime Trail

"From the summit of Mount Liberty, in the White Mountains, a hiker surveys Little Haystack Mountain and Mounts Lincoln and Garfield, where the A.T. traverses the ridgeline"


Illustration 5. suggests scales of space, time, and power that are beyond the understanding of mortal men (white men are explicitly referenced here by the figure and the
toponym, while women and peoples of color are rendered invisible). This image refers back to the landscape art of the Hudson River School and later depictions of the grand western American landscapes, with awe-inspiring scales of majestic nature, juxtaposed with minute human figures. This is the sublime wilderness of the vast primeval forests and towering raw mountain-scapes.

This oft-repeated scene of a lone figure set in a vast wilderness landscape establishes a narrative mythology: the acolyte, having toiled to achieve enlightenment (the summit of liberation), is permitted by providence to look upon the inconceivable embodiment of the divine. This type of representation also provides the setting for the performance of pilgrimage, which is discussed in the third section of the analysis. Of primary importance here is that the landscape is framed as a majestic, greater than human, place that is conducive to ritualized forms of quasi-religious activities.

The caption provides a window into another form of discursive co-opting of the grand scenery and scale, this for nationalistic purposes. Through toponyms, Mounts Liberty, Lincoln and Garfield, an American heritage mythology of iconic patriarchs, are grafted onto the essential elemental power of mountains, forests, and weather. This serves a double function, both bolstering the iconic state of these figures and serving to erase the peoples and their mythology, existing on this continent prior to European colonization.

**4.2.1.6 Collective Mythology: Wilderness and Progress Dialectic**

In the previous section, I reviewed the specific representational feature of each image. I selected and investigated these images because they represented compelling individual representations and themes in the visual discourse. I now focus on the broader themes that they represent. I am proposing that each image stands for a class and that, collectively, these classes may be seen as constituting a meta-narrative that struggles...
between Wilderness and Progress mythologies. This is actually my main assertion: the AT has become an iconic landscape because it has been uniquely successful at embracing simultaneously the irresolvable American mythologies of Wilderness and Progress.

Images similar to Illustration 1. belong to a large class in which the AT is presented as distinct-from and morally-superior-to settlements, towns, cities, industry, commerce, and technology. This is the line of discourse that frames the AT as the utopian solution to corrupt and continuously decaying urban social and economic structures. Images similar to Illustration 2. frame the AT as a natural unstructured place, providing viewers with the space to project their utopian fantasies. The critique of the first category is insinuated, but not visually present. The argument goes like this: if urban spatialities are broken and generate broken humans, the AT is a place of recreation, literally Re-creation, a natural Wilderness paradise, where urbanite viewers may find salvation. Images of this type can be split into two classes. Images similar to Illustration 1. represent the first category. As aesthetically pleasing natural spaces without other human subjects, they are free from coercion and critique. Images analogous with Illustration 3. reflect the second category: the AT is a place of simple living in joyful communities where ridged social structures bend to the quirks of individuals. However, this representation stands out as embodiments of contradiction. On the preferred denotative level of meaning, they depict the re-creative potential of the AT, which allows for participants to redefine themselves. But on a connotative level they function discursively to define precisely how the new AT social structure should be reestablished. They seem to depict anti-structure, but they function to establish an anticipation of recreational social structure in prospective participants.

Images of a type with Illustration 3. are also at the front line of this dialectic tension between wilderness and progress narratives. Spatial artifacts such as the trail tread, signage,
and shelter, provide a physical reminder that that AT is a regional development project maintained by an elaborate bureaucratic structure and thousands of hours of annual labor committed to maintaining the Wilderness character of the experience. The AT is a irony, a spatial program that consumes Wilderness while producing it. The often-photographed plaque (NGS 1972, 1988) at the trail’s southern terminus on Springer Mountain, literally casts this tension in bronze, with the words “a footpath for those who seek fellowship with the wilderness.” The explicit design of this landscape project was to construct a trail and shelters and amenities that provided access for the masses to enjoy wilderness. To do this, the landscape first had to be designated, then codified and protected as wilderness. But the very existence of the AT precluded it from common definitions of the term. The reconciliation of the trail as a Wilderness, i.e. the absence of human presence and virginity of natural systems, and as a utopian regional plan, i.e. human presence inscribed in meaningful ways on the landscape, is arguably the most eloquent of the trail’s cultural mythologies.

Images similar to Illustration 4. represent the pervasive recurring depiction of objectified anthropomorphic AT wildlife. Photos of bears in trees, frogs, owls at night, ferns, rhododendron, stands of birch, and pale fungi populate this class. Images of this type serve two functions. They convey an intended sense of the trail’s exotic natural features, and they establish a relationship between these objects and the human subject who is viewing them. These images are included as visual candy or local color that draw a range of readers. They do, in fact, reveal seldom-observed natural objects, but coupled with these revelations are ideological messages, which use biotic images to reproduce cultural values. These messages include, among others, taboos of death and sex, portrayal of natural systems as working for humans, helplessness, and submission of biota to humanity. While elusive, they are most
clearly evident in photos of customs that have gone out of cultural practice, for example, needling a small bear cub (NGS1949). The collective work of this category relative to Wilderness and Progress is subtle. Their denotative function is to present the AT as exotic wilderness landscape, which is at times even openly hostile to the Progress narrative (NGS 1989 and 2009). However, on balance, the bulk of images objectify biota as a curiosity inherently subservient to, or valuable as resources for, humanity.

Finally, images similar to Illustration 5. reveal a common denotative trope: the diminutive human surveying grand natural scenery. On a connotative level they function as an allegory juxtaposing the small accomplishments of humanity against the inestimable wilderness sublime. This message may appear antithetical to that of Illustration 4. type images; however, it serves markedly different ideological purposes. Both sets of images are included to draw in the viewer. However, whereas images such as Illustration 4. entice with intimacy and the promise of contact with the mysterious, images like Illustration 5. command with grandeur and allude to spiritual enlightenment.

The essential discursive function of images aligned with Illustration 5. is to frame the AT as a sanctified wilderness landscape, in which an American transcendental pilgrimage can be performed. On a denotative level the meaning is a crescendo of visual wilderness propaganda, offering a literal summit from which to gaze upon the vast primeval landscape. The connotative mythology into which this taps is equally immense. It draws on deep veins of Christian and American heritage iconology that conflate the beauty and grandeur of wild nature and the divine (Novak 1980). In Christian traditions the sublime landscape serves variously as the site of communion with God, a physical manifestation of the divine, or as symbolic evidence of God’s hand in creation. This connection between the AT and Christianity is suggested repeatedly in NGS publications through captions and images such
as those of churches and clergy. Similarly, a connection between these dramatic natural settings and American national heritage is reiterated in text and imagery. The NGS takes pains to frame the AT as an American Wilderness, through the repetition of visual symbols such as the American flag, military, and president, set in natural environments along the trail.

In summary, images such as Illustration 1. set up a moral hierarchy in visual space, but upon deeper examination the essential contradiction between Wilderness and Progress is revealed as an ideologically-driven mythology. Images like Illustration 2. frame the AT as a malleable space and moral curative for urban ailments. Images akin to Illustration 3. openly function as the epicenter of dialectic tension between the competing ideologies of Wilderness and Progress. Images of a type with Illustration 4. press for the AT to be seen as a Wilderness on a denotative level, but they subtlety contravene this with progressive framing. Images aligned with Illustration 5. reflect the height of the discursive mythology, by depicting the AT as a manifestation of sublime wilderness. Collectively, these images and classes of representation frame the AT as a wilderness landscape. However, their discursive function is revealed through both a deeper scrutiny of the circulating messages and the inescapable programmatic nature of the trail. My contention is not that these myths are false assertions, but rather that the AT is singular in its ability to simultaneously embody both Wilderness and Progress mythologies, and that the AT has become an iconic American landscape because of the success, scale, and durability of this balancing act.

4.2.2 Representational Analysis Part Two: Representations of AT Participants, Conformity and Resistance

In this section I analyze an additional fourteen images of AT participants and discuss their role in perpetuating and contesting the prevailing icon of the young white male AT hiker, see Illustrations 6-19. Through this investigation my aim is to provide a window into
this persistent sub-narrative of altarity, identify the messages that these images project about the AT, and document how they have evolved over time.

From a quantitative perspective, the dominant image of an AT hiker is the white, able-bodied, young adult male. This finding is based upon the content analysis I performed on NGS images from 1949 to 2008, and a less formal review of other media representations of the AT. This icon dates to the earliest depictions of the AT. However, alongside this image are images of women, elders, young children, and later a growing presence of hikers of varying races, cultural backgrounds, and physical abilities. Rather than reproduce and, thus in a way reinforce, the dominant visual discourse, I have chosen to focus on this much smaller, yet essential, subaltern aspect of the AT narrative. Taking a critical approach, I selected a subset of images that speak to the expanding visual definition of an acceptable AT participant. I chose images of figures who have become icons in the cultural mythology of the trail and images of hikers who generally typify the period in the trail’s representational evolution.

This narrative is an important one because it sheds light on the presence of a diversity of historically underrepresented AT participants. While the prevailing colonizing discourse of white male hegemony is troubling, this counter-narrative is cautiously hopeful, suggesting that the AT, American society, and the media institutions have, if late and inconsistently, become increasingly open to representations of diversity. Furthermore, resistance to rigid social structures has become intertwined in the mythology of the AT, signifying that the AT landscape may increasingly provide a real and represented space for new forms of defiance by the next generations of participants.

In the following section I will provide an interpretation of each of the fourteen images’ individual meanings within the historical narrative and then discuss the AT’s
broader mythology of conformity and resistance.

4.2.2.1 Participant Image One: Founding Fathers

“Father of the Appalachian Trail, Benton MacKaye, -regional planner, forester, and conservationist - envisioned the trail as part of a social experiment to make the world more habitable. Maritime attorney Myron Avery (right), measuring trail in the Great Smokies, was the doer who organized volunteers for the A.T. project. His efforts helped transform the dream into reality.”

Illustration 6., comprising black-and-white images of Benton MacKaye and Myron Avery, was published in 1988 by the NGS, but the images drawn from the ATC’s archive were likely fifty years old at publication. The denotative message is plain. These are the iconic founding fathers of the AT. Each is represented as the personification of the role the two men are alleged to have played in the trail’s formative period. MacKaye, bespectacled with pipe in hand, is depicted reclining on a ledge surveying a map. He is framed as the visionary and dreamer of the two. In contrast, Avery, with work shirt, backpack, and measuring tool in hand, stands poised in a field ready to realize the vision. He is framed as the disciplined and capable doer who implemented the plan on the ground. These joint representations solidify both men’s places as the great white father figures and progenitors of the AT landscape.

The primary message behind these images is the establishment of the AT’s creation mythology. This references layers of western mythology including Christian mythology:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness . . . Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping things that creeps on the earth.” . . . God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. (Genesis 1, New American Standard Bible, 2014)

One function of this particular framing of the two is its linking of the AT’s founding myth to that of the nation. MacKaye and Avery parallel Washington, Jefferson, Franklin and Hamilton as great white heroic father icons possessing ideological zeal, practical capability and a diversity of temperaments, capabilities, and quirks, which necessitated the strengths of the others working through cooperation and conflict to realize their vision.
Finally, these representations reference American Manifest Destiny and pioneer mythology, with their three prevalent themes: American exceptionalism; providence; and the righteous moral authority of progress.

From a critical perspective, all these myths work on two levels to consolidate power in the icons. First, they erase peoples and belief systems that predate the mythical origin. Second, they sanctify the creation act as beyond moral consideration and essentially paternal in gender. Through the reiteration of this AT creation myth, a diversity of peoples and their contributions are continually rendered invisible.

4.2.2.2 Participant Image Two: 1941 Status Quo

Illustration 7. depicts white male and female, tool-carrying volunteers setting out to do trail maintenance. Dating to a 1941 LIFE Magazine article, the black-and-white image is a cheerful scene of recreational service. There is a clear reference to action and advancement that is reinforced through the use of perspective and linear arrangement of figures. Collectively the denotative message is that the nation’s wholesome citizens work together to realize an ambitious project in the out-of-doors. It is hard graft, but with a positive outlook: Many hands make quick work of this most American of activities. Come join in, enjoy nature, meet other like-minded sunny-faced men and women, keep fit, and do your part.

An important message here is that these people are not just at the site of the AT, but they are engaged in a performance of the AT that makes the discourse of the trail substantive in space. Functionally, they are engaged in the act of re-inscribing the landscape with signifiers (white blazes, snipped limbs and fixing the trail tread) that reassert the presence of the trail project on this material location. As a piece of propaganda, this photograph extends the act of constituting the AT exponentially by exposing a national viewing audience to its action. Collectively, the message reads: On the trail, this is what is done, and white middle
class men and women are the type of people who do it.


“On the trail. Members of the Patomac Appalachian Trail Club set out with weeders, shears and axes to clear a stretch of the trail in Virginia.”

The connotative myth of the image invokes strong themes of Christianity, pioneering
and patriotism. The figures in the image seem to present a moral surety, venturing forth confidently, with the belief that they are rightly manifesting the material AT in accordance with the fathers’ vision of the world. These men and women are converts, apostles to the AT project, and through them the AT project is made a reality. Immediately, this passage from the Christian Bible comes to mind:

   And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1: 14, New American Standard Bible, 2014)

The AT is the word of the Father, and these people are the word made flesh, full of grace and truth.

This also suggests a link between the utopian visions of the AT as better world and earlier Christian-American pioneer mythologies. Both circulate in discourse and compel dedicated white adults to carve civilization out of the wilderness. With the frontier long closed, by 1941 the blank interior spaces of federal lands represent both the enduring vestiges of this primeval state and the opportunity to enact this pioneer performance writ small. If pioneering is not an option, then this is the next best thing.

With the advantage of historical perspective, it seems obvious that this article is a finely-crafted piece of nationalistic propaganda, promoting collective service to the nation, recreational distraction from growing anxiety, and physically taxing labor to prepare the nation’s youth for the looming prospect of America’s entrance into the Second World War. Flipping through the rest of the magazine, the war in Europe is the prevalent subject. The image therefore references how to participate in community sacrifice for the greater good. It functions ideologically by framing this as an enjoyable, wholesome, white middle class activity in which both men and women can participate.

I included this image in the narrative investigation because it typifies the sort of
people represented as participating in the AT in the decades starting in the 1920’s and extending at least through the 1940’s. During this period, the people are white, and the message is one of patriotic commitment to the project.

4.2.2.3 Participant Image Three: Earl Shaffer


Illustration 8. depicts Earl Shaffer, a young white man, standing next to the summit

“Earl V. Shaffer atop Baxter Peak of Katahdin in August 1948, just before he became the first to report an end-to-end, single-journey hike of the Appalachian Trail, documented by his slides and notes.”
sign of Mount Katahdin in 1948. This Image has been reproduced in numerous publications both in black-and-white and in color. Its outward significance is that it captures a watershed moment in the AT’s evolution, the completion of the first continuous end-to-end hike of the trail. The image has been used routinely to signify the entire journey, the successful completion of that journey, and the iconic origin of the thruhiker.

The publicity that this narrative generated (the 1949 NGS article is directly attributable to this) fundamentally altered the landscape mythology of the AT. It could be argued that this representation marks the turning away from MacKay’s aspirations for a new form of utopian settlement and the emergence of a transient American wilderness pilgrimage spatiality.

From a critical perspective, the image represents at least two other important features that begin to manifest themselves in the visual discourse. First, there is the swift colonization of the AT by young white men. In the image, Shaffer personifies the essential American wilderness traveler, i.e. a capable, prepared, fit ex-soldier. The hero, succeeding against long odds and skepticism, stands amount his conquest. Through this image and accompanying text, a mythology of origins and heroes—which reference cultural icons of the great white employer, the pioneering American man—is repeatedly broadcast to a viewing audience. Consequently, this figure, now set at the center of the landscape’s performative mythology, is a young white man.

The second aspect of note is Shaffer’s use of the AT explicitly as a place of escape from congestive social structures. In time, this increasingly prominent landscape mythology facilitated the emergence of a subaltern cultural performance, the thruhike. Shaffer’s own words from his book, *Walking With Spring* (1981, 2004) fill the image with a timely cultural resonance:
Those four and a half years of army service, more than half of it in combat areas of the Pacific, without furlough or even rest or leave, had left me confused and depressed. Perhaps this trip would be the answer.

Late in 1947 I had seen an article in an outdoor magazine entitled “The Long Trail’s Challenge.” It said that no one had been known to have hiked the entire trail in a continuous journey, though many had tried, and such a trip might actually be impossible. Suddenly the old dream came alive. Why not walk the army out of my system, both mentally and physically. Take pictures and notes along the way, make a regular expedition out of it?

As Shaffer’s story spread, the underlying narrative was a culturally palatable form of rebellion: A soldier returns from war to a home he no longer recognizes. In search of new meaning around which to rebuild his shattered world, he turns to nature. The linear form of the AT, coupled with its designation as a place for Re-creation, provides the physical and social space in which total emergence in this singular activity is feasible. By dedicating himself to walking from end-to-end, Shaffer incidentally facilitates the emergence of a subsequent media discourse that frames the AT as a quasi-separate, or liminoid, space.

This liminology is traceable to the utopian settlements in MacKaye’s 1921 journal article. The distinction of the Shaffer icon is that it marks a shift in the discourse—from the AT as a material landscape project, to a permutation of the ideology in the form of a novel landscape performance. This is especially significant because in many respects this performance was to become the quintessential representation of the AT in the ensuing decades. Shaffer’s performance provides the outline of a social script, and the very early groundwork for a subculture, that begins to solidify around the trail. But essential to this script is the notifying, stabilizing, and meaning-making of media in getting the word out. Alone, this hike was just one man walking; but as re-projected to thousands over decades and across the world, an iconic myth solidified into cultural landscape.

The key process at work is the dialect between Shaffer’s action, the media discourse
that prompted him to undertake the action and resulted from his accomplishment, and the special characteristics of the AT landscape that engendered itself to this type of occupancy. This appears to be an especially tidy example of the intersection of Foucault’s philosophy of discourse, Lefebvre’s triadic model of the social construction of space, and Soja’s spatiality. In any case, the effect of this discursive formation in the publicity accompanying Shaffer’s success was to inform others seeking regenerative escape of the AT’s potential in this capacity. But because of the power of more pervasive social discourses, this potential would be realized by few outside of the young white males occupying the narrative’s mythological center.

4.2.2.4 Participant Image Four: 1949 Gender

Illustration 9., published by the NGS in 1949, is composed of a pair of black-and-white images portraying a stylized young white woman performing trail maintenance and a young white man in military-style hiking costume drinking from a stream. The article in which they appear is noteworthy both as the first of many by the NGS and as a source of national exposure and legitimization for the AT project to a broad audience.

The two photos function very explicitly on a comprehensive denotative level to distinguish men and women and their place on the AT. The top image portrays a heavily manicured and provocatively sexualized female icon while the bottom image presents a young man drinking directly from a stream, disregarding civility and personal welfare. Given the exaggerated degree of gender stereotyping, it is worth noting the thinly masked sexual allusions in these images. The tree with which she is intertwined may be interpreted as a phallic symbol, while the male could be seen to be fondling the bosom of Mother Nature. These sexual-gendered symbols are reinforced through many of the attributes of the figures represented, and they reinforce themes of female sexuality and male virility evident throughout the article’s other photographs.

Beyond her sexualized features, the image portrays the dual roles that Woman is expected to manifest. Simultaneously she performs as sexual object (nymph) and maintainer of order and appearances (mother), cheerful provider of service and icon of Nationalism (motherland) (Richards, 2005). The caption both perpetuates this objectification and shifts focus to move the AT front and center. While the young woman is the subject and actor in the photo, the caption focuses on the AT signage, referring to her anonymously as “the girl.” In this way she is backgrounded as any anonymous girl, an object and icon in the service of the AT.

By contrast, in the other photo the male figure is largely obscured but, in the caption, he
is personalized. In this way he is transformed him from an iconic representation into an intimate familiar one. He is Robert of Philadelphia, on the historic AT in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. In this way he is subtly made into more of a real person than the undistinguished female. The inclusion of Robert’s image by the culturally conservative NGS serves to normalize and legitimize the animal-like action of drinking straight from the stream. He is Man: wild, virile, and without regard for social norms. The function of this image is to draw a distinction with the icon of the woman who has gone been careful to maintain propriety (gloves and make up) even in the wooded setting.

Collectively these images provide a benchmark of behavior that is tightly drawn along gender lines. They say that, on the AT, men and women have distinct roles. Women volunteer in the service of the trail and look good while they are doing it. They perform the important function of keeping the trail well-maintained. Men recreate, get back to basics, and let the rules be dammed. Be a woman, do your part in this important community project. Be a man, go conquer a mountain, drink straight from a stream, and test your mettle against raw nature.

On a connotative level, these images provide a divergence of social roles for men and women on the AT. These images, as much as any of the others in these publications, embody the iconic myth of distinct differences between genders. They feed off many outside lines of discourse, not the least of which is a post-World War II vitriolic nationalism that values women cheerfully serving men who are on campaign. Discursively, this works as a template for expected gender performance on the AT, sidelining women to a supporting role, while putting men in the foreground as the heroes of their own narrative. In significant ways this image references back to the *LIFE* (1941) and Shaffer (1958) depictions. While Women are expected to remain in service to the landscape project of the AT (the ideology of
the white father), Men are free to pursue the new elevated embodiment of AT performance, the end-to-end hike, initiated by Shaffer. The semblance of parity between males and females, present in earlier images, fades as gender increasingly has substantive implications for performance.

Another aspect that is conspicuous for its absence in both these images and in the ones preceding and following is the ubiquitous whiteness of these subjects. It will not be until 1972 that the NGS publishes an image depicting peoples of color in association with the AT, until 1988 that that they are depicted as actually utilizing it for recreation, and until 2009 that a man of color is included as a thruhiker (and, even then, as an unidentified supporting character). The AT has overwhelmingly been depicted, from its inception as the exclusive province of white people. When this is considered in the context of the preceding analysis, a hierarchy in the landscape of the AT begins to emerge, proceeding from white men to white women, to men of color, and on to women of color. As Rose (2012) insists, the discourse of visual representation is essentially about making some ways of understanding the world visible and other unseeable. Through the great body of images such as this, alternative manifestations of what it means to be a woman on the AT are made less and less visible, and peoples of color are made unseeable.

4.2.2.5 Participant Image Five: Grandma Gatewood

Illustration 10. marks another unexpected turn in the discursive history of the AT. The photo is of Emma Gatewood, known on the trail as “Grandma” Gatewood, who was the first woman to walk the AT end-to-end. Like Shaffer, Gatewood subsequently became a trail icon through the publicity surrounding her hike, completed in 1955 when she was 67. In the ensuing decades, her fame in the hiking community would grow, as she completed two more thruhikes, becoming the first to accomplish this feat of completing multiple
thruhikes. This legacy challenges underlying gender and age expectations for performance on the AT.


“Emma “Grandma” Gatewood of Ohio, the first woman to report a thru-hike in the same continuous direction, inspired thousands for her grit, simple gear, and candor. She was 67 years old on her first of three successful hikes.”
One function of this image is to set up a cognitive dissonance between the expected image of the young, virile male thruhiker and Gatewood. In addition to having the moniker “Grandma,” she is physically stooped, wears glasses and walks with a cane. Through this juxtaposition, and by force of character, she assumes a place in the pantheon of AT icons, representing the most improbable of figures and serves a model for overcoming physical and socio-cultural obstacles.

In this representation, which is one of two or three regularly used to show her, she does not look at the viewer but instead looks slightly up and away. There is almost a determined disengagement with the viewer. The viewer is part of the world that dismissed her (which made the journey all the more difficult) and now seeks to peer at her as an oddity. This points to another aspect of the Gatewood icon—her decisive rejection of the social structure that questioned her competence and maybe her sanity. As the story goes, she had to slip away without telling her family, concerned that they would block her aspirations (Montgomery, 2014). In this way she comes to stand as an icon of resistance, and she imbues the trail landscape with these same qualities.

Combining these two connotative themes, the Grandma Gatewood icon emerges as the patron saint of the improbable, a figure who embodies the rejection of conformity, and resistance of expectations. She breaks layers of glass ceilings, paving the way for women and elders, while simultaneously affirming the thruhike as the preeminent performance of the AT landscape. Fifty years later Gatewood remains a fixture of the AT discourse. The publicity surrounding her and others who followed solidified the institution of the thruhiker, which had been started by Shaffer. The AT was no longer merely a larger recreational space through the American Wilderness but was anointed as a landscape of altarity, of contested expectations, and a liminal space, where the rules and ties that bind in the outside world
need not apply.

An interesting function of the thruhike becoming the quintessential act of the AT was that it began to take on a social structure of its own. As this landscape myth took hold, social expectations and norms began to solidify. An example is the taking of trail names such as “Grandma.” After adopting a trail name, a thruhiker represented an apostle living the ideology and inhabiting the myth. By contrast, day hikers and weekend warriors could be framed as lesser devotees. Gatewood removed many of the perceived barriers to participation and, in the process, paved the way for AT to become its own kind of culture.

4.2.2.6 Participant Image Six: 1972 Gender

Illustration 11. was published by the NGS in its 1972 book about the AT. In the scene, two backpackers walk side-by-side through an autumn forest conversing. They project an air of congenial friendship in their facial and body language. Their size, position, clothing and equipment speak of equivalence; and, almost incidentally, they are of different genders and not romantic partners. The caption and earlier text identifies them as long distance AT hikers—Jill, wife of the project photographer, and Ron author of the book.

I included this image to illustrate a counterpoint to the dominant visual and textual narrative of the AT as a disproportionately male space. The image conveys a symmetry and equality between women and men on the AT, which in 1972 remained an outlier. The most notable aspect of the image is that Ron and Jill’s hiking costumes are virtually identical. At this point in the narrative arc of the book, the three companions have walked hundreds of miles together up the length of the AT. They have become compatriots, and gender has ceased to be a point for distinction. The function of this image is essentially to frame the AT as a place of meritocracy, a space where the cultural performance of the Hiker in the wilderness can be enacted equally by a man or a woman.

I also chose this image as a reflection of the persistent undercurrent of female and male co-participation. Early imagery such as that in *The Mentor* (1928) and *LIFE* (1941)
portrays the AT as a space for groups of men and women to recreate and volunteer together. Clothing is distinctly gendered, but the images focus on communal group activity. This changes notably in NGS’s 1949 article, which employs highly gendered depictions of the participants on the AT. Gatewood’s notoriety, generated by 1955 and 1956 blurbs in *Sports Illustrated*, both acknowledges and disrupts these narratives; this 1972 image traverses the social space she opens. It speaks to a changing AT, and it reveals that even the lagging indicator of the NGS appears to have acquiesced to dramatic cultural shifts in the intervening decades. If the 1949 NGS images signify strict gender roles, this image rounds the circle and reintegrates the two parts. Through it, the performance of the AT, i.e. the end-to-end hike, is no longer the exclusive province of Men.

4.2.2.7 Participant Image Seven: 1972 Boy Scouts

Illustration 12., which also appeared in the NGS’s 1972 book on the AT, comprises a primary photograph of a Boy Scout group posing in front of an AT shelter and two smaller photos of a black bear and a copperhead snake. Two clear messages circulate in this collection of images. The first is a telling reflection of cultural instruction along gender lines, and the second is a framing of the AT as a space of wild danger.

A denotative reading of the image might go something like this: On the AT, hikers will traverse a variety of places in this vast wilderness landscape. Along the trail there are shelters, which provide protection. The hiker encounters groups of fellow young-male hikers, i.e. men in training. The cautious hiker will keep a keen eye for danger and will use the shelters, which will protect them on their journey.

The bear and snake icons are unequivocal references to wild danger. The captions eliminate any uncertainty: “On the trail the boys keep sharp watch for poisonous snakes, such as the northern copperhead at left. Black bears abound in the Great Smokey Mountains. One night a bold one made the Scouts thankful they were inside a shelter. Scenting food the beast lunged again and again at a chain link fence across the front of the lean-to before wandering off.” These deeply ingrained danger icons of the bruin and the viper really need no embellishment. The beast story speaks more to the provocation of the Boy Scouts and the
threat humans pose to nature. What is not clear is the intention behind placing all of these images on the same page. Are they grouped with the Scouts to attract danger-seeking young male backpackers, or is it done to warn backpackers generally of wild animals and packs of young men? One function of this danger message is to frame the male subjects as embodying the masculine. These brave vigilant men, armed with staffs, willingly campaign through this wilderness, overcoming dangerous obstacles. The shelters symbolize fortifications, and they physically attest to human superiority over nature and the progressive civilization of the wild.

The second message is implied by an absence. There is a large group of men and young men, but there are no women or girls to be see. Moreover, there is an implication that they are not here because they are at home. The men are on the AT facing danger, while the women are safely at home. The photo reflects this message on two levels. First, there are no women in this scene in 1972. This is a Boy Scout group whose constitution includes a policy of allowing only boys and a purpose of instructing them in how to be Men by doing Manly activities like Backpacking the AT. On another level this image functions discursively to depict the AT as the kind of place where groups of Men, and not groups of Women, go backpacking. The effect of this in situ and discursive instruction is to reinforce an association in young men, i.e. the next generation, that backpacking and the AT are the province of men.

Clearly, this message runs at cross-purposes with Image Six, and, in fact, there are many more representation that depict men backpacking than women. The inclusion of contradictory gender messages prompts critical examination. If they portrayed just one theme over and over again, their function as propaganda would be easily recognizable. There are two points worth considering here. First, over the decades the AT has consistently
been depicted, both more often and more loudly, as a landscape where men take center stage. Second, over this period there is also a clearly identifiable trend to liberalize the representation, by portraying, if quietly and inconsistently, a growing number of females, elders, persons with disabilities, and peoples of color.

4.2.2.8 Participant Image Eight: 1972 Race

"On a two-day expedition to the park, young campers stop beside White Oak Falls, reached by a side trail... 10-year-olds Mary Ann Shore (left) and Cheryl McBride rinse their dishes in a still pool."

Illustration 13., the third drawn from the NGS’s 1972 book, conveys distinctly different messages on the denotative and connotative levels. In the photo, two adolescent females squat together in a forest stream tenderly washing cups. On its face, three aspects of the image are notable. First, the young girls represent innocence, passivity and vulnerability, all of which mark it as an uncommon representation of the AT. Second, one of the girls is African American, making her one of the very few African American females represented in conjunction with the AT. Third, the image is strongly evocative of intimate youthful relationships. Collectively, the image projects a message about youthful exploration, racial harmony, intimate friendship, and experiences with peers.

On the connotative level, the image circulates messages about the importance of race and the AT as utopian space. This image stands out specifically because very few images of the hundreds published on the AT in the national media depict non-white AT participants. Seen as a carefully chosen piece of propaganda, the image references both a hopeful message for the future and a subtle reassertion of the contemporary power of racism. In addition to its contents, the image is notable for its size. It spans one and a half pages, suggesting that the editors felt that its message was worth emphasizing.

The image speaks of companionship and innocence without knowledge of the fractious social categories that are their cultural burden. On one level, the intimate companionship of an African American girl and white girl projects a hopeful message about racial reconciliation. The youth reference the future and innocence; their friendship reveals the fundamentally constructed nature of race as a meaningful cultural category.

The NGS understands full well that this message is contentious in 1972, coming on the heels of the social revolutions and racial acrimony of the 1960’s. The conservative NGS is walking a fine line between promoting a progressive message and avoiding antagonizing
its broad readership. It deftly accomplishes this by selecting an image of two young females. The unguarded platonic intimacy of these pre-teen females is an understandable extension of their station as young female campers. This message is palatable to a wide audience because of the youth’s parity and innocence, in a way that a multi-racial image of mixed age or gender figures would not have been in 1972.

Read in this way the image is both hopeful for the future and a reflection of the power of racism in contemporary society. That the NGS would choose to include so few images of people of color, and then to insert such a timid exemplar, speaks to their complicity or acquiescence in the face of this cultural marginalization.

By including this message in a book about the AT, the NGS reinforces the myth that the AT is a place apart. In this setting, the social order and the patterns of habit and identity are disrupted. Visitors are free to be their better selves and to share the wilderness hiking experience with others divested of the historical burdens. This further promotes the utopian myth of the AT and of Nature as a landscape of Re-creation.

**4.2.2.9 Participant Image Nine: 1988 Status Quo**

Illustration 14. is included twice in the NGS 1988 book on the AT, on the front cover and again as the introductory image of Chapter Three. Both times it fills the entire page. The denotative meaning associates the AT with representations of the two figures as white, middle class, well-dressed, fit, husband and wife, in an undemanding scenic natural environment. By using this image as the cover of their book, the NGS frames the AT as a picturesque trail of national significance, in which its target audience can participate as armchair adventurers or real life explorers.

From a critical perspective the deeper connotative meanings of this image reference gender, race, class and human nature relationships. These culturally powerful symbols,
strikingly portrayed in the image, suggest why the image was chosen for the book cover, and how it functions as discourse.


“High above the Potomac River in Maryland, hikers pause at an Appalachian Trail overlook. One of the country’s national scenic trails, the A.T. follows the Appalachians for some 2,100 miles between Maine and Georgia.”

Gender is a central feature of the image. The male and female figures represent a complex gender binary that circulates as expectations on the AT. The image simultaneously pits Woman and Man as Janus-face opposites and as a twin-like couple. The figures’ resemblance to each other from head to toe is uncanny. Their similarities in hair and skin color, physique, blue knit short sleeve shirts, red backpacks, light and dark khaki shorts, white socks, light leather shoes, and gold rings all reinforce that the two are a pair. There is a message of symmetry, equivalence, and equality between Man and Woman. Yet each bears a distinguishing symbol culturally associated with his or her respective gender. A long, exposed, tanned, and suggestively-cocked leg marks the female figure. This is the classic sensuiously suggestive posture of Woman as sexual icon, possibly distilled to its most raw stereotype in the cartoon of Betty Boop (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Icons of Gender: Betty Boop and Fred Flintstone (King Features Syndicate, Inc. 2016 and Warner Bros. Animation 2016).
By contrast, but with equal assertion, the male figure stands behind and a bit over the female. He bears a large stick. Upon close examination, the walking stick is approximately the same height as the male figure, making it impractical for its implied use as an aid to balance. Like the cocked leg of the female, the stick is a cultural affectation; it is a prop and a crude weapon of sorts, suggesting defense and violence. If Betty Boop, is the effigy of Woman, then Fred Flintstone is the reduction of Man. Because the figures are alike in almost all attributes, these stand out. Each is reduced to an icon: Woman = leg = sensual, sexual; Man = staff = weapon, violence, defense of Woman. When the two symbols are intertwined they can be read as Man + Woman = violence in defense of sexual objectification. On a fundamental level, this reiterates, albeit on a more subtle level befitting contemporary mores, the message promoted by NGS through Image Four in 1949. Both divide and juxtapose the sexes by rendering them as strongly stereotypical gender icons on a mythological level while establishing a parity of participation on a more superficial level. Applied to the AT, the myth functions on a superficial level to suggest that the AT is a place for both males and females, while simultaneously defining expected social roles of Man and Woman. The effect of this is a reinforcement of stereotyped gender norms. These representations work to stereotype men and women to the AT while repelling subaltern groups.

The image places symbols of race and class front and center on the AT. By using this image of an affluent, polished, blond, and white couple for the cover of their arguably most significant publication about the AT, the NGS targets those they hope to attract the AT. There were undoubtedly layers of editorial decisions that resulted in this image being created and used as the cover image. In doing so, the entire book (“don’t judge a book by its cover” is a phrase that itself reveals our natural proclivity to do just this) is framed in a
certain light, i.e. white and affluent. The cover image has substantial implications, not least of which is its impact on who will be enticed to buy and read it, which in time translates into who will participate in the AT and how. As Rose (2012, p.90) has pointed out, “Discourse is a particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood, and how things are done in it. . . A specific visuality will make certain things visible in a particular way and other things unseeable.” Through this cover image of eminent whiteness and affluence, and the ubiquity of absence within, the vast potential readerships that do not fit this description are made “unseeable” relative to the AT. The self-assured posturing of these figures leaves little room for other types of people in the space of the AT.

The image also establishes how participants should anticipate the AT as a landscape and their performative role in it. In this cover image the figures are not hiking, not working, not dirty or seemingly not even a part of the landscape. They survey their domain (the domain of the white and affluent) from this high promontory. They are transient recreationalists; their attire suggests that this is a day trip into the realm of aesthetic nature. Underlying this is a sense of mastery. To venture forth with so little in the way of clothing and equipment and to maintain such a high state of cleanliness and sharpness of presentation conveys the underlying message that this is all sport. There is no danger here. This is a casual exercise by two people who are entirely self-assured that there is nothing here to fear. On still a deeper level, this speaks of the mythology of mastery over nature. The Wilderness has been tamed and named the Potomac River. It has been planned, built, and certified on the highest (federal) level. In this respect, it is not merely safe to perform the AT; it is right and patriotic. Performance of this recreation assumes not only immediate safety, but that there is a much larger system in place that will guarantee all the requisite fundamentals (food, water, shelter, material needs), which are only assured when a systemic mastery of
Wilderness has been decisively achieved. Therefore the myth is revealed as just that, a myth of exploration, adventure, pioneering, etc. It is a recreational performance that mimics an older, deeper mythology of American conquest and settlement. But unlike this violent and uncertain past, the contemporary relationship between humans and the natural environment is well established and fundamentally controlled. The myth referenced in this image is apparent in many of the other images as well. Together they contribute to and rest upon the underlying cultural assumptions of the AT.

Through this Image the NGS frames the AT in 1988 for a wide readership. It suggests that the AT is for them if they are like this, aspire to be like this, or hold these types of people in high regard. The image says that participation is for the affluent, white, clean and polished, and conservative Americans. By its message, the image continues a tradition, which by this point is evident in the visual mythology: The AT is a landscape most appropriate for some Americans and not for others.
"Hot Springs, North Carolina...
Favored rest stop, the Trail Cafe has served up a hearty breakfast for thru-hikers Rita Baumgartner and Laura Schilf. Before setting out again, Rita applies sun block and Laura adjusts her pack. Committed to an estimated five million steps from Georgia to Maine, the two women find the trail a “whole different way of life. A lot freer,” says Rita.”


Illustration 15. is another of the images appearing in the NGS’s 1988 book on the AT. As in Illustration 14., two white AT hikers are pictured. But in contrast to the glossy cover shot, this photo seems to be a candid view of the reality of AT backpacking. In the
image, two female figures, almost androgynous in their clothing and gear, are caught in the act of preparing to leave town. While the crafting of this image is not as outwardly evident as Image Nine, it still should be understood as a highly selective representation of the AT, chosen by photographer and editor to convey specific meanings to a target audience.

The comprehensive message projected by the image is that the AT is a place where women may now participate, act, and dress in a way that parallels male participation. Other places remain less free for women, more filled with social conventions and expectations, but here and now the performance of the AT has been opened across the gender lines.

On the level of connotative myth, this image is best understood in the broader context of NGS representations of the AT. Quantitatively, women are depicted at a notably lower rate then men. Fewer still are images that depict women without men. Going even further, women are very rarely presented as thruhikers. But here we have women alone as thruhikers. They are not shown as dainty, stylized, sexualized wood nymphs, but rather as true peers. Much as their male compatriots had been depicted for approximately the previous 40 years, these women are ideologically-committed apostles to the faith of the AT; they believe that the AT is a way of life. It would be inaccurate to suggest that these are the first such representations, but they stand out as distinctive early examples published by the NGS. They differ from the 1972 “Ron and Jill” images, both because Ron and Jill are often pictured together and because Jill is identified as the wife of the unseen photographer. In contrast, this image shows truly independent women, not one sponsored by the NGS or chaperoned by a male companion. What is more, their costume is distinctly gender neutral and all vestiges of gender appropriate clothing are subverted to meet the demands of utility.

The underlying connotative myth presented through this image is intended to speak to multiple audiences simultaneously. It conveys a message to young white females that the
AT of the late 1980s is a place in which some of the manacles of tradition and conformity, such as gendered dress and performance, are loosened. At the same time, the image is functional and bland on its face, in essence two people performing routine daily tasks. In this way it seeks to reassure the conservative patriarchy that mores will not be abandoned entirely to a wilderness of hedonism. This image also functions on the level of visual discourse to present the narrative of real, identified young women asserting themselves at the highest level of landscape participate. These are not the NGS leggy cover girls; these are dyed-in-the-wool, tough as nails thruhikers who are also women.

Finally, it is worth returning to the Grandma Gatewood icon and its impact on this image. Gatewood, as a real person and discursive icon, paved the way for this image by establishing three decades earlier that the AT was a place of resistance to expectations, especially gendered ones. By 1988, the growing number of images like this provide evidence that this discourse of defiance has started to take root.

4.2.2.11 Participant Image Eleven: 1988 Race

Illustration 16. is composed of two facing page images in the 1988 NGS book. Their significance is that they continue a now well-established pattern of substantiating a social hierarchy on the trail. Furthermore, this juxtaposition of figures subtly reinforces race as a defining feature in this order.
"Getaways and get-togethers coincide on the A.T. as it nears the Hudson River. Fathers with young children socialize on a paved portion (above) in Bear Mountain State Park, a weekend magnet for residents of New York City. In adjoining Harriman State Park, trail veteran Dave Sherman, a 2,000-miler, opts for serious hiking as he tackles a passage called the Lemon Squeezer (left)."


The denotive messages of the images are multiple. From the caption the viewer learns that in the right-hand image “Fathers with young children [apparently African American residents of New York City] socialize on a paved portion [of the trail].” while, on the left, “trail veteran Dave Sherman, a 2,000-miler, opts for serious hiking as he tackles a passage called the Lemon Squeezer.” The images are also of notably different sizes, with Sherman’s taking the entire page while the much more crowded, and yet anonymous, family photograph fills only a third of its page. Rock ledges invoking nature and wilderness frame Sherman, while the family recreates in a developed section of parkland. The comprehensive
message contrasts people and places. On one side the urban family of color casually socializes in a park, and on the other, Sherman—the experienced, lone, white male—performs actions of adventure in rugged nature.

The image of Sherman, the lone hiker, is a common trope in this publication and other AT representations in media. The family representation is much more symbolically complex, defying superficial interpretation. Its complexity arises out of the contradiction between a cultural stereotype of African American men as idols of cool and absentee fathers and the reality portrayed in the image: two cool and fatherly African American men. While the image generally frames the men in a positive way, it unnecessarily demotes them in the AT hierarchy as urban and uncommitted trail users. To represent people of color so rarely, and then to do so in such a way, strongly suggests a careful editorial hand behind the representation.

One comprehensive message that could be drawn from these representations is that the AT is a recreational space accommodating a diversity of types of people and activities. However, taking a critical perspective, the message becomes more troublesome, suggesting that the proper, devoted, and highest use of the AT is by comprehending white males who have the background and wherewithal to overcome its more daunting challenges.

Given the ubiquitous invisibility of peoples of color and the predominance of white men in representations of the AT, it is difficult not to see these images as subtly promoting a myth of racial order. This is reinforced by a quantitative absence as well. The NGS and other media promoters of the AT have included only a handful of images depicting people of color participating in the AT over decades of coverage. Whether borne of ignorance or maliciousness, the message conveyed through these particular photos and their captions further substantiate this depiction.
While this urban family of color socializes in the developed landscape, the experienced white adventurer pits himself against raw nature. The white man is a true believer and apostle of the faith, while the black family plays at the safe margins. These are clearly ideologically-driven representations. This is because this same feature, ‘The Lemon Squeezer’, was featured in NGS’s 1949 article on the AT. In it, a “girl hiker inches cautiously through a rock crevice” and the greater area is described as a “forest playland.” The 1949 image reveals this geologic feature is also within the controlled space of the park and lacks any real danger. For the NGS to frame it as a serious or daunting adventure four decades later is deeply disingenuous. In reality, both 1988 images depict people recreating in a state park, surrounded by amenities.

Like many of the representations of the AT, Illustration 16. conveys a complexity of visual information to the viewer. On a superficial level it appears to begin the process of desegregating the AT. However, on a deeper level, it works to reinforce well-established American racial myths at work on the AT.

4.2.2.12 Participant Image Twelve: 1987 Boy Scouts

Denotatively, Illustration 17. conveys a message about an eclectic ragtag group of adolescent males brought to the AT by adults to build character, open their eyes to the wider world, get in shape, and earn merit badges. The appearance of these teenagers does not suggest interest in hiking or having their photo taken. There is a double performance represented here. The figures are performing Boy Scouting, and, just as faithfully, they are performing Contemporary Adolescent, typified by grudging compliance with adult expectations. The reader learns from the caption that such Scout groups are common on the AT, where the young men are compelled to participate in backpacking and trail maintenance, and they are indoctrinated with the ideology that these activities are socially
praiseworthy.


"Frequent trail hikers, Boy Scouts also contribute their services for trail maintenance."

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This image reinforces two connotative myths. One is that the AT remains a place for male preeminence and the other is that there is increasing racial-ethnic diversity among participants. With respect to the first message, the image continues to depict the AT as a place of masculinity and youthful outdoor recreation. Despite the growing number of images representing women’s participation in the AT, images such as this one serve a powerful discursive function by normalizing male participation and omitting female participation. This message is especially troublesome because the image of these young men implies that this pattern will endure for another generation.

If groups of young women are not participating and being represented on the AT, then where are they in 1987? The implications speak volumes: Young women are in other places, doing other things, being indoctrinated by other kinds of discourse. This has lasting consequences, generational consequences. Image Ten tempers the message to some degree, suggesting that despite the disparity young women are participating and being represented. However, at least quantitatively, women are not yet equally represented, and these repeated images of Boy Scouts do a great deal simultaneously to explain why and to perpetuate this inequity.

The second connotative myth speaks of change, specifically the potential for inclusion of racial diversity as represented by these youths of color(s). This is not the 1972 Boy Scout group portrayed in Image Seven, a representation of white male uniformity with one or two outliers. This 1987 image portrays a much more dynamic and varied state of the population. Youth is key to this meaning because, through youth, the image depicts the present while in large part signifying the future. This is a glimpse of the chaotic, post-modern social mix at the dawn of the 21st century. The image captures a cultural landscape in flux. If Image Eight
suggested in 1972 that the trail is a place for racial harmony and Image Eleven, from this same set of NGS publications, subtly underscores a contemporary racial divide between adults, then 1987 this image splits the difference. The image shows a great diversity of young males. They don’t embody the essential innocence of the young girls or the rigid division of the adults. Rather they show the evocative miscellany of the next generation of hikers.

The myth intertwines with those of the female thruhikers and the African American family in the 1988 NGS book. These images contain representations of youthful promise, hopeful ones about family and deconstruction of stereotypes, which almost counter the negative. Collectively, the discourse is complex, muddied by cross-meanings. As the most racially diverse of the NGS’s AT images, this image decisively marks a broadening of AT participation, and it potentially reflects a generational shift in photographers and editors, who are far more reflexive about their roles in shaping the discourse and, by extension, participation in the AT.

4.2.2.13 Participant Image Thirteen: Bill Irwin

Illustration 18. is the March 1993 cover of Guideposts magazine. The page is filled by a photo of Bill Irwin and his service dog, and it features the article title “Bill Irwin: A blind man’s odyssey on the Appalachian Trail.” This image is one of many that circulate through AT media promoting Irwin as both the first blind AT thruhiker and as an icon of AT participant virtues. The magazine’s subtitle, “A Practical Guide to Successful Living,” and the representation of Irwin and his dog convey a message about an inspirational figure, a person who persevered through a host of challenges that were compounded by his disability, to realize a dream. The affable Irwin—smiling, attired in bright athletic cloths, and resting his hand on a companion dog—provides a friendly fatherly-grandfatherly figure and
quintessential model of “Successful Living.”

The image and allegory of Bill Irwin, the blind Hiker, has become an icon of the AT. Much like Shaffer and Gatewood before him, he functions to redraw the bounds of AT participants. Each of these figures broke the expectations, the glass ceiling and, in doing so, provided an entry point for other people like them, i.e. an model for thruhikers, women and elders, and the disabled. They also established the mythological landscape of the AT as a place for overcoming adversity. Through this visual discourse, Bill Irwin takes up the mantle of Gatewood, becoming another in the pantheon of long shots. Whereas Gatewood faced obstacles relative to social expectations of age and gender, Irwin faced socio-physical ones. The mythological implications are in the cumulative effect. Year-by-year and generation after generation, outsiders, misfits, and long shots take up the ideological gauntlet of the thruhike and impart altarity as a cornerstone mythology of the AT. In this way, the AT becomes a liminal space, a space within which established expectations and conservative mores are left at the door. Increasingly the AT becomes a place populated by a diversity of people, Re-creating in the full sense of the word. But there are the lingering divisions. Irwin was visually impaired, but he embodied the kindly white elder. The AT inescapably exists within the larger American culture. As such, it will always draw from this larger pool of discourse. These expectations of gender and race will endure as long as they remain viable categories of American culture at large.

4.2.2.14 Image Fourteen: 2013 Status Quo

Illustration 19. comprises a set of six black-and-white portraits of long-distance AT hikers. These images are part of a much larger set that was made as a side-project by an ATC trail maintainer in Maine in 2006. This subset appear in a 2013 Backpacker magazine article. Collectively this group of portraits presents a message about the diversity within the
family of AT hikers. It conveys a sense of intimacy between subject and viewer that is supported by the direct address and unguarded facial expressions. As a set of similarly-sized figures in gray scale, the representations suggest equity among members of a group. All are AT hikers, and yet their essential individuality is maintained and emphasized by their juxtaposed clothing, skin tone, and facial features.


“Faces of The Trail
In 2006, photographer Chris Bennett began carrying a bedsheet to shoot impromptu “studio” portraits of the hikers he encountered as a ridgerunner for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in Maine. Clockwise from top left: Melton “Grits” Cockrell; Brett “Leprechaun” Grizzle advises would-be hikers: “Don’t overcomplicate things. It’s just walking, and you already know how to do that”; Freddie “Breeze” Hughie; Joanna “Trickster” Cahill says, “Start by spending just a week on the trail. Anyone can thru-hike, but you really have to want it so you can call on that desire to pull you through the days when your thighs are bleeding (true story).”

From top: Mary Helermann says, “Focus only on your goal for the day. Little by little, you will get there”, Jordan “Donkey Love” McCarron adds, “Don’t overschedule. Weather and whimsy will demand that you live in the moment.”
These images promote a simple connotative myth: There are many kinds of people who believe and participate in the AT; it is a Landscape where the individual will find his or her place among a collective of individuals. It is a welcoming place. The complexity is in understanding that the depiction of Freddie “Breeze” Hughie is a milestone of sorts. Here we have one of the first, and still rare, representations of the fully- equal African American thruhiker. People of color are increasingly depicted, but remain the minority. So, beneath the message of equity and diversity, the historical legacy and enduring reality of discrimination remain. Through these nine decades of representations, a myth has slowly evolved. This narrative works to define the expectations of whom will participate in the AT. Images such as this, which on the surface speak of diversity and equity, function on this deeper level to both contest and solidify the narrative of exclusive participation.

A larger collection of these images was included in the ATC’s AT Journeys magazine (November-December 2006), which featured the Melton “Grits” Cockrell photo as the cover image. This duplication points to the resonance of these images and the way in which they capture the unique personalities and implied back stories of the individuals who commit themselves to the ideology of the trail. A comparison of these two publications suggests calculated editorial decisions were made regarding which images would be included. Both show that the intention was to represent an intimate portrait of participants in an aesthetically pleasing form. The Backpacker magazine image set reduces the number to distill the maximum diversity. The result is that each magazine presents a subtly different mythology of the AT, the distinction between variety and diversity.

As the final image in this series of images representing AT participants, it is worth considering the social space that has been traversed, from founding fathers to unlikely hikers
and through expectations of gender, race, age, and ablebodiedness. The representations I have selected portray a strand within the ongoing mythology of participant representation. These images are not representative of the vast whole of the depictions of AT hikers. Rather, I selected them to speak to the complex and contested iconology of the AT. Taken at quantitative first glance, the AT remains decidedly represented by images such as the NGS 1972 Boy Scouts: youthful, white, and homogeneous with some internal diversity. But from an early period, representations of figures such as Grandma Gatewood have established a thread in the mythology that the AT is a site of non-conformity. The landscape project was driven by dreamers like MacKaye, who infused it with a progressive social ideology. Illustration 19. represents the latest incarnation of these aspirations. The AT remains a place of inequity, but it also continues to be depicted as a space where diversity and individuality are encouraged.

**4.2.3 Representational Analysis Part Three: Performance, A Visual Mythology of Pilgrimage**

Performance of the AT has evolved in the intervening years since the trail idea was first proposed by MacKaye in 1921. One of the most significant turning points in the history of the AT was the first end-to-end hike of the trail in 1948 by Earl Shaffer. The resulting publicity and recognition, especially thorough the NGS’s article in 1949, initiated a crystallization of an AT culture around the long-distance hike. Over the decades, this culture has evolved as the AT landscape, performance, and representation have shifted in response to influences from within the emergent community and in response to broader cultural trends. Collectively, these have generated a mythology that frames the undertaking of an AT thru-hike as a pilgrimage. In this section, I examine six images drawn from the NGS’s 1988 publication that are both common tropes in depictions of the AT and closely aligned with
traditional icons of pilgrimage performance. In the process, I aim to document how these photos function subtly as discourse that circulates a connotative pilgrimage mythology through denotative representations of AT performance.

But first, it is worth considering the AT in light of its unique attributes. Stretching continuously through 2000 miles (3200 kilometers) of publicly held lands, the trail was designed for both walking and occupation by the public. This socio-spatial infrastructure laid the essential foundation that enabled a pilgrimage culture. The AT is continually produced through the dialectic exchange between spatial phenomena (the AT as a physical artifact composed of spatial extent, terrain, climate, ecology trail, signage, shelters, etc.) and a social phenomenon (AT as representation, performance, embodied experience, meanings, and mythology), a process Soja (1989) calls spatiality. This way of seeing the AT emphases the mutual interdependence of its space and society. Communities within the American social context form the spaces that allow their existence, and these spaces exert power over human societies, shaping their manifestation. These processes are not deterministic, rather space and society are indivisible, and, in the dynamic evolutionary process of unfolding, the two are perpetually created as distinct “spatialities.”

Applying these conceptualizations to the AT, the trail can be seen as an emerging phenomenon in which its physical and social forms are dialectically interacting. Because of the interconnection, an examination of one aspect (e.g., the ways in which it has been framed through visual media discourse) provides a perspective on the entire spatiality. Furthermore, by understanding the AT in this way it becomes clear that the AT materializes as a pilgrimage through its framing as a pilgrimage. Essentially the AT is a pilgrimage, because we say it is.
4.2.3.1 Meaning to Mythology: The AT Pilgrimage Discourse

The link between the AT and pilgrimage has foundations in MacKaye’s initial article, in which he proffers the trail project as a utopian spatiality. The AT was to be a recreational corrective for a degenerative urban society; this infant form embodied it as an alternative or “liminoid” spatiality. As the vision was implemented, however, the main utopian component – communal settlements – were never constructed. The project’s scale and dedication to active recreation in nature became its defining attributes, but the utopian ideology did remain a fixture of trail culture.

This association between the AT and a pilgrimage (or transcendental adventure) has become a subtle, yet ubiquitous element in such lay-literature as travelogues and guidebooks. These publications use descriptive text (i.e., the repetitive allusion to the AT as a pilgrimage, adventure, or quest) and imagery to visually format the trail as iconic stations of the pilgrimage. Examples of this can be seen throughout the media about the trail. Through its combination of unique spatiality, initial utopian ideology, and decades of AT discourse referencing pilgrimage, the AT’s landscape and performance have become a spatiality in which its deepest mythology is pilgrimage.

Thoreau’s words echo the sentiments of many of the more than 1,000 people who set out each year intending to follow the white blazes from Georgia to Maine… “One might conclude,” said Bill Foot, “that the trail is a great place to figure out where to go or what to do with the rest of your life.”

(The Appalachian Trail Backpacker. Logue and Logue, 1990)

This was the threshold of my great adventure, long delayed by World War II and without my hiking partner, who had been killed on Iwo Jima… Why not walk the Army out of my system, both mentally and physically, take pictures and notes along the way, and make a regular expiation out of it?

(Walking with Spring. Shaffer, 1981)
This was Emma Gatewood’s course, a footpath through a misunderstood region stitched together on love, danger, hospitality, and venom…she had accepted the invitation to stalk her predecessors – this civilian army of planners and environmentalists and blazers – and, in a way, to become one of them, a pilgrim herself.

(Grandma Gatewood’s Walk. Montgomery, 2014)

It required only a little light reading in adventure books and almost no imagination to envision circumstances in which I would find myself caught[.]


A Pilgrim in Process: Trail Society –Values and Traditions

Friendships spring up quickly and are incredibly durable…Many hikers feel so strongly about the trail that they have their ashes scattered on it… There is no completely satisfactory answer to the question of why people form such strong attachments to the trail. Jeff Hansen suggests, “That will always be a mystery to all of us. But I wonder if it’s not that people can have a sense of adventure and a sense of belonging all at once, and people miss both of those things in their lives.” … Because it’s such an intense experience and they’re so excited about it, thru-hikers seem to exist almost in a world of their own while on the trail.

(Walking the Appalachian Trail. Luxenberg, 1994)

There are probably as many reasons why a person thru-hikes as there are thru-hikers, but among those I have met, two general themes stand out. The first reminds me eerily of the rite of passage common to many cultures around the world that I’ll call the Vision Quest. In Native American culture it would often take the form of a young adult leaving home for the wilderness in search of enlightenment… The second motive is the spirit of adventure. It’s much closer to the reasons we all escape to the wilderness from time to time… It’s a motive not unlike what one finds in mountaineers, polar explorers, or anyone who embarks upon an intensive personal effort of that order.


Ridick (2011) notes the association of the AT and pilgrimage, but traces its source to a linkage made by hikers between natural in situ features (such as rock, sky, and stream) and their meanings depicted in other pilgrimage settings. I am unconvinced by this argument. To my mind, the AT has come to be equated to a pilgrimage because its spatiality is represented that way. That is, as the AT was popularized and gained visibility, those who produced these
images intentionally and unconsciously crafted a pilgrimage iconology. The repetition of these visual and textual associations has made the AT culturally meaningful as a pilgrimage. Ridick’s thesis misses the mark by attributing the source of pilgrimage-thinking far too late in the process. The participant understands and anticipates the AT as a pilgrimage, well before she or he ever steps onto the trail. Even those not cognizant of this mythology will quickly intuit it through the performance of others who are under its spell. In any case, reflexivity is warranted because scholarly investigations (including this study and Ridick’s) may also contribute to the discursive framing of the AT as a pilgrimage. In fact, the social authority afforded to such representation makes it particularly effective at institutionalizing such associations.

An example of how this idea has been drawn in indirectly is through the inclusion of a small but notable set of references to and representations of Christianity (Illustration 20). Their peculiar inclusion suggests an intended message, and has two evident effects. First, they establish a link between the AT and a network of widely know biblical and historical narratives about pilgrimage and communion with god in the wilderness. Second, the specific iconography of priest blessing the hikers, legitimizes the trail as a place sanctified by established religious structures. The inclusion of just a few of these images draws in a powerful religious discourse that redirects views, predisposing them to draw the link between an AT hike and a pilgrimage.
4.2.3.2 Characteristics of Pilgrimage

To understand how the AT has been visually framed as a pilgrimage, the first step is to identify the visual icons of pilgrimage. Turner and Turner’s *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (1978) and Victor Turner’s *The Ritual Process* (1969) provide fundamental references. These drew on Van Gennep’s text *The Rites of Passage* (1908). From these works, I have appropriated a six-phase iconology that informs the analysis.

The ritual process is composed of three main stations. First, a *Pre-Liminoid* phase in which the subject breaks with their former social structures. This phase is defined by social and spatial separation. Second, the subject enters into a *Liminal* (or *Liminoid*) phase, a state of ambiguous flux poised between the old identity and the new. It is in this process that the rites of passage are performed.

A point of clarification is need here. While Turner and Gennep use the term liminal to describe the main phase of ritual rites of passage, Turner and Turner suggest that liminoid may be a more accurate term for applications in processes such as those happening on the
AT:

“Pilgrimage then has some of the attributes of liminality in passage rites… But since it is voluntary, not an obligatory social mechanism to mark the transition of an individual or group from one state or status to another within the mundane sphere, pilgrimage is perhaps best thought of as “limnoid” or “quasi-liminal,” rather than “liminal” in Van Gennep’s full sense.”

(Turner and Turner, 1978)

Therefore, in this analysis I will use limnoid in place of liminal, but will continue to use the term liminality to suggest the marginal attributes of the AT. I have also divided the limnoid stage into four distinct sub-phases. These sub-phases in the performance of liminality reflect four iconic characteristics of limnoid performance identified by Turner (1969). They are: Differentiation, Ordeal, Communitas, and Completion. Each has distinct processes associated with them.

1. Differentiation: Throughout the performance of the limnoid phase the initiate asserts a distinction between her/himself and those of the outside social structure, through dress and behavior.

2. Ordeal: In the course of these rituals, initiates face trial and hardships that break down their former egos, test their commitment to the quest, and strengthen them for subsequent life in society.

3. Communitas: Initiates develop a tight communal bond amongst themselves, in contrast to the distinction that is drawn relative to people outside their ritual structure. These Communitas are characterized by egalitarianism and a disregard for pre-ritual social status, identity, and history.

4. Attainment: At the end of the limnoid phase the initiate ascends into the ranks of the initiated. The rite of passage has run its course, and the initiate is now a full member will all associated rights and responsibilities.
The final stage is the *Post-Liminoid* phase characterized by aggregation back into the social structure of the wider world. The initiated returns from pilgrimage, but in an elevated social light. They now embody the quest and the secret wisdom discovered in the process.

These three phases (and the four sub-phases of the middle phase) of rites of passage provide the context for a representational analysis of AT pilgrimage imagery. In the following, section I will present this analysis and discuss my results.

### 4.2.3.3 Pre-Liminoid Phase: Separation

The narrative format of this image montage represents the start of a journey (Illustration 21). Our subject begins his quest. Dutiful friends, who cannot accompany him on this adventure support him by accompanying him to the threshold. An exchange of blessings is conveyed in the appropriate way as deemed by social and gender norms, and our hero sets out alone. He, Scott, is made personal to us, but not intimately. Scott functions denotatively as a real person (like members of the audience) and connotatively as a symbol (the Hiker, a surrogate for all thru-hikers). After crossing the threshold between home and the wild, the figure climbs to the summit to make a ritual commitment to this quest, and then he proceeds. As he fades into the obscuring fog, the physical and psychological hardships begin, suggesting the pain of a new way of being and the unknowable trials to come.

These images represent the pre-liminoid transition between secular structured society and the ritual journey. On a denotative level it depicts the beginning of Scott’s journey, but it is clearly intended to function on a connotative level, marking the symbolic commencement of the questing-hero myth, characterized by acts of separation from friends, identity, and the known. The iconic Hiker is an incarnation of the seeker, a lone pilgrim and devoted acolyte, who with faith abandons the safety and sets out on a quest. He will travel
through hardship and peril, through loneliness and through foreign lands, from his point of
depture. He is now the Hiker.

Gennep (1908) foreshadows the paralleling of pilgrimage and hike as a passage
describing a pilgrimage landscape fits the AT as well.

Territorial Passages can provide a framework for the discussion of rites of passage which follows… [t]he boundary is marked by an object – a stake, portal, or upright rock (milestone or landmark) – whose instillation as that particular spot has been accompanied by rites of consecration…. When milestones or boundary signs… are ceremonially placed by a defined group on a delimited piece of earth, the group takes possession of it in such a way that a stranger who sets foot on it commits a sacrilege analogous to a profane person’s entrance into a sacred forest or temple.

The symbols of the trail sign, stepping stones over a creek, the divide between manicured lawn and forest, and the mail box at the AT terminus, each function as in situ markers of AT and liminoid territory. They instruct behavior and mentality. The iconic white blazes of the AT serve as the “milestones or boundary signs” along the entire stretch of the trail. They serve denotative function to orient and also define the moral-spatial territory of the ritual. This is clearly evident in *The Appalachian Trail Backpacker* (Logue and Logue, 1990).

**Blue-blazing**

Before you begin your thru-hike, you should make an important decision. Just what is the goal you are pursuing? Is it to hike the entire Appalachian Trail, or is it merely to spend several months hiking in the Appalachians? You should ask yourself this question because your opportunities will arise to cut off sections of the trail to make it shorter, easier, or to provide easier access to shelters and towns. The term for taking these shortcuts is blue-blazing. The name comes from the fact that most of the trails you will intersect are marked with blue blazes instead of the A.T.’s familiar white blazes.

This passage informs, but its function is ideological. It both clarifies the meaning of symbolic markings and subtly warns pilgrims of the moral pitfalls of shortcuts. As a moral instruction it reads: The AT space is marked by the white blazes. Pilgrims will be tempted
to deviate from this path, but the proper hiker will remain true to the quest and will remain in the sacred liminoid state that has now been entered.

4.2.3.4 Performance of Liminality: Identity and Distinction

The next set of imagery advances the narrative to AT performance into the liminal realm (Illustration 22). The committed hiker is now represented as having embraced his role as the thru-hiker by his symbolic costume and performance. These specific photographs are noteworthy because they demonstrate editorial visual reiteration that distinguishes the serious hiker from other users of the trail. Also, note that I purposefully use “he,” rather than “she or he,” because these images, in fact the majority of images, use a male figure to represent the Hiker and I want to underscore the socially constructed nature of this icon.
The juxtaposition of the top two images (from NGS’ 1988 publication) is essentially a representation of contrasting people and their use of the AT. Setting aside the critical racial issues (these are discussed in the Participant section), the images distinguish the dedicated backpacker (i.e., the thru-hiker, represented by Dave Sherman) from the causal-recreation users of the AT (i.e., the undifferentiated masses, represented by the family). The NGS and other media representations elevate the performance of the serious hiker by using numerous devices: the size and number of images, the detail provided in the captions, and provocative imagery.

The bottom two images, from the NGS’ 1949 article, asserts these same distinctions with respect to gender. Women (anonymous and generalized) are portrayed as maintainers of civilization, social structure, and propriety through dress and behavior. By contrast, Robert Bumstead, “Man” and serious hiker, performs the rejection of the social order, signified here primarily through his actions, but is also hinted at by what little we can see of his costume, apparently a military uniform which was a typical hiking costume in the post-WWII period.

The effect of both sets of images is to distinguish between the serious, committed hiker and the casual recreationalist. The denotative figures of Dave and Robert merge into the connotative icon of the Hiker. The Hiker is a mythology that distills the ideological performance of the AT into a single figure. This icon is ubiquitous in AT representations. Images showing silhouetted backpackers (Chase 1989 cover) and other illustrations (The Mentor 1936 cover) reveal the Hiker reduced to its essential signifier. This symbol references pilgrim, explorer, adventurer, aesthetic, and American-pioneer mythologies, each of which is made more notable by their strong undercurrents striving to show and define masculinity.
This second set of images shows the complete entrance into the liminoid state.

Liminality, from the Latin for marginal or in-between, refers to the initiate’s movement outside of the prevailing social structure during rites of passage. According to Turner (1969, 359), in this phase “the characteristics of the ritual subject (the ‘passenger’) are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state.” This is signified by several distinct features, but most obviously by costume and performance. The Hiker embraces his new identity and role as initiate. As committed acolyte, he distinguishes himself from those of the outside social structure. With respect to his costume or appearance, the backpack is the most obvious among these symbols of differentiation. But as the culture of the AT has developed, other symbols, including the growing of beards and the adopting of trail aliases, have come to represent the embrace of this liminoid identity.

One way in which the AT myth interacts with the pilgrimage mythology is through common symbols. There is a clear parallel between the signifying costumes of the Hiker and the Pilgrim. In both cases, these costumes originate from their utility. But as the icon of the Hiker solidified, it was increasingly laden with significance derived from the symbol of the Pilgrim. In both instances, costume is used to separate the liminoid subject from the mundane world beyond. This has deep historic roots in Christian pilgrimage:

In the European Roman Catholic tradition... medieval Christian pilgrims are readily identified by their uniforms; in addition to their insignia they wear a floppy hat to keep off the sun and rain, sturdy shoes, and a cape or half-cape over their shoulders, they carry a pouch for their belongings, a water bottle, and a sturdy walking stick. (Davidson, Kay, and Gitlitz. Pilgrimage 2002. p.479)

Once initiated into the ‘order’ of pilgrims, he signified his attachment to a new way of life by wearing a uniform, as distinctive in its own way as the tonsure of a priest. This included the mark of the cross, a wooden staff, a long tunic, a waste pouch, and later a broad-brimmed hat. [A writing by Orderic Vitalis c. 1135 suggests that pilgrims were
also distinguished by their “unshaven faces.”]  (Sumption. 1975 *Pilgrimage: An Image of Mediaeval Religion*. p.172)

The most important effect of the similarity of these signifiers is that it has led to a transfer of the myth of the Pilgrim onto the myth of the Hiker.

Another feature of the performance of limnoid distinction common to both Hiker and Pilgrim is the philosophical rejection of the outside world, especially its urban, materialistic social structure. The 1949 image of the Hiker is a striking incarnation of this. The figure demonstrates his disdain for propriety by drinking directly from the spring without using a cup. In many other representations, the attitude is more subtly referenced in the images by the wearing of soiled or worn clothing and by the growing of beards, or in the text by exaltations of the superiority of this wild, natural, or free way of living in contrast with their former or typical urban lifestyles. This also links to at least fifteen centuries of Christian pilgrimage discourse and even to biblical iconology of the Garden of Eden and the pursuit of clarity and divinity in the wilderness:

Contempt for the society which they left behind was at least as important to the followers of St. Jerome [c. 347-420, Author of books on Christian pilgrimage to the Holly Land during the medieval period, which shaped traditions for a thousand years] as their longing for the promised land. His entourage at Bethlehem saw in their pilgrimage an act of self-denial, of voluntary exile whose object was to take them away from Rome and thus from the ‘damnation to which the rest of the world is destined.’… ‘Depart from the midst of Babylon’, Jerome urged a friend who had stayed behind in Rome, ‘fore it is the house of Satan, the stronghold of iniquity and sin.’ The desire to renounce civilization as contemporaries knew it was a powerful spiritual impulse of the late classic period… The true spirit of Christianity they saw in the communities of hermits in the Egyptian desert.

(Sumption. 1975 *Pilgrimage: An Image of Mediaeval Religion*. p.94)

The drawing of distinction is an important reflection of both an initial and ongoing commitment to the quest. It is brought to a head in the performance of “the ordeal,” where
initiates are repeatedly faced with the decision to reassert the distinction or abandon the quest.

4.2.3.5 Performance of the Liminal Phase: Ordeal


“Where an inch can make a difference, backpacker Noel Grove squeezes through a narrow crack in Mahoosac Notch. This mile of trail, considered by many the A.T.’s most difficult, calls for giant steps and steady nerves (opposite) in an obstacle course created over millennia by boulders tumbling from Mahoosuc and Fulling Mountains.”

Two photos appearing on facing pages in the 1988 NGS book show the Hiker pitted in a struggle with elemental Nature (Illustration 23). Nature signifies the immovable object, a manifestation of elemental forces of a magnitude that participants and viewers find hard to fathom. The Hiker, now in Maine and tempered by months and miles of these struggles, manifests the unstoppable force. Counter to the spatial fixity of rock and mountain, she or
he, flows around these monoliths, unable to change them, yet unwilling to be halted, drawn forward by compulsion, faith to the ideology, belief in the institution of the AT.

As they transform into icons, these images reference two aspects of the AT’s ritual mythology. First, during the performance of the liminoid phase of a rite of passage, the initiate faces a series of trials. Turner (1969) specifies:

> The ordeals and humiliations, often of a grossly physiological character, to which neophytes are submitted represent partly a destruction of the previous status, and partly a tempering of their essences in order to prepare them to cope with their new responsibilities… (p. 103)

This is clearly portrayed in both of these images (as well as in Illustrations 21 and 22). AT narrative accounts consistently underscore the physical and psychological demands of the trail, and accounts like Bryson’s (1998) play up other dangers, both real and imagined.

The second aspect of the AT’s ritual myth is the stage set for the myth: the space of the AT is both sanctified and active component of the Ordeal. Much like the symbolic movement outside of social structure during the pre-liminoid phase, the setting for these rituals is physically located outside of the human realm. Characteristically, the ordeal is located at a distance from centers of civilization, in a peripheral, exotic, or wilderness setting, and often the ordeal itself features a struggle against elemental nature. The AT’s forest and mountain setting facilitates a transfer of the Ordeal myth onto the Appalachian landscape, much as it has done for other pilgrimage landscapes:

[pilgrimage sites were often intentionally isolated] Often the deities or natural forces that drew pilgrims were deemed to inhabit mountaintops or sacred groves in the midst of dense forests. The discomfort, risk and sacrifice required to visit such places were part of the pilgrims offering to the gods. Pilgrims who still climb the steep paths to the summit of China’s Five Mountains, Japan’s Mount Fuji, Peru’s Mount Ausangate, or Tibet’s Mount Kailas, for example, derive religious merit from negotiating the rigors of the trail. In the early history of some religions, such as Buddhism, Shinto, and...
Christianity, holy individuals withdrew to remote locales to distance themselves from the distractions of human interactions and to embrace the solitude conducive to focused contemplation of the deity. The pilgrims who went to visit these hermits and gurus or, once the holy individuals had died, traveled to venerate the places where they had lived, perceived value in the difficulty of the journey.


The performances of both the Ordeal and Differentiation facilitate the emergence of the next feature of ritual rites of passage, the *Communita*. Through the performance and costume, the Hiker differentiates himself from society, and simultaneously aligns himself with other initiates. The challenges of the Ordeal unify neophytes and, because the route of the pilgrimage is relatively static, this comradery may span generations of initiates.

**4.2.3.6 Performance of Liminality: Communita**

Gene Espy, AT folk hero and one of the first to successfully complete a thru-hike (Illustration 24). In the image, he stands stooped and aged in front of a porch filled with aspiring hikers, well into their journey. He is not talking to the hikers behind him. Therefore, the caption must be stating generally that, during the larger event that this image represents, he has been recounting his story. It just does not seem to right that an elder would stand isolated in the sun, while the hikers were all within the screened porch. The image appears to be staged to emphasize him and his importance to the AT community. He is progenitor, early apostle to the socio-cultural institution of the AT which has endured and expanded in the intervening decades. The effect of this choreographed photo is that it highlights that all of these photographs are clearly edited abstractions of reality.
“Young hikers look out from the porch of The Place, an A.T. hostel sponsored by the United Methodist Church in Damascus, Virginia, as Gene Espy recalls his through-trek in 1951: “I was out to see the country, the waterfalls, the wildlife, not to set a record.” Espy was the second person to walk the entire A.T. in one stretch.”


The image also references the ongoing, living community of the AT. The youthful figures behind Espy suggest a new, vital, and excited generation of hikers. For the AT project, and specifically its use for long-distance hiking, this signifies health, growth, and potential. These people (mostly comprised of white males) are waiting in the wings, and have already committed themselves to the endeavor. Their physical closeness, emotional warmth, and cheer suggest a communal bond.

Beyond the superficial focus on a specific figure, this layered image refers to the mythology of the AT as a community. Espy is notable for having been one of the first to
walk the entirety of a route. His journey continues to be relevant because it contributed to the continuous formation of an AT socio-cultural community. If Espy is the icon of the Father, then the members of group behind him are his progeny. Together they form a family, a multigenerational group of similarly minded members. With respect to the performance of a rite of passage, this type of social unit is called a Communita. Turner (1969) uses the term to encompass the unique ephemeral society that forms during the liminal phase of such activities. He specifies that “among themselves, neophytes tend to develop an intense comradeship and egalitarianism. Secular distinctions of rank and status disappear or are homogenized.” This feature of the trail’s mythology is a common theme in thru-hikers’ records of their journey.

4.2.3.7 Performance of Liminality: Attainment of the Sacred Goal

Drawing to completion through attainment, a young married couple concludes their thru-hike at the summit of Mount Katahdin, the AT’s northern terminus (Illustration 25). The image combines three primary elements: the place, the people, and the performance. The place is the mountaintop, rock-strewn and foggy. It is a harsh environment, befitting the site of a journey through a diversity of natural settings and obstacles. The people are the honeymooning “Wheelers of Tennessee.” Although they are faceless figures here, they are personalized by other images in the book. The final performance is a celebratory, one of achieving the goal of thru-hiking the AT together.

A fourth element in the image, the Confederate flag, ruptures the otherwise predictable narrative of finishing the AT. The inclusion of this provocative symbol in NGS depictions of the AT invokes strong reaction and underscores the consistent omissions of racial diversity. It reminds us of the antipathy of the dominant group (whites) toward a historically repressed group.

Moving beyond the denotative Wheelers, this image alludes to the final phase of the liminoid phase, the Attainment of the Sacred Goal. The rite of passage has run its course. The initiate has been initiated and is now a full member with all associated rights, privileges, and responsibilities.

Here at the summit, the quest is complete and another transition awaits. At the
moment of success, the moniker of Thru-hiker, which was a title of status and action, is now permanently inscribed on the individual as a character signifier. It ceases to reference an active attempt in the present, and it becomes a mark of social distinction – an achievement of the past, and an immutable foundation that facilitates subsequent endeavors.

It is significant that this entire process was predicated on spatial movement. The Hiker began at a point, traversed a route, and concluded at a point. This is a literal rite of passage, the ceremonial custom attendant with passing through the space of the AT. Furthermore, to be the Hiker is essentially to be in a state of social flux. One must move to be a hiker and, because the trail is spatially fixed, the Hiker will eventually run out of trail. The Hiker cannot stay a hiker in perpetuity. The mythological performance of the Hiker and the Pilgrim is essentially transitory. As Marsh (1989) indicates with respect to the social transition of post-coal towns, meaning and means are ultimately intertwined. The landscape of the AT has been vested with a great deal of meaning, but very little means by which the station of the Hiker can be maintained after the performance has run its course. After attainment, the Hiker is compelled to end the liminoid phase and reintegrate into the society that was left behind.

4.2.3.8 Post-Liminal: Reintegration as an Embodiment of the Sacred.

The Hiker has truly achieved the goal. The summit has been attained. Before passing on and returning down to the post-trail world, the contemplative Hiker takes it all in (Illustration 26). The Hiker cannot stay and there is no going back, or higher. There is only transition to other places, social structures, identities, and performances.

The “gaze over the landscape” is a recurring visual theme in representations of the AT. These images combine both a panoramic view of a vast expanse of the environment and a human subject actively gazing at that expanse. Other wildland images show only a
panoramic view or only a human subject; the combination is a trope endemic to promotional visual media of the AT (see Illustration 14 - NGS 1988 cover reviewed previously for another example). Images like this take the form of a discourse that not only instructs the viewer about which natural environments are worth valuing, but also instructs about who should be performing and which roles they should be performing in these settings.


With respect to the AT, the Hiker is repeatedly depicted as pausing to appreciate the view. The Hiker is portrayed as a contemplative icon who considers the big picture, possesses existential clarity, and appreciates a good view.

As myth, this representation completes the ritual rite of passage sequence. The Hiker
has realized the objective of the quest which turned out to be the journey itself. But it was not just the journey, because once the liminoid experience of the hike is completed, the cognitive effects persist. In the lexicon of Turner (1969), the initiated person transitions to the post-liminal phase of “aggregation”: “The wisdom (mana) that is imparted in sacred liminality is not just an aggregation of words and sentences; it has ontological value, it refashions the very being of the neophyte” (Turner 1969, p.364). Hiker comes away not just as a wiser woman but as an incarnation of enlightenment borne out of the ritual process.

In virtually all narratives of the trail, reintegration into the larger social structure is implicit. The story ends at the top of the mountain or at the trail exit. Notably, there are few images of the actual reintegration process. Several guidebooks include a section describing the difficulty hikers encounter and the meaninglessness they feel upon their return. A cartoon published in the New Yorker magazine and subsequently in other AT literature demonstrates this (Figure 14) and indicates both a deep affinity for the identity of the Hiker and its lack of meaning in the larger unbelieving society.
4.3 Cartographic Discourse Analysis Findings

In this section, I present the results of my cartographic discourse analysis. By applying Wood and Fels’s (1986) intra- and extra-significant coding scheme to a set of six well-known historical maps of the AT, I identified how shape the landscape mythology of the AT. These conclusions are based upon the position that while maps are routinely used as tools to locate, identify, and provide information about landscape features, they simultaneously serve to enshrine power, meaning, and mythologies in the landscape. In his book *The New Nature of Maps*, Harley (2001) advances the idea that maps should be regarded critically as ideologically informed discourses that make some worlds possible, rather than as objective distillations of reality. The maps of the AT have been put precisely to this use, and, in fact, the AT provides a uniquely lucid example of the link between cartographic discourse and material landscape formation. The analysis is organized.
chronologically. It begins with MacKaye’s 1921 published proposal map, then proceeds on to a discussion of maps published by Nature Magazine in 1934, National Geographic in 1949, 1972, 1987, and finally a contemporary wall map produced jointly by the National Park Service and Appalachian Trail Conservancy in 2014.

4.3.1 Map One: Benton MacKaye 1921

The article “An Appalachian Trail” by Benton MacKaye (1921), published in *The Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, was the first public articulation of the concept of a contiguous long-distance Appalachian Trail (Figure 15). MacKaye’s map and text craft a vision, rationale, means of construction, route, and most importantly an underlying ideology that directs the place-making project of the Appalachian Trail to today.

In the decades since publication of the article, popular press articles exposed a broader audience to the AT, and nearly each article included maps of the trail. Especially in the early decades, maps made the project visible and intelligible in ways that course-grained, black-and-white photos and accompanying text could not. Coupled with captivating narratives and suggestive images, this discourse transformed a corridor of mountainous terrain of eastern North America into the Appalachian Trail. In the process, many of the initial ideological elements proposed by MacKaye were retained and retransmitted as a persistent mythology. Over the decades the myth became more elaborate and nuanced, but its core ideology established the expectations of participants for the subsequent one hundred years. An initial review of MacKay’s 1921 map provides a window into these workings and a foundation for the analysis.
by a labor group in New York City. They have erected a sawmill on their tract of 2000 acres and have built the bungalows of their community from their own timber.

Farm camps might ultimately be supplemented by permanent forest camps through the acquisition (or lease) of wood and timber tracts. These of course should be handled under a system of forestry so as to have a continuously growing crop of material. The object sought might be accomplished through long term timber sale contracts with the Federal Government on some of the Appalachian National Forests. Here would be another opportunity for permanent, steady, healthy employment in the open.

Elements of Dramatic Appeal

The results achievable in the camp and scouting life are common knowledge to all who have passed beyond the tenderfoot stage therein. The camp community is a sanctuary and a refuge from the scramble of every-day worldly commercial life. It is in essence a retreat from profit. Cooperation replaces antagonism, trust replaces suspicion, emulation replaces competition. An Appalachian trail, with its camps, communities, and spheres of influence along the skyline, should, with reasonably good management, accomplish these achievements. And they possess within them the elements of a deep dramatic appeal.
Wood and Fels (1986) provide a structure for deconstructing cartographic discourse. It comprises two categories: intra-significant and extra-significant codes. Intra-significant codes are elements of the map that facilitate communication. The attributes of symbols, planer dimensions, size, value, texture, color, orientation, and shape are varied in such a way that the reader is made to understand that they represent either real-world features or ideas that have been affixed to them. The intra-significant code set can be deconstructed and clarified as iconic, tectonic, temporal, linguistic, and presentational codes; each will be described as they are applied to the specifics of the map. Map makers employ these intra-significant codes to facilitate the communication of their messages, and, in turn, maps are employed in the service of myth-making in the world through extra-significant codes. The extra-significant code is an amalgam of thematic, topical, historical, rhetorical, and utilitarian codes.

The first and most obvious set of representations at work are iconic codes, or map symbols, with attributes varying in size, value, texture, color, and shape. The iconic codes in the 1921 map (trail route, rail lines, water bodies, city points, shaded public lands, and political boundaries) provide a not-so-subtle indication of its subject matter and objective. The view is first drawn to the thick black cord of the main trail. This line frays at its ends into branch trails denoted with dashed lines. Surrounding most of this is a hachured area that is meant to indicate mountainous areas. Rail lines, shown as medium-thickness hachures, are the only prominent transportation features on the map. Dots of varying sizes, apparently representing population, are used to indicate cities. The distribution of these cities is notable, emphasizing a densely populated northeastern United States in contrast to an empty South. The map does not employ color or value as graphic variables. This may be for financial or technical reasons, but results in a figure/ground relationship between the land and water that
is not readily apparent in some areas.

Space, orientation, scale, projection, and perspective define the tectonic codes of the maps. The area of coverage is the eastern portion of the United States from northern Florida to Maine and from the Atlantic coast to the Ohio River Valley. The projection, orientation, scale, and extent used in 1921 established a pattern repeated in many of the subsequent trail-overview maps.

Temporal codes link the maps to distinct time periods, emphasized by the prominence of railroad lines. The absence of southern cities also signifies the era. Although the Civil War had ended more than fifty years prior to this first map, there are no features labeled in the southern states with the exception of Mount Mitchell. As a New Englander wrote the article and the political and economic centers of the U.S. were in the northern states, an unstated code might be read into this conspicuous absence.

Linguistic codes use text to add meaning to the map. For example, the title of the 1921 article “An Appalachian Trail” is notable for the weakness of the titular proclamation. The use of the indefinite article “an” indicates that it was one of multiple possibilities. By 1928, an article with the title “The Appalachian Trail” appeared in The Mentor magazine. The shift from the indefinite article “an” to the definite article “the” is a significant linguistic shift from the indefinite to the singular and iconic.

It appears that more than the name was mutable in these formative years. The 1921 article has the trail running from the highest point in the north, Mount Washington, New Hampshire, to the highest point in the south, Mount Mitchell, North Carolina. By 1934, the southern terminus was Stone Mountain, Georgia; between 1937 and 1958 it was Mount Oglethorpe, Georgia, after which it was moved to its current location at Springer Mountain, Georgia.
The presentational code expresses the visual hierarchy of the map. In this respect, the 1921 map is clearly dominated by the trail. The shaded mountainous region serves to highlight its context as other than the undifferentiated blank backdrop. The odd diagonal shape of the trail and the eastern coastline of the United States is magnified by a bounding box that attempts to contain it and minimize blank space. The resulting compromise is a distraction. Subsequent generations of cartographers will proffer a variety of solutions to this enduring issue.

Codes of extra-signification are the ways in which maps are used in discourse or as propaganda. MacKay’s map clearly serves these purposes. It is intended to show what the text can only describe. The map has makes the trail real in a way that photos and narratives of the completed project can’t.

The journal article reflects the social position of the author and the AT concept. By publicizing the project in The Journal of the American Institute of Architects, the idea assumes a particular social status. As a well-regarded regional planner with a Harvard education, MacKaye understands that status is vital to the trail project. He is sending a message to a very specific public through a high status journal in which such ideas are taken seriously. He certainly understands that to be accepted, the author and the product must both fit certain norms reflected in linguistic style and a practiced convention of map rendering.

The journal’s index contextualizes Mackay’s article and provides a forum in which its thematic code, the AT proposal, is appropriately understood. The index suggests that the lofty regional plan for “An Appalachian Trail” is in line with a broader stream of progressive projects. The subjects of other articles in this same issue include “reserving productive areas within and around cities,” “labor and the housing problem,” “aerial and architectural photography,” and “architecture and craftsman.” MacKay’s proposal for a
regional planning project fits the spirit of the publication. Contextualized in this way, it is afforded serious attention by readers who are in financial and political positions and able to act.

Similarly, the subsequent popular press coverage acts as booster of the trail idea. From the iconic illustration of The Mentor magazine to the array of maps and pictures published by NGS between 1949 and 2009, the subject is the goodness and rightness of the trail, a message tailored to an affluent white audience capable of taking advantage of its existence. Through this media discourse, the Appalachian Mountains are transformed into the AT. A common feature of this discourse is that it mostly ignores the existing people and their landscape mythologies. Residents are routinely portrayed as tokenized figures that symbolically behave in backward ways. In this respect, the trail mimics a long history of rural development programs, such as those of the Tennessee Valley Authority in which MacKaye was professionally involved.

MacKay’s map represents a hubris that radiates racial and class superiority, a message that is conveyed in numerous ways on the map. One of the most obvious is its use of topic codes. These codes transform space into place and, at the most fundamental level, assert the cultural-political overlay of the United States onto the North American continent. This is a process of erasure: other ways of seeing the landscape are made invisible. The 1921 map achieves this by replacing existing cultural landscapes with the delineation “mountainous areas.” This designation transforms a diverse set of inhabited places into an anonymous, perhaps empty, space. In this way, the proposed route is aligned with the two characteristics necessary for the establishment of a national park in this era: aesthetic scenery and limited economic value.

The maps, text, and images from the article are composed of signs that are both
universally understandable and unique to a very specific cultural moment in time. In the 1921 map, the most evident historical code is the inclusion of railroad lines rather than roads or interstate highways. One of the tenets of the trail idea is that it is accessible for the masses; in 1921 the railroads and branch trails extending to regional cities were the anticipated means of transportation. The boosterish language – reflective of modern, progressive, paternalistic, and spirit-of-the-day views – speaks just as clearly about the historical period.

One consistent thread is the abiding purpose of the trail articulated in 1921 as an alternative form of rural regional development, which allows an anti-urban mode of experience and communion with nature. The tone carries forward, little diminished in its rhetorical bluster. In 1921, the myth is established in a modern and communitarian can-do spirit. The directness of text and map reflect a distinctly upper-class paternalistic tone and set of objectives. The activity is wholesome embodiment of boy scouting values such as community, volunteerism, and anti-militarism. The article links the idea to other such initiatives that include the scouting movement, the Appalachian Mountain Green Mountain hiking clubs, and prominent, intentional, utopian communities. At the same time, MacKaye articulates the trail as a direct reaction against the rapid changes of industrialization, war, and epidemic. It is a patriarchal plan for the future. The mythology of the AT begins in 1921, and it is the function of the utilitarian codes to make the vision a reality. While a vast historical foundation and cultural superstructure brought it within the realm of possibility, the map made it real. The text sets the stage, describing its route and the character of the development. But the map shows its audience a thing that has already been made. The myth is not only already borne, it is fully developed in this rendering. It is the ultimate justification: the trail must come to be because it already is. The map is propaganda in its
most persuasive articulation. The editors of subsequent articles about the AT understood this as well, and they used maps to their own ends to expand public awareness, to deepen the myth, and to institutionalize a belief in the AT.

**4.3.2 Map Two: Nature Magazine 1934**

MacKay’s 1921 map was central to his proposal for an Appalachian Trail. In 1934, *Nature Magazine* published a short article and a map that reveal the rapid implementation of the plan in the intervening years (Figure 16). This map is significant, because it documents a fundamental change that has occurred from an AT to the AT. The generalized vision had become a concretized landscape. Furthermore, the map literally illustrates this process through which a unique AT mythology is constructed by assembling a cross-section of American mythologies.

The map’s codes of intra-signification reveal how *Nature Magazine* harnessed cultural meanings of specific graphic symbols to fill the AT landscape with particular messages. The hand-drawn map employs several sets of iconic codes to contextualize the AT. First, and most prominently, the route of the AT stands out in a thick black line. Along this route the trail is marked by an incongruous set of mountain, gap, forest, and park icons. However, the illustrated pictograms are the most intriguing set of features. They distill regional identity mythologies to isolated icons.

In Maine, there are the canoers and leaping fish. In upstate New York, there are “lynx,” “hermit thrush,” and “Indian legends.” In New Jersey, there is a mosquito. In Pennsylvania, there are “deer” and “bear.” In Virginia, there are “fox,” “turkey,” and a golden horseshoe. In West Virginia, there are “grouse” and a log cabin. North Carolina has an unidentifiable object with a bull on it and “D. Boone.” South Carolina has “possum” and “rhododendrons.” And Georgia has the “mocking bird” and “cotton.” Not all of the icons are
labeled; those that are have been put in quotation marks.

The linear form and scale of the AT remain a complex cartographic conundrum: presentation of the entire trail in one image while maintaining a north-south page orientation while keeping the shape of the states and U.S. coastline, and minimizing awkward blank space on the page. Each of the six maps employs a slightly different set of tectonic codes to reconcile the unique spatial form of the trail with standard presentational codes. The 1934 map solves this by orienting north to the upper left-hand corner which allows the total width to be minimized and presented in a standard rectangular box. This arrangement is repeated in many of the magazine article maps that appear in the subsequent decades, and bears a resemblance to the linear format of the 2000-2014 NPS wall map.

The presentational code has another notable feature in the use of the AT logo. The A-crossed-T icon functions as a crest, it consolidates meaning down to its absolute essential form. The entire planning project is represented in a single glyph.

The map reflects the state of the AT in 1934. The temporal code that documents this is the incomplete “scouted” section in Maine. This final leg of the AT was not finished until 1937 and the map therefore represents a brief time in which the trail was fully formed conceptually, but not yet physically.
Figure 16. Cartographic Discourse Analysis: Nature Magazine 1934.
Among the linguistic codes, one of the more notable decisions was the designation of six “districts” along the length of the trail. The function of this subdivision is unclear, but it does have two noteworthy features. First, the ordering of the districts begins at the northern terminus at Mount Katahdin, and it concludes in the south at the symbolized but unnamed southern terminus. Second, the districts in the north and central regions take specific state-based names – New England, New York-New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland-Virginia – while the two southern districts are named Unaka, after the national forest, and Southern, a general and subtly dismissive term. This elevation of the north and central portions as more important, to the southern “backwater” is a theme common to many of the AT maps and photographs.

The map’s extra-significant codes work in the world to transform these intra-significant symbolic meanings into an AT landscape mythology. The pictographs and legend are used to establish the theme. The legends of “districts” and icons of “Indian legends,” “D. Boone,” “log cabin,” “cotton,” and assorted wildlife terms are not included to clarify so much as they are to dictate the terms of engagement. Through these, the map projects a mythological referencing of pioneering, adventure (the Indian legend located in New York is a sure reference to James Fennimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*), the savage, American heritage, and wilderness. The inclusion of “cotton” to stand for Georgia cannot be understood without mental reference to slavery. Collectively the map frames the AT as a way to access a mythological halcyon America of eclectic regional character and natural variety.

This reading depends heavily on cultural topic codes, circulating beyond the map. To understand Georgia + cotton = slavery, and NY + Indian legend = *The Last of the Mohicans*,
requires a broader cultural understanding and base of knowledge of symbols then any map could provide. It also underscores how maps function, not as windows into the “real world,” but as finely-tuned lenses for focusing on very specific subjects. One of the main functions of this map is to assert the importance of the AT and other political institutions (such as states, cities, and the nation) through its utilitarian codes. While the latter have, by 1934, been worn into cognitive and material existence, it is exactly this type of taken-for-granted reiteration that maintains their viability. The revelation of this map is that through this very type of discourse the cartographic prophesy of the 1921 map has become a material formation. The author of the map sketches a line in paper and ink that inevitably works to inscribe it in minds and earth.

Each map reviewed here shows, tells, and constitutes the AT in a way that makes it conceivable. The maps make the AT comprehensible as a contiguous entity and one comprehensive place. Without them the AT cannot be easily understood as a singularity. Photos can reveal the myriad of the individual places, and text can narrate the trail, but it is the map that uniquely allows the AT to become visible and therefore real.

The pictograms of Indian legends, D. Boone, the log cabin, recreation, and wildlife also function as historical codes. They provide a legacy and continuity into which the AT myth can slip. The AT becomes another distinctly American place in the sequence, and also a way of traveling across space and back through time. None of the icons refer to the future. Rather, the icons orient the AT toward the past, to a mythological era between settlement and 1934. As a recreational landscape, the AT becomes a means for the viewer to both conceive of and participate in these signifiers of the past. These historical icons reassert MacKay’s utopian vision that the AT is a liminoid space set apart from contemporary developed life.
The map’s rhetorical codes reverberate through the delicately rendered lines and caricatures. It tells the viewer that this place should not be taken too seriously, which is a perfect way to disarm criticism of the ideology. If people object to the quasi-governmental landscape appropriation, the map suggests that it is all in good fun. It is a wholesomely American place where everyone can participate in strenuous outdoor recreation.

The skillful illustration of the 1934 map brings the AT within reach of a broad audience, while its discourse makes it more appealing to certain segments. This underlying message links the project’s growing mythology to a broader set of American myths. The particular AT landscape that it promotes is carried to a broad readership. The next map published by the NGS in 1949 expands this exposure even more.

4.3.3 Map Three: The National Geographic Society 1949

The NGS published its first article on the AT in 1949. This article included a map of the trail stretching diagonally across two pages (Figure 17). The map was typical of the magazine’s treatment of most subjects in the period. The most significant discursive function of the article and map was to legitimize the AT for a broad national audience. In the process of this partnership between the NGS and the AT, the trail landscape was imbued with a new set of codes.

As maker of the map, the NGS chose a specific set of iconic codes reflective of both the type of place they understood it to be and the type of institution they envisioned the NGS to be. As with the other maps, the route of the trail is brought to the foreground by a thick dashed black line. The line functions as a territorial claim to the space around the trail. The route is populated with 17 named mountains, eight named mountain ranges, eight water bodies, four parks, two towns, one shelter, three mountain passes, and seven unidentified elevation points. Visually, they mark the AT not as a contiguous whole, but as a sequence of
places punctuating an inconsequential space. These points of interest suggest that the AT is primarily a natural mountain landscape contextualized within a non-descript land of states dappled with cities.

The inclusion of elevations and a hill-shade base layer illuminates how tectonic codes are employed to emphasize the mountainous character of the landscape. Subtle backgrounding of mountains allows their inclusion without significantly adding to a busy overlay of point and line features. They function in a similar way as the illustrated icons of the 1934 map, suggesting the region’s character. The other maps being analyzed reveal a slightly different regime of emphasis. For example, the dark-hatched areas of MacKaye’s 1921 map made mountains a central feature of his message, while *Nature Magazine’s* 1934 map barely acknowledges their presence. But mountains are not merely terrain; they also symbolize wilderness, marginal agricultural economy, adventure, and sublime grandeur. The use of point elevation symbols (such as “4768+”) also reinforces the mountainous character. But even such small symbols serve multiple purposes. By including precise data points, the NGS frames the map as a scientific representation and itself as a scientific institution. The viewer sees these points and reads them as marks of cartographic quality. And because of the common confusion of precision with accuracy, the NGS gains social prestige.
Figure 17. Cartographic Discourse Analysis: The National Geographic Society 1949.
The two most notable temporal codes of the map are the absence of color and the location of the southern terminus at Mount Oglethorpe. The map reflects the state of the trail in 1949. As a gray-scale map, the image is dated to a period that predated ubiquitous use of color imagery in the NGS’s publications. Most of the other maps, illustrations, and photographs in the issue are similarly gray-scale. Mount Oglethorpe stands out because it ceased to be the southern terminus in 1958. The terminus was relocated to avoid encroachment of residential development on the trail.

The linguistic code specifies features (states, cities, water bodies, and natural features) along the trail’s route. Noting natural features reiterates the landscape’s natural character by marking unique points of interest. In this respect, the map can be used as a tour guide as it promotes a vision of the AT as a land of scenic wonders in contrast to the nondescript spaces that surround the trail’s space.

The collective impact of the map’s presentational codes frames the trail and the NGS in an aura of seriousness. This differs markedly from the 1921 and 1934 examples. Whereas the previous maps displayed the hallmarks of a handcrafted illustration, this map is an exercise in regimented professional draftsmanship. The line weights and tone are exactingly uniform; dots are circular, stars crisp, and cross-hairs tight. The map, consistently and in line with cartographic conventions, uses san serif and serif fonts, italics, bold text, and size to indicate qualitative distinctions. The density of features reinforces the central focus on the trail, with peripheral spaces left comparatively generalized and the text box and scale bar made rigidly symmetrical. Together these features reflect a technical competence that permeates the map’s other meanings, marking them as accurate and factual.
The map builds on its intra-significant codes to elaborate a mythology of the AT and NGS through its extra-significant codes. The thematic code draws on the features of the iconic code to present the AT as the extant landscape. The map states matter-of-factly that the AT exists. This is an interesting assertion considering that, when the map was published in 1949, the trail was in poor repair after years of wartime and post-war neglect. Instead of dwelling on this reality, the NGS focuses on its scenic environmental features. This discourse did not originate with the NGS, but rather through the repetition of this selective focus. In what will prove to be a long partnership, they have ensured that the AT would be associated with wilderness.

The topic codes delineate the spatial extent that the AT myth will encompass globally. The dark, dashed line marks the center of the myth while the outer bounds of the myth are left less clear. Where does the AT stop? Is it at the line’s edge, at the features in close proximity, at the edges of the mountainous landscape, or does it encompass the entire region of the eastern US? The NGS believed that AT was best understood within this broad context. The map portrays the AT not so much as a distinct place in its own right but as a transect of America. In a way that is similar to the 1934 map’s regional pictograms, this map employs a field of linguistic codes to present an AT mythology across the trail space. As the AT envelops these places and their unique meanings, it takes on their essential character. In the process, the AT becomes the rugged natural heart within a modern civilized-urbanized nation-state.

The historical code of the map transforms this moment into a trail era, which is best understood within the sequence of maps. The 1921 map initiates a trail era of utopian aspiration, the 1934 map crafts one of playful recreation, and the 1949 NGS map is characterized by self-serious technocratic professionalism. This rhetorical code internalizes
the rational geographic scientism of the post-war NGS and projects it on the landscape. But this message is complicated by images and text that ground the trail in outdoor recreation. The map caption says, “The A.T. links more than 2,000 miles of scenic highlands. Along this skyline profile, hikers wander from granite-studded uplands of New England through the hazy Blue Ridge to the majestic Great Smokies to the rounded hills of the South.” Here we find rosy prose. The tone is one of enjoyment, scenic delight, and unhurried wandering in the majestic landscape. In this way, the trail becomes a landscape of serious recreation. There is room for casual nature-lovers, strenuously-disciplined adventure, and the civilizing influence of lodges. Together the map and accompanying article defined the era for the AT, legitimizing the trail as an American institution worth the serious consideration of a generation of armchair geographers and recreationalists.

This is also the utilitarian function of the map in the world. If the 1921 map lays a vision, and the 1934 map plays with the idea, then the 1949 map institutes it as a cultural force. Through the broad legitimizing exposure provided by the NGS, this AT was made real for Americans, in a way and on a scale it had not previously achieved.

The three main functions of the 1949 NGS map were to significantly expand awareness of the AT to a broad national audience, to mark it as a valid landscape project, and to establish its mythology as American scenic wilderness. With the 1949 map and article, the NGS initiated a relationship that was a vital source of publicity spanning the balance of the 20th century.

4.3.4 Map Four: The National Geographic Society 1972

In 1972, the NGS again turned its gaze on the AT. The resulting book reported the journey of three companions as they hiked sections of the trail from Georgia to Maine (Appendix E). The book contains maps that break the trail into eight sections, each section
stretching across two facing pages. Three maps, the southern (Figure 18) and northern (Figure 20) termini and the trail running through New England (Figure 19) were selected for closer analysis. These maps are the first of the set to use color, but in most respects they continue to make the trail comprehensible to a broad audience and frame the AT as a natural environment that traverses distinct American regions.

The most notable change from previous maps is the use of color icons. The icons of these maps can be divided into explicit subjects (e.g., the AT route line, shelters, wildlife and points of interest, and contextualizing features like land and water, terrain, conservation areas, political boundaries, major roads and cities). The maps emphasize this subject and context relationship through size and color in an unexpected way. A backdrop of thin lines and muted colors allows a small, yet boisterous, red trail and bold black legend symbols to assail the viewer.
Figure 18. Cartographic Discourse Analysis: The National Geographic Society 1972, The South.
Figure 19. Cartographic Discourse Analysis Findings: The National Geographic Society 1972, New England.
Swamps, lakes, and streams mingle with rugged mountains and deep forests in Maine. The trail winds 275 miles from the New Hampshire line to Mount Katahdin, cutting through an isolated wilderness heavily scored by glaciation. Slim white birches grow in dense stands; thickets of wild cranberries and blueberries bear fruit in late summer. Moose browse and beavers build lodges and dams in the many small lakes and streams along the trail. Foxes and porcupines scurry through camping areas after dark. Starting from Monson—last supply point on the trail—a well-provisioned hiker can travel the 120 miles to Mount Katahdin in ten days. Climbing Katahdin itself and descending again fill a strenuous day.

Figure 20. Cartographic Discourse Analysis Findings: The National Geographic Society, 1972, Maine.
The tectonic codes (e.g., scale and orientation) of the maps speak through a conventionalized language that adds reality and factuality to the mapped landscape. The hand-sketched hill-shading provides an example. Some areas are shaded and some are not. But it establishes a visual pattern that is understood as a symbol for a mountain and valley terrain. This is supported by watercourses that abide by the rules of space and gravity in this map world. The map-world’s symbols mimic the rules that viewers understand intuitively which facilitates a faith that the map will conform to the rules of the world (i.e. be realistic).

The expertly-crafted graphics of these symbols combine as a presentational code that connects quality of rendering with accuracy of information. Crisp lines become crisp information. High quality visual display suggests excellence of the institution. The cartographic merit of these maps provides a public relations tool to promote the NGS as an institution of integrity, as much as it is advertising for the trail.

On the map, the temporal code – a robust highway system, the color palate and style of the features, and the language of the captions – marks the time. Linguistic codes name features of importance on the map and they serve to orient and legitimize parks and preserves, states, water bodies, towns, roads, prominent mountains, and otherwise unintelligible icons of animals, camps, shelters, and fire towers for viewers unfamiliar with these places.

The map’s extra-significant codes reveal the AT, framed by the NGS, as a landscape of exotic places. Foremost is that the map works to make the AT a real place, and then it populates this reality with an assortment of curios, moods, and values.

Its thematic codes focus attention on the mythical elements to be emphasized. The dominant red line icon of the AT route transects the map space, ordering an ecology of associated symbols. In this world of the AT, water and undulating terrain are fundamental
forces. This is a landscape of wildlife; pictographic beaver, moose, bear, and fox dwell here. A tangle of understated fire towers, towns, roads, and boundaries suggests that human design is faint and of lesser significance. The map’s comprehensive theme is the AT and its wilderness.

By projecting the trail this way, the NGS hides its values in plain sight. This is subtly evident in use of Native American and European-American toponyms. Not only have Native American identifiers largely been supplanted by European-American names, but each is also aligned with distinct types of features. Native American names have come to symbolize nature in rivers, mountains, and parks, while European-American names represent power and progress reflected in cities, states, and highways. Native Americans stand for the past; European-Americans stand for the future. The map demonstrates how thoroughly saturated the landscape is in the mythology of erasure.

Similarly, the three map sections’ topic codes transform the three spaces into regions that are then aligned with very specific cultural value sets via rhetorical codes. The map uses color, line, text, and page breaks to construct places transected by the AT. While the maps are not the spaces, they are as close to the mapped places as the viewer will ever come. These mapped landscapes do not exist, or they only exist in the mental map of the landscape created in the dialectic between the map and viewer. The map’s disciplined text and line, and the whimsy of the animal symbols and hand-sketched hill-shades, project an entertaining realism. It has the pretense of stylishness; it is casual, yet ordered. It entertains and informs, and it keeps readers’ attention at a superficial level commensurate with its recreational subject.

The map’s trick is to employ rhetorical codes to makes these places into their stereotypes. It reinforces myths. The myths work through anticipation to make these places
into the image of the myth. The captions speak for themselves:

[Southern Backwards Appalachia]
Nantahala, Waucheche, Cheoah: Haunting Indian place names persist in the southernmost Appalachians, once the homeland of the Cherokee Nation. From Springer Mountain to Fontana Dam, the trail passes through wooded game preserves sheltering deer, bears, foxes, and wild turkeys. Stubbornly independent highlanders living near this 160-mile section farm and make handicrafts and moonshine, although the number of illegal stills decreases each year. The last few decades have seen a revival of arts and crafts in this economically depressed region; with government and church assistance, several cooperatives have organized in some of the larger towns to sell pottery and textiles, baskets and furniture.

The Cherokee are still there, but the NGS’s discourse has rendered them mythical and made them apparitions! There is an implication that this backward region is a natural environment populated by wild animals and poor willfully-ignorant, law-breaking moonshiners in need of institutional assistance to move beyond subsistence farming and basket weaving. The high culture of NGS frames this anachronistic region pityingly as an exotic land of anti-progress:

[Refined New England]
From the Delaware Water Gap to the Vermont line, the trail passes through several state forests, parks, and wildlife preserves, as well as private land. One of the most popular sections crosses Harriman and Bear Mountain State Parks, part of the Palisades Interstate Park system. Hikers can visit Bear Mountain's Trailside Museum and explore many nature paths. Deer and beavers inhabit the Audubon Wildlife Center and Miles Wildlife Sanctuary near Sharon, Connecticut. Music Mountain presents concerts by the Berkshire String Quartet; Tanglewood provides a summer home for the Boston Symphony Orchestra; and Jacob's Pillow offers ballet performances. A day's hike leads to the highest point in the rolling Berkshire Hills, the 3,491-foot summit of Mount Greylock. This 300-mile stretch ends near Williamstown, Massachusetts, where Williams College opened in 1793.

Whereas Appalachia has “wooded game preserves,” the cultured east coast has state parks, an interstate park system, museums, Audubon wildlife centers, wildlife sanctuaries, the Berkshire String Quartet, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, ballet performances and a 200-
The region stands for progress juxtaposed with Appalachia’s backwardness. This is the gilded repose from which the NGS and associated cultural, financial, and political powers smugly congratulate themselves on a job well done, while continuing a long history of pulling down the native peoples of Appalachia.

[Maine Wilderness]
Swamps, lakes, and streams mingle with rugged mountains and deep forests in Maine. The trail winds 275 miles from the New Hampshire line to Mount Katahdin, cutting through an isolated wilderness heavily scored by glaciation. Slim white birches grow in dense stands; thickets of wild cranberries and blueberries bear fruit in late summer. Moose browse and beavers build lodges and dams in the many small lakes and streams along the trail. Foxes and porcupines scurry through camping areas after dark. Starting from Monson - last supply point on the trail - a well-provisioned hiker can travel the 120 miles to Mount Katahdin in ten days. Climbing Katahdin itself and descending again fill a strenuous day.

The third region is an “isolated wilderness” of “rugged mountains and deep forests” where wild creatures of the night reveal no fear of humanity. The brave traveler should plan carefully. Supplies are scarce, and the way is strenuous. This is neither the cultural backwoods, nor the front stage; it is a region that is wild in its inhumanity.

All three of these descriptions are illusions. They are pervasive cultural fabrications, composed in an office by writers who are parroting the most superficial of regional generalities. There are consequences, however, are they are very real. The discourses in which they traffic, and perpetuate, have economic and experiential implications for the people living in and visiting these places.

These captions also provide a historical code for the regions. Maine is encoded as the primordial past, a wilderness in stasis, and the land that time forgot. It is a landscape preserved out of time, marked physically by a glacial age and populated by its remnant wildlife. Moving forward, Appalachia is encoded as the cultural past of the prehistoric native and the backward highlander. It is portrayed as a retrograde region dominated by
large orange-brown blocks of cultural and developmental inactivity. The discourse frames New York and New England as the locus of civilization, culture, and progress; it is atop the hierarchy. It is a place to be emulated, looked up to, and celebrated. This region is the frenetic present, filled with a collage of cultural institutions, intended by the NGS to be understood as a familiar present or an anticipated future.

As with the 1949 map, the true work of these 1972 NGS maps is to reinforce the institutional presence of both the mapmaker and the AT project. This is the utilitarian code, the map functioning as propaganda. The NGS uses the map to promote itself. Through the map’s high level of graphic craft and its subject of adventure-wilderness-American heritage, the NGS can frame itself as a certain kind of institution. With every quality map, article, illustration, and photograph, the NGS reiterates that it is America’s reliable source of visually-captivating documentary reporting.

The map and associated book serve as a tool for promoting the AT to a broad national audience. Just as the NGS gains stature for reporting on the trail, so too does the trail gain legitimacy by being reported upon by such a reputable institution as the NGS. Both require a continuous flow of resources to endure, and the stability and longevity of this partnership reflects the mutual benefits gained.

4.3.5 Map Five: The National Geographic Society 1987

The 1987 map is perhaps the “icon-richest” of the set (Figure 21). The map is layered with icons and is presented within an illustration of a forest floor. On the map, a thick red line marks the trail route as the theme and visual center. Mountainous terrain is suggested by hill-shading. Parks and forests are designated by shades of green. Private lands are represented in pale orange. And water bodies are sky blue. Black dots mark the locations of towns, while dots and areas of yellow indicate the extent of larger cities. Gray
lines mark highways and state lines.

Figure 21. Cartographic Discourse Analysis Findings: National Geographic Society 1987.
At the tectonic level, this map is unique among those analyzed. It breaks the trail space into three sections that run diagonally across two facing pages. This relationship between the parts of this unusual arrangement is explained by a small reference map illustrating how the sections fit together.

The temporal codes locate the map in the contemporary 1980s. This is indicated by both the map’s content and its graphic attributes. For example, the highway system has replaced MacKaye’s 1921 railroad network as the means of accessing the trail. Map symbols and the caption – “the trail lies within a day’s drive of half of the nation’s population” – mark this change. The map’s use of color and the indication of cultural institutions of the era, such as national parks and the ATC’s headquarters in Harpers Ferry, mark the progression of time from the older maps.

The map is filled with a common linguistic codes that label with names and locations of trailside towns, mountains, protected areas, and shelters, and even provide elevations. The map’s caption supports the overall thematic tone that frames the AT as a recreational wilderness.

This information is organized in a coherent presentational code that underscore two important messages. First, the map establishes a hierarchy of cities and protected areas over generic rural space. Urban and protected areas are marked with linguistic and iconic codes upon an undifferentiated rural backdrop. Second, the 1987 map is embedded in a painting of a forest floor. The meaning is conveyed that the map is a map, and the illustration directs how the landscape represented in the map should be imagined. The illustration links the map and the caption to assert the naturalness of the AT. Notably this work of art borrows from the kit fox photo image (Illustration 4) that was published the following year in the NGS’s book about the AT.
The extra-significant codes of NGS’s 1987 map reiterate their now well-established myth that the AT is an aesthetic wilderness landscape and recreational escape for American urbanites. This is clearly evident in the thematic dominance of both the protected and urban areas, as well as in the forest floor illustration.

Spatially, this is designated by topic codes that primarily designate the areas on and around the trail as forest, parkland, or generic unidentified terrain. Urban areas are prominently displayed as distant from the trail, and they diminish to mere points in closer proximity to the route. The woodland background underscores the message that the AT is a natural environment.

More generally, the 1987 map reaffirms the NGS’s commitment to the place-making project of the AT. The map is a vision of the AT made into a reality on the land. For decade after decade, the NGS has highlighted in its publications the trail’s naturalness, while also downplaying its function as a space for social non-conformity. MacKaye’s original vision of utopian settlements was never realized, but the culture of the AT has always retained aspects of this aspiration. NGS has simply focused on the environment of the space rather than also wading into the marginally-provocative subject of the AT as a liminal space. It is not that the NGS completely ignores this quality, but this seems to be beside the point they are clearly endeavoring to make. The map and accompanying article orient their depiction of the space to conservative, white, middle class tastes by focusing on the idea that this trail is accessible wilderness, but it’s not too wild. The AT is made to be an exotic, yet benign, recreational landscape where prospective, affluent participants can commune with nature and also access civilized comforts.

In many respects, this is indicative of the historical era that the map portrays. At this point in the late 1980s, affluent middle-class America is increasingly grappling with
environmentalism. The NGS’s focus on recreation is understandable given the prosperity of this class. Ironically, it is this material wealth and urban lifestyle that make escapes to a wilderness so appealing. The map facilitates daydreams of American adventure, simple natural living, and protection of sensitive natural ecosystems.

This message is driven home through the map’s caption:

The Appalachian Trail

An avenue of solitude through wilderness and rural countryside, the trail lies within a day’s drive of half of the nation’s population. Proposed by conservationist Benton MacKaye in 1921 and begun the next year, the trail was completed in 1937 when segments were connected.

First “thru-hiked” in 1948, the route is marked today by white two-by-six-inch blazes painted on rocks and trees. Every year some one hundred hikers travel the whole length, taking from four to six months, but countless short-term users also extol the trail’s camaraderie, personal challenge, and intimacy with nature.

The deep allure of the AT myth is that readers can actually participate in it. It is accessible to the masses, and yet it provides solitary communion with nature. Simultaneously, it offers the potential for fellowship and the grand escapist fantasy of leaving it all behind and thru-hiking the whole trail. The framing of MacKaye as a conservationist, rather than a planner, is indicative of the landscape mythology this map weaves.

On a utilitarian level, the 1987 map reasserts the association between the NGS and AT. It brings an enticing vision of the trail to a new generation, couched in provocative language and illustrations. It highlights accessibility and communion with wilderness to speak a language accessible to this target audience. The map, the article, and a 1988 book promote the NGS as an American institution with a genuine commitment to the nation’s exceptional natural heritage. In the two decades following these publications, the NGS returned regularly to the subject of the AT, producing numerous smaller articles, a documentary film, and a wall map.
Figure 22. Cartographic Discourse Analysis Findings: National Park Service 2014.
The final analysis is of one produced by the NPS and the ATC (Figure 22) [See APPENDIX F for the full map]. This is the most recent of the maps analyzed. The map was obtained from the NPS’s AT web page, but it is commonly sold as a wall poster and comes as an insert with the ATC’s 2014 picture-book history of the trail. It is a slightly edited version of a map that has been available through the NPS and ATC since the mid-1990s.

The most visually dominant icons on the map are the multi-colored areas of the states, the uniform yellow of urban areas, the route of the AT in a dashed red line, the green of dedicated state and federal parks and forests, a web of beige and gray roads, and the blue waterbodies. The labels of the linguistic codes identified some of these features as places of significance. Many of the mountains along the trail route are labeled (e.g., “Baldpate Mtn 3812ft 1162m”), and this both marks their importance and demonstrates a NPS sensitivity to the international scientific and cultural practices of reflecting distances and elevations in metric units. The map has been periodically revised by the NGS/ATC to maintain its reflection of the present state of the AT. There are no dates on the map, but the highway system, sizes of urban areas, font style, and the diversity of identified protected areas conveys the conditions of the early 21st century.

Similar to the 1987 NGS map, this map strikingly contrasts the green conservation lands with yellow urban areas and muted earth-tones of the states that serve as the trail’s backdrop. The green-hued labels of the protected-area spaces suggests their importance as well as establishes a sense that these are natural, forested areas. The yellow urban centers have notably crept toward the trail. Both regions appear to be important relative to uniformly undistinguished spaces on the balance of the map. These blank spaces are particularly apparent when they coincide with the route of the AT, as they suggest that these areas are not natural, consequential, or worthy of protection. This may well reflect the
Another notable feature is the horizontal arrangement of the map and its close-cropping to the spaces around the trail. These tectonic codes set this map apart from the others that are analyzed. Among all the maps, this choice distorts the shape of the features most noticeably. In fact, the close cropping of the trail in the frame may represent an attempt to mask the obvious distortion of the states’ iconic shapes. In any case, this format dramatically emphasizes the linearity of the trail. Another prominent feature is the identification of every government conservation area along the trail’s length. Collectively, their naming reaffirms the spatial and regulatory authority of state and federal governments.

As a work of extra-signification, the map’s theme reaches beyond the obvious focus on the AT. Through the topic codes, the map is a vehicle for the state to assert its territorial control over the vast space that reaches well beyond the strictly defined trail corridor. The NPS employs the map as a spatial record of the places under its authority. Even at the very margins of the map, small national historic sites and monuments with no connection to the trail are included, further reinforcing the message.

With respect to the AT, the mere creation of a map is an acknowledgement by the federal government of the AT’s validity. Through it, the state blesses the trail project and cedes supervisory authority to identified private trail and hiking clubs. This point is worth considering a bit further. The ATC and its thirty-five constituent clubs are non-governmental organizations. The AT project has never been a government initiative. It is a private initiative that makes use of public lands. This is usually lost on a general public that mistakenly believes that the AT is a National Park Service institution. The AT is authorized through the NPS, but in reality a private entity oversees management of the trail.

This map is a document that is replete with historical codes that become evident over
time as features fade to become anachronisms. This map is intended as a source of up-to-date public information. But unlike the earlier maps, this is offered digitally and free of charge, which also allows the NGS to rather effortlessly make alterations as desired. From a critical perspective, the effect of this is to continuously assert the federal government’s presence.

The full message is couched in sleek rhetorical code. The sterile san serif font and uncompromising point, line, and polygon graphics, conform to a ubiquitous NPS cartographic format. The function of this is uniformity, legibility, communication of power, order, and rationality. The map makes statements of fact. It does not dwell in ambivalence or equivocate. The comprehensive message is one of unquestionable authority and dominion over this space. This certitude permeates the map, underscoring the omissions as well as the inclusions. To be excluded is simply not to exist.

Conversely, the included institutions will be seen by posterity to have existed in 2014. In reality, they are transitory cultural artifacts that are in a constant process of being contested and transformed. In the world, icons affixed to spaces, environmental systems, and groups of people are all imbued with instability. But the map makes no room for compromises. One of the greatest mythologies borne of this map is that they ever existed in the form they are presented.

Finally, the utilitarian codes reveal the coercive programs for which this map is employed by the NGS and ATC. The map functions, in the subtlest way, as propaganda, marking the contemporary legitimacy and prowess of these institutions. Power is manifested in the map; it flows through the NGS to the ATC and out to its constituent trail clubs. It provides a definitive reason for the ATC’s existence, defines the territory it controls, and showcases the landscape it has created. The map is a reaffirmation of the ATC’s and NGS’s
authorities to discipline the landscape through the AT project. By marking their domain in the map, they naturalize their regulatory regimes over the space *in situ*. What could be more normal and customary than a managing body laying down a few ground rules over its territory? The map both makes the landscape meaningful as the AT and annexes the space under the authority of the ATC and NGS.
V. SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

The volume of popular press visual materials about the AT is sizable and growing. Thousands of people casually consume these maps and photographs every day. Today’s three million annual users of the AT and the hundreds of thousands of volunteer-hours spent maintaining the trail are testaments to the success of this media campaign. The purpose of this research, therefore, was to understand the content and messages of this visual media, which have an allure over so many. My intention was to discern what these materials were saying both in aggregate and through their underlying messages so that I might better know the AT and how the power of visual media is intertwined with its ongoing development. Specifically I set out to answer the following three questions through this dissertation:

1. What people, places, and activities of the Appalachian Trail have been promoted through the NGS images published on the AT?
2. What underlying myths about the AT do these representations promote?
3. How does this visual discourse frame and construct a particular AT?

5.1 Summary of Findings

The visual media of the National Geographic Society lie at the center of this analysis, and through a content analysis I addressed the first of my research questions. Several quantitative patterns are evident in the more than four hundred images the Society produced between 1949 and 2014 about the AT. I identified six prominent landscape themes. Three of these landscape characteristics – wilderness, recreation, and exclusivity – were apparent by their quantitative emphasis. The other three – linear, scenic, and symbolic – were more spatial in nature, becoming evident when the images were mapped.

The NGS images present the AT as a wild natural environment, from the intimate scale of the forest floor to sweeping mountain panoramas. Eighty-one percent of images are
set in nature and there is no development (buildings, roads, power lines, etc.) shown in 56 percent of the images. Depictions of the AT as recreational summer playland abound. Most images support this message: 76 percent are set in summertime and recreation is the primary activity of 75 percent of subjects. Others support this theme by showing fall and winter sports, or people cheerfully working in support of the AT.

A third quantitative theme is striking and highlights deeply-rooted cultural power structures permeating these images. This is the exclusivity of the AT, in which trail-users are largely white, male, and youthful. In total, 508 people appear in these images. Of these, men are depicted nearly twice as often as women, 59 to 27 percent, respectively. When narrowed to include only actual AT participants, this disparity widened 61 percent men to 24 percent women. This ratio steadily increased from period to period. In 1949, men were 1.4 times as likely to appear as women; in 1972, 2 times as often; in 1987-1988, 2.5 times as often; and, from 1993 to 2009, men were more than three times as likely to appear as women. Age is also a notable characteristic of those shown; young adults and adults made up 81 percent of depicted participants. Finally, racial disproportionality is a hallmark of these images. This is evident even in a cursory review. On average, between 1949 and 2009, 88 percent of participants pictured were white or light-skinned. Surprisingly, this imbalance had bimodal peaks in both 1949 and 2009.

When the subset of these images identified by location were mapped, three more landscape themes were evident. First, despite their general linear distribution along the trail, the majority of the images were clustered around a small set of places. This clustering served to advance narrative elements, namely allusions stationed along a ritual progression. In the second theme, clusters of images focus largely on locations of notable scenic beauty. In the third theme, they represent places of existing cultural significance. Both function as a
form of synecdoche, in which a small symbolically-rich part is used to represent a larger place or region. This transforms these places, regions, and the AT as a whole into a series of icons. In so doing, the AT becomes an almost archetypal landscape of natural scenic splendor and nostalgic heritage.

Drawing from these insights, I turned next to answer my second research question by analyzing individual images and groups of images that reflected powerful underlying messages. Just as the aggregated images have power by virtue of their collective weight, these selected representations are powerful because of their symbolic weight. As potent visual metaphors, they subtly communicate and direct understanding, either individually or as part of a narrative group, and they function as codes linking the AT to other cultural mythologies. I focused on three of these myths prevalent in the visual discourse: the AT as a place of wilderness; conformity and resistance of participants; and performance of a pilgrimage.

A prominent qualitative theme was the portrayal of the AT as a wild or natural place, and this was also reinforced symbolically. On radically different scales, the Appalachian Trail wildlife and the sublimity of the trail served as icons of this mythology. However, under deeper review it became apparent that this depiction of the AT as wilderness was repeatedly contrasted with representations of the AT as the site of progress. This equally powerful mythology of American rural development takes numerous forms including American naturalism and the picturesque trail as a civilizing intervention. It reaches its most distilled icon in the shelter. These are merely notable icons of numerous representations that intertwine the landscape project of the AT with a larger American wilderness-progress dialectical tension.

Representations of the conformity and resistance of AT participants is another
prominent theme in the visual narrative. While the young, white, male AT hiker was quantitatively the personification of the participant, qualitatively this message was much more complex, oscillating between conformity and resistance. More than the other two, this mythology has visibly evolved over the decades of the study period, tracking larger shifts in American society. This progression is clear in the expanding qualitative diversity and framing of images of gender, and more recently marked by the presence of hikers of varying ages, races, cultural backgrounds, and physical abilities.

The third and final prevalent myth is the association of the AT with the performance of a pilgrimage. This can be traced back to MacKaye’s initial 1921 article, which proposed the trail project as a utopian or liminoid spatiality. This association between the AT and a pilgrimage or transcendental adventure has become a subtle, yet almost ubiquitous, element in subsequent representations. The images I deconstructed are a few, intentionally chosen examples of this mythology. They illustrate a common narrative progression of pilgrimage from the pre-liminoid separation to the liminal phase characterized by identity and distinction, to ordeals, *communitas*, and attainment of the sacred goal, before the ultimate post-liminal reintegration as embodiment of the sacred.

In addition to these images, maps have been a common form of presenting visualizations of the AT to the public. Between 1921 and 2013, major media institutions and the U.S. government published more than twenty overview maps of the AT, six of these by NGS. These maps function both as cultural artifacts from their respective eras and as propaganda that was vital to the development and maintenance of the AT. I identified four recurring discursive themes by deconstructing six maps spanning the AT’s history. The designation of the AT as a wilderness landscape was a common representation in both the photographs and the maps. From the first map by MacKaye in 1921 to the maps by the NGS
in the 1970s and 1980s and up to the latest maps published by the NPS, maps were employed to designate the spaces of the trail as essentially wild and natural; NGS published a particularly elaborate example of this in 1987. The maps also serve as a vehicle for persistent historical and regional mythologies. A common practice has been to subdivide the trail into geographic regions, personified by icons history, geology, and ecology. Through a nostalgic retrospective iconography, the maps also convey a strong sense that the trail is of the past. In many respects this also reinforces the wilderness discourse.

A third discursive theme is the presentation of the AT as an anti-urban utopian recreational landscape. In much of the map text and iconography, the trail is framed as an escape from cities. This message dates to MacKaye’s original proposal and remains central to the project. Finally, each of these maps in its own way serves to reinforce the territorial and ideological claims of the institutions that created them. From MacKaye’s vision steeped in values of modern, progressive, paternalistic centralized planning to National Geographic’s technocratic seriousness which legitimizes the AT for a broad national audience and culminating in the sleek unequivocal vector graphics of the 2010 NPS/ATC map that communicates power, order, and rationality. These maps presume authority and dominion over this space. In the process of showing the trail, they inject ideological messages about territorial control, which reinforces the AT project and the institutions that promote it.

5.2 Constructing an AT landscape through Visual Discourse

These results identify the people, places, and activities of the AT promoted quantitatively by the NGS, the three prominent mythologies promoted qualitatively across visual media representations of the AT, and the place making of successive AT maps. These visual media are simultaneously cultural artifacts, means of transmitting knowledge,
and elaborate forms of propaganda. My third and final research question, is answered through the collective impact of these visual discourses, as they steer and shape the development of an AT landscape.

As a case study in this process, the AT is a particularly clear example of the link between visual discourse and landscape formation. All landscapes rely on some form of representation to structure their meaning within cultural consciousness. In this respect, the AT is what it is today because of visual discourse. The AT began as a visual discourse, relying on the power of a map to reduce an ambitious set of ideas to one coherent plan. Over the decades, subsequent maps and photographs were a vital force, unifying and guiding the project. The spatial narrative they established depicted an idealized world, harnessing mythologies of wilderness, progress, adventure, pioneering, and pilgrimage, and it located them in this landscape. The depictions made people believe and begin to see the land in this way. Slowly it was forged in this image.

The central point of this dissertation is to reveal this process and to demonstrate that the AT, like so much in this world, is a story. It is a story that has been repeated so often, so vividly, and so convincingly that we have almost forgotten that it is a story. In this way, it has become an American myth entrained in a landscape. Like all myths, it functions symbolically to help us make the world meaningful. But through this process the AT has become a landscape that privileges some types of people, performances, and environments over others. The story has directed particular manifestations of power and has been appropriated by others to reinforce their power. This is the function of visual discourse: out of a space of an infinite number of possible worlds, it makes some visible, meaningful, actionable, and natural, and precludes others.

These discourses collectively reveal not *The Appalachian Trail* but *An Appalachian*
Trail as seen, edited, and reproduced through particular discourses. There is a dark exclusionary underside to the proclamation by the NGS (2009) that this is the “Peoples’ Path.” When the NGS and others portray mostly middle class, technocratic, flag-waving, Christian, white men, the implication is that the path is actually for these people. If this were a one-time depiction, it might be discounted as an anomaly, but a review of more than six decades of photographs makes it startlingly clear that this is not an accident. The NGS and others have universally portrayed the AT in this way, time and again.

It certainly can be debated that they are merely depicting what its photographers see. However, this misses the point in two fundamental ways. First, these visual discourses are highly edited narratives. Media producers are in the business of storytelling. They invest tremendous amounts of thought and resources to identify, research, and produce this documentary discourse so that will resonate with viewers and sell their products. Second, as institutions that frame themselves as a sources of knowledge, visual-media producers have a powerful conditioning effect on public understanding of the AT. This discourse performs work that both entices and repels participants, and therefore the inequity of AT participants is in some part attributable to their work. Whether these media discourses are chicken or egg, the end effect is to filter people, their forms of participation, and the way they understand the landscape of the AT.

There is hope in this perspective, as well. For, if the world is made meaningful through the stories we tell, then we may begin to craft new worlds with new stories and new ways of telling. Let us craft better worlds, more equitable, more creative, more peaceable, more life-sustaining, and more compassionate worlds.

5.3 Implications and Recommendations

My study expands our understanding of the AT in two important ways. It
illuminates the process through which the AT became an iconic American landscape and it provides a working example of the application of visual research methods. My hope is that this research will cause others to consider the AT in a new light. Visual media has been vital to the AT project, broadcasting a discourse and including both its most attractive and repulsive attributes. With this understanding, it becomes imperative that those of us who believe in the AT’s potential, work actively through targeted discourse to make it the landscape we want it to become. Looking beyond the AT, this research underscores the need for people who are not only visionary thinkers and capable practitioners, but also savvy in media discourse – people capable of addressing destructive messages or shortcomings with alternative visions.

My research also suggests several future areas of research. First, there remains a vast body of historical AT visual and textual data to analyze. This material could and should serve as the bases for numerous additional research projects. The methods employed here could be adapted to study audio, text, video, and new digital media. Because of the importance of the positionality of the researcher, future studies undertaken by researchers from diverse backgrounds and perspectives would provide expanding understandings of the AT. Finally, I am excited to see how others will shed new light on the AT through the rapid evolution of methods in virtually all areas of visual communication and associated research.

I also imagine that the research methods I employed could be applied to a wide array of other subjects. Content analysis methods should be made more accessible and useful by new software developed to automate the process. Representational analysis should be taught to younger students in lower-level schools to enable critical thinking and to filter the barrage of visual information to which we all are subjected. Finally, cartographic and other forms of discourse analysis will also evolve and should find their application in diverse forms as the
divide between real and virtual, map and illustration, photo and video further dissolves.

Each of these methods will need to be refined and adapted, but their core uses should serve as foundations upon which many future questions may be answered.
APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX A. Content Analysis Assistance Solicitation

APPENDIX B. Content Analysis Process Journaling Example

APPENDIX C. Sample Representational Analysis Process Sheets

APPENDIX D. Representational Analysis Process Journal

APPENDIX E. Full 1972 National Geographic Society Map Set

APPENDIX F. 2014 Appalachian National Scenic Trail Official Brochure Map
APPENDIX A. Content Analysis Assistance Solicitation

Call for help fine-tuning my dissertation methods

I am starting in earnest on my dissertation research. The first section involves a Content Analysis of photographs published by mass media print outlets such as National Geographic Magazine, Life, and Readers Digest from 1921-2013. This is where I could use your help. I need to check in with you, my learning community, to ensure that I am both creating usable coding categories, and that my coding of images is not wildly different than how others would code these images. If you can spare 30 minutes to code these photos and assess the categories themselves you would be doing me a great service.

Here is what I need:

1. Take a look at the coding matrix and photos. If there is a caption assess the photo with and without considering the textual information.

2. For each photo, fill in the matrix, code-by-code, based on what you are seeing. Ex. is the image a landscape scene or a close up of an individual, what time of day, who is represent and what are they doing?

3. After filling these out, reflect on the process, and the categories. Which categories were difficult to determine (high inference)?, Which might be changed and how?, Are there any that you recommend adding?

I will take your recommendations, and make adjusts accordingly.

Again thank you very much for your help, I look forward to your insights,
Ben Prince
APPENDIX B. Content Analysis Process Journaling Example

Process Journaling May 28th 2014

Content analysis requires the researchers to establish coding categories based upon the research question and data. Once these are compiled into a coding matrix each image in that data set can then be assessed. But even with a research question established what categories should be used? Turning to previous studies is an obvious start, but even these merely provide suggestions of what might be useful. In the end it falls on the researcher to once again make seemingly small, yet ultimately substantial informed subjective decisions.

I first turned to six other similar image content analysis studies for guidance.

1. McNiel et al (2012) in an analysis of representation of women in wilderness recreation advertising adapted their categories from Goffman (1979). These five classes where reportedly then adapted, but the final set were not divulged in the research article

   1. The gender of who was present in the ad
   2. Settings of the ad
   3. Women’s size and placement in the ad
   4. Activities being engaged in
   5. Type of product being advertised

2. Hummon (1988) used Content analysis on U.S. States’ tourism brochure imagery. To convert these into quantitative data he established multi-part categories as follows.

   1. Landscape Imagery: nature, pastoral, village/town, suburban, urban, other

   2. Temporal Imagery: Time of Day: day, sunrise/set, night
                       Season: Fall, winter, spring, summer
                       Period: Past, present

   3. Activity Imagery: Leisure: outdoor rec, sport, history/ethnic, eat/dance, museum/concert
                        Work: service, com/indust, agri/extraction

   4. Images of People:
                        Tourists: families, couples, child/youth, adults, elderly, minorities, costumed
                        Natives: families, couples, child/youth, adult, elderly, minorities, costumed

3. Cornelissen (2005) reviewed tourist operator brochure imagery of South Africa. This was broken into two parts.

   I. Main Destination sold by overseas tour operators

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II. Representations of South Africa
   A. Product: Hotels/transportation, Animals, Cultural Villages, traditional culture, arts and crafts
   B. Activity: Game viewing, hiking, golf, gambling, swimming, hang gliding, horse riding, abseiling, helicopter riding
   C. Place: (Rural) bush, Table mtn, wine estates, traditional huts etc. (Urban) waterfront, CBD, Government buildings, historic buildings

4. Beaudreau (2002) employed a content analysis approach to contrast National Geographic’s depiction of Canada between two periods. While most of the research focuses on representational analysis CA is used in a supporting role

Youth Portrayed in National Geographic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1960s</th>
<th>1990s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo/with Adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2-3 w/ Adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4+ w/ Adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Wyckoff and Dilsaver (1997) undertake a probing review of Great Northern Railroad’s Promotional photographs of Glacier National Park. The image categories employed were organized by subject and time period, percentage and number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1911-20</th>
<th>1921-25</th>
<th>1926-30</th>
<th>total % / #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native Americans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wild West</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. In Reading National Geographic, Lutz and Collins (1993), exhaustively explore NGS as force in mass culture between 1950 and 1986. This study involved among other research tools a content analysis of six hundred randomly selected photographs. These were coded through the following categories.

   World Location
   Unit of article organization
   Number of Westerners represented
   Smiling in photos
   Gender of adults depicted
Age of those depicted
APPENDIX B. Content Analysis Process Journaling Example
Aggressive activity, military or weapons
Activity level of main figures
Activity type of main figures
Camera gaze of person photographed
Surrounds of people photographed
Ritual focus
Group size
Urban/rural setting
Wealth indicators in photo
Skin color
Dress style (western/local)
Male nudity
Female nudity
Technology type present
Vantage of camera

Developing Content Analysis Categories

Pulling from these examples and my research question some categories being to emerge.

1. Landscape Imagery:
   A. Landscape: nature, pastoral, village/town, suburban, urban, other
   B. Scale: landscape, setting, subject
   C. Place/Region Identified
   D. Human constructed objects, structures
   E. Signage
   F. Mood of image
   G. Accessibility of setting for participants:
      easy/moderate/strenuous

2. Temporal Imagery:
   A. Time of Day: day, sunrise/set, night
   B. Season: Fall, winter, spring, summer
   C. Period: Past, present

3. Activity Imagery:
   A. Leisure: sport, ethnic/ceremony/religious, eat/dance, concert/festival/reenactment,
      outdoor recreation:
      I. Active/Type (ex. hiking, rock climbing, backpacking, swimming, etc.)
      II. Passive/Type (ex. pick nick, contemplation)
   B. Work: service, commercial/industrial,
      agricultural/extraction, science (nature study or monitoring), Trail (management, building, maintenance or education)

4. Imagery Subject:
   A. People:
I. Trail users: families, couples, child/youth, adults, elderly, sex/gender, skin color, wealth indicators, costumed
II. Native location: families, couples, child/youth, adult, elderly, sex/gender, skin color, wealth indicators, costumed

B. Animals, Plants (Type)
C. Natural landscape, contemporary human construction, historical human construction
D. Subject size in the image (fills frame, subject in setting, subject in landscape)
E. Subject’s gaze (at viewer, past viewer, away from viewer, at other subject)
F. Image Composition: obviously staged, seemingly spontaneous, other
G. Vantage (point from which camera perceives main figures)
Illustration 9. NGS 1949

White Blazes on Trees Guide Appalachian Trail Hikers

Regularly, Volunteers like this girl take paintpot and brushes into the woods to freshen A.T. markers. On winding sections, blazes are placed within sight of each other. Blue blotches mark side trails, Double blazes warn of abrupt changes in route.

A Hiker Gulp Cold Water from a Rocky “Cup”

Robert Bumstead, of Philadelphia, drinks from a clear spring beside the Appalachian Trail near North Conway, in New Hampshire’s White Mountains. This section of the A.T. follows the old Crawford Path, once a popular bridle trail from Crawford Notch to Mount Washington.

I. Individual Denotive Features

Text Elements

1a. D Signifier: “White Blazes on Trees Guide Appalachian Trail Hikers” D Signified: caption title, redirects attention in image from the female figure to what she is doing, the marking/making of the trail.

2a. D Signifier: “Regularly, Volunteers like this girl take paintpot and brushes into the woods to freshen A.T. markers,” = D Signified: the human figure, she, “this girl” diminutive form of female, woman, is performing a task, working in the service of the AT project, for free, because she believes in the trail, in service to projects, community, nation. This is a “Regularly” done activity, common, expected, needed routinely. The activity is marking the trail with paint, paintpot and brushes are tools of this activity, but a Woman “freshens” the trail, makes it clean, neat, tidy, appealing, attractive. The setting for both this act, and the AT is “the woods” = outdoors, nature.

3a. D Signifier: “On winding sections, blazes are placed within sight of each other. Blue blotches mark side trails, Double blazes warn of abrupt changes in route.” = D Signified:

1b. D Signifier: “A Hiker Gulp Cold Water from a Rocky “Cup””. = D Signified: The human figure drinks from a natural pool, embibes thirst quenching, life giving, water straight from the source, direct from ‘Mother Nature’. Man returns to a more primal, animal, wild form of being.

2b. D Signifier: “Robert Bumstead, of Philadelphia, drinks from a clear spring beside the Appalachian Trail near North Conway, in New Hampshire’s White Mountains.” = D Signified: the Man is identified, made personable and familiar as Robert Bumstead, from a well known other, urban place (Philadelphia). He is quenching his thirst, placating a physical desire, by drinking from a cold, clear spring, this is a rash act, wild, and primal, but also speaks of his perceived purity, of this place (the AT in “New Hampshire’s White Mountains”, nature = wilderness, unspoiled by human development.

3b. D Signifier: “This section of the A.T. follows the old Crawford Path, once a popular bridle trail from Crawford Notch to Mount Washington.” = D Signified: the place is old, established, historic, well known. It was once well used, then fell into disuse/use changed as riding horses fell out of common practice.

Photographic Elements

4a. D Signifier: brush, paint pot and painting a blaze D Signified: tools for creating, marking, establishing signs, symbols, for wayfinding, orienting, = the act of denoting, establishing/restablishing meaning and spatial order, rendering service to an idea, reasserting the guides, space, territory, route, rules of the AT

5a. D Signifier: Gloves and smock = D Signified: protection, way of maintaining appearances, cleanliness, propriety, health, while engaging in activities that might stain, mark, dirty actor.

6a. D Signifier: female white figure (clean styled hair, lips painted, crisp blouse) = D Signified: dress, features, and captions mark the figure as a female woman, skin as a ‘white’ woman.

7a. D Signifier: backpack= D Signified: bag for carrying gear and provisions, signifies preparation, movement, intention, self-sufficiency, but in contrast to the previous Shafer image, the symbols of a place to visit, to extract resources from, to recreate in.

8a. D Signifier: Tree & wooded setting = D Signified: nature not settlement, the woods, forest, wilderness. not the abode of humans, but a place to visit, to extract resources from, to recreate in.

4b. D Signifier: Human figure, male, white, short hair = D Signified: clean (clean shaven, hair cut, fingernails trimmed), adult. drinking directly from stream = wilderness, primitive animal behavior, lack of civility, propriety, headless of consequences, variety, manliness.

4b. D Signifier: Backpack and shirt= D Signified: bag for carrying gear and provisions, signifies preparation, movement, intention, self-sufficiency, individual, military. A style of pack more common to the era, today other types of packs used.

APPENDIX C. Sample Representational Analysis Process Sheets.

II. Comprehensive Denotative Themes

What is immediately evident through a comparison of the top image, figure painting, and its accompanying caption are the differences in focus. The human figure is the center attention, actor, occupier of visual space in the photo, while in the text the focus is not on the anomnous "girl", but on trail signage. The image portrays a heavily stialized, and manicured, and provocatively sexualized female icon. This last point is worth special examination especially in relation to the accompanying image of the male. The tree which she is embracing, entwined with may be interpreted as a phalic symbol, while the male could be seen to be fending the bosium of mother nature. These subtle symbols when interpreted as such seem at first suprising and out of place, yet when the totality of signs for Woman and Man are delineated, and assimilated (not to mention referenced intertextually with other images in the article) it becomes apparent that a subtle theme of female sexuality and male virility runs throughout. The specific attributes of this image move beyond the merely sexual by referencing the roles that "Woman" is expected to manifest. Simultaneously she performs as sexual object (nymph) and maintainer of order and appearances ("Mother"), chearful provider of service and icon of Nationalism (Motherland) (see Superman and the Bride). The caption both perpetuates this objectification and shifts focus to move the AT front and center. The figure is never personalized, as is the accompanying male figure, rather she is backgrounded as "the girl", rendered anonimous as any 'girl', an object, and icon. Instead the viewer is directed not just to what she is doing, for them, for us as recreationalists, making signs, but to the sign as center of focus. The sign, AT marker, blaze, or blotch, markers the route, provides critical wayfiding information, which differentiates the way, from the wilderness.

The bottom image, figure drinking, networks a number of signifiers to present a very differnt aspect of perfor

III. Connotative/Iconological Meanings

Myth of Women and Men on the AT, and the erasure of Color

On a connotative level these images provide a divergence of social roles for men and women on the AT. These images as much as any others embody the iconic myth of distinct, read innate, differences between the sexes. in doing so they feed off many outside lines of discourse, not least of which is a post-WWII veteriolic nationalism that holds cheerful service of women to campaigning men in high reguard. Discursively this works as a templet for expected roles of performance on the AT. In effect sidelines women to a supporting role, while foregrounding men as the heros of their own narrative. In significant ways this image references back to the LIFE 1941 and Shaffer 1958 depictions. While Women are expected to remain in service to the landscape project of the AT, read the ideology of the white father, Men are free to persue the new elevated embydment of AT performance, the end to end hike, initaited by Shaffer. where before there was at least a symbolence of parity between males and females, now gender takes on a more substantive performatve implications.

Another aspect which is conspicuous for its absence both in these iamges and ones preceding and following is their unwavering whiteness. It will not be until 1972 that the NGS publishes an image depicting people of color in associated with the the AT, not until 1988 that that they are depicted as actually utilizing it for recreation, not until 2009 that a man of color is included as a thru-hiker, and even here as an unidentified supporting character, in a scene about the ATC. Essentially the AT has overwhelmingly been depicted, from its inception as the exclusive provence of whites. When this is taken together with the precending analysis, a hiarchy in the landscape of the AT begins to emerge, preceeding from white men to white women, to men of color, and on to women of color. As Rose (2012) insists, the discourse of visual representation is essentially about making some ways of understanding the world visible and other unseeable; through the great body of images such as this alternative manifestations of what it means to be a woman are made less and less visible, and peoles of color are made unseeable.

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Illustration 14. NGS 1988

High above the Patomac River in Maryland, hikers pause at an Appalachian Trail overlook. One of the Country’s national scenic trails, the A.T. follows the Appalachians for some 2,100 miles between Maine and Georgia.

1. D Signifier: “High above the Patomac River in Maryland, hikers pause at an Appalachian Trail overlook.” = D Signified: The two figures in the photo are AT hikers. The AT here is at a significant elevation relative to a river below, this river is notable, its contemporary proper name is the Patomac River. AT this location the AT is in the political entity of Maryland, a US State. This is both a location and a representation of political authority, a reiteration of the legitimacy of the institution of governmental spatial control.

2. D Signifier: “One of the Country’s national scenic trails, the A.T. follows the Appalachians for some 2,100 miles between Maine and Georgia.” = D Signified: “One of the Country’s national scenic trails” = again a reiteration of the institution of government (appeals to American nationalism (scenic nationalism)). The caption ties into the idea that the AT is a product of sanctioned by the federal government. This allows the symbolic meanings of both to reference the other and fuses-reinforces their meanings. Also eludes to other similar ‘national scenic trails’ so the AT is one of many, one of a set, a group, category. The AT is defined in this set by “follow[ing] the Appalachians for some 2,100 miles between Maine and Georgia.” This is both what it is and why it is notable: first and primarily, its length 2,100 miles. It is long very long. there are other trials but not many that are 2,000 miles. second, it follows the Appalachians (mountains) its namesake, so the Appalachians are 2,000 miles, and both extend “between Maine and Georgia.” Similarly, these are more than locations, they are meaningful places. They are homes or exotic locals. They have relevance to the American heritage & patriotic ideology.

3. D Signifier: forested mountain & river background = D Signified: context of the scene. The outside, nature, vast expanse, varied terrain, forest, mountain, river = wild nature, natural environment.

4. D Signifier: hiking figures (white, adult male and female) = D Signified: a couple; rings = married a husband and wife, but no kids = freedom to go hike, recreate without being tied down. Attractive, well-kempt hair, fit, stereotypical average Americans, DINKs, a pair.

GAZE = looking out over this wide expanse of the natural landscape, not at viewers, past viewers, our gaze is reoriented in viewing theme. We see them then try to follow their gaze out, as it is beyond the frame we are left to imagine, and this is taken up by the background we can see ie river, and forested mountains. The implication is that wherever you look you are surrounded by a wild natural landscape, and this is the setting of the AT.

5. D Signifier: figure’s clothing/gear (matching: knit collared shirts, kaki shorts, white socks, and low leather hiking boots, small backpacks) male with hiking stick = D Signified: clean, well put together, middle/upper class, the young American ideal. Gear = day hikers, casual hikers, not thru-hikers, like you the audience. = the trail can be used by people like you for recreation. You can participate so you may want to read this, learn from this. Look at the kind of people who use it, they are ordinary, if a bit perfect. It is not an edgy, scary, dangerous place. It is a landscape, from which you will have wide aesthetically pleasing views. (no discomfort here)

6. D Signifier: tree branch = D Signified: all kinds of nature hear and far, close at hand. Ties together the back and foreground.

APPENDIX C. Sample Representational Analysis Process Sheets.

II. Comprehensive Denotative Themes

This image is included twice in the NGS 1988 book on the AT. It is the front cover, and again as the introductory image of chapter three, both times it is a full page image.

The image speaks by networking the meanings associated with the two figures (Couple, husband and wife, white, middleclass, well dressed, fit, aipealing) and the environment (wild nature, natural ecosystem, aesthetically pleasing) and creates a unified comprehensive meaning which is then extrapolated to the AT generally (as the subject of the book) that people like this, do the AT, that the AT is a compelling natural setting, and an enjoyable place in which to recreate. As the book’s subtitle indicates it is a landscape to be “explored”.

From a critical perspective the deeper connotative meanings of this image reference gender, race, and human-nature relationships. It is significant to reflect upon why this image was included not just in the book by as the cover to this book by the NGS in 1988. There was clear intention here, and drawing out the mythology represented through this image will help to indicate why this was done.

First, the image subtly depicts and informs gender expectations on the AT. The male and female figures establish at the onset a binary, this is not a binary of opposing, jarring type faces, but a coupling, an almost twin-like resemblance from head to toe. Hair, skin color, size, blue knit short sleeve shirts, red backpacks, light and dark kaki shorts,white socks, light leather shoes, gold rings all reinforce this pairing. There is a message of symmetry, equivalence, equality between man and woman, and yet each bears an essential sign of their gender, which establishes a distinction between the two. The female figure is nearly identical to the male, but here her exposed, long tanned, and cocked right leg, this is the classic sentimentally suggestive posture of woman as sexual icon. It is not overt, if anything it is understated, latent, a passive everyday sexuality, which hints at the social context in which females vie even here in nature, as objects of sexuality. By contrast, but with equal assertion the male figure stands behind a bit over the female and most notable grasps a large stick, upon close examination, the walking stick is approximately the same height as the male figure, making it impractical for its implied use in walking utility. Rather it is a prop, a crude weapon of sorts, which suggests in a similar latent way, defence and violence. Because they are alike in almost all attributes but these, a mathematical approach which allows a reduction by elimination of all equivalents, leaves us with tokinized icons, each figure defined by these key remaining attributes: Woman = sensual, sexual, Man = Weapon, violence, defence of Woman. And when the two symbols are intertwined they can be read as Man + Woman = violence in defence of sexual objectification. On a fundamental level this reiterates, all of this on a more subtle level belies this, the messaging promoted by NGS as seen in 1949 (image above) which divides and juxtaposes the sexes, by rendering them into stereotypical gender icons on a mythological level, while establishing a parity of participation on a more superficial level. Applied to the AT the myth, functions on a subliminal level to suggest that the AT is a place for males and females, and then goes on to define the expected conservative social roles of Man and Woman through each may perform the AT. In doing so this not only reinforces stereotypical gender norms in society at large, but works discursively to draw these people to the AT and ostracise, and repel from the AT, subaltern groups.

Second, the image reveals a mythology of race and class on the AT. By utilising this image of affluent, polished, blond, white couple, for the cover of arguably their most significant publication on the AT the NGS frames not only their target audience but those they hope to attract/expect to participate in the AT. There were undoubtedly layers of editorial decisions, which resulted in this image being created and utilized as the cover image. In doing so the entire book (“don’t judge a book by its cover”) which itself reveals our natural proclivity to do just this is framed in a certain light, ie white and affluent. The cover image has substantial implications, not least of which is its impact on who will be enticed to buy and read it, which in turn translates into who participated in the AT and how. As Rose (2012, 59) has pointed out, “Discourse is a particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood, and how things are done in it... A specific viscerality will make certain things visible in a particular way and other things unsearable. What this image makes “unsearable” is of particular concern for race and class. Through this image of immense whiteness and affluence, the vast potential readership which does not fit this description are at the onset made invisible relative to the AT. The selfassured posturing of the conservative figures, leaves little room for other types of prose in the space of the AT.

Thirdly, the image establishes how participants should anticipate the AT as a landscape and their performative role in it. In this cover image the figures are not hiking, not working, are not dirty or seemingly even a part of the landscape, from this high promontory they survey their domain (the domain of the white and affluent), they are transient recreationalists, their attire suggesting that this is a day trip into the realm of aesthetic nature. Underlying this is a sense of mastery, to venture forth with so little in the way of clothing and equipment, to maintain such a high state of cleanliness, and sharpens of presentation, conveys the underlying message that this is all sport. There is no danger here, this is a casual exercise, by two people who are entirely well assured that there is nothing to fear here. On a deeper level this speaks of the mythology of mastery over nature. The wilderness has been tamed, and named the “Pattonic River”, it has been planned, built and certified on the highest (federal) level. In this respect it is not merely safe to do the AT it is right and patriotic. Performance of this recreation assumes not only immediate safety, but that there is a much larger system in place which will assure all the requisite fundamentals (food, water, shelter, material needs), which are only assured, when a systemic mastery of wilderness has been decisively achieved. Therefore the myth is revealed as just that, a myth of “exploration”, adventure, pioneering etc. a recreational performance, which mimics an older deeper mythology of american conquest and settlement. But unlike this violent, uncertain past, the contemporary relationship between humans and the natural environment is well-established, fundamentally controlled. This myth referenced here, comes through in many of the other images as well, together they contribute to and rest upon the underlying cultural assumptions of the AT.

Collectively through these a myth emerges, in which the NGS frames the AT in 1988 to a wide readership. The AT is for you, if you are like this, or aspire to be like this, or hold these type of people in high regard. The AT is about being out in nature, and viewing it. It is not about working the land, changing it or even yourself. Participation is for the affluent, white, clean and polished, conservative America. It is a spectacle close at hand, our natural treasure (if “us” white and affluent).
### I. Individual Denotative Features

**Text Elements**

- **Gravestones of pioneers** = Markers of death, old, the first europeans who are now dead, the site of an early european settlement, history, the past, a bygone era, ended
- **cast long morning shadows** = (morning), time, the sun is just rising, a new day, beginning, youth, start, light is good for photography (the golden hour) "cast long shadows" = important, are perpendicular to the sun’s rays ie: vertical, substantial, still standing.
- **[Gravestones] in a churchyard** = church yard is proper, expected, ordinary space/place/site for gravestones. it is adjacent to a church (which is old)
- **Cades Cove, Tennessee, within Great Smokey Mountains National Park”** = multiple signs for location. “Cades Cove” = a location/settlement. “Cove” is there a water body near? “Tennessee” = Political jurisdiction, American State, southern, the old South. “within Great Smokey Mountains National Park” = the park is in TN, Cade Cove is in GSMNP, why is town in a Park, predates park, is bound by park regulations, “GSMNP” = Federal level political jurisdiction, protected, conservation, Has Mountains of significance, has attributes worth protecting under the designation as a park. Park = natural environment, plants, aesthetic.

**Photographic Elements**

- **Clear Sky** = Fair weather, no rain, good for being outdoors, the larger world, beyond
- **Mountains** = varied topography, more than human scale space, time, Prehuman/ancient. place of adventure, challenge, struggle, resources, wild/nature, wilderness,
- **Expanse of forest** = primeavil woods, non-human realm, ecology, wild/nature, wilderness, resources, not developed, woody = enduring, strong, old/ancient/ original/native state of the land.
- **Fields/pastures/meadows** = human influence, settlement, cultivation, continuing human occupation, use of land, agrarian livelihood, pasture, domestication (domestic animals) = utilization of land for food production, grass, herbatious = effemeral/short lived
- **Human Structure (white, steeple, simple)** = a church = house of worship, settlement, community, christian, european, old, rural, human development, belief, culture, civilization, domestication, salvation, control, authority, morality, guidance, restraint, piety, simplicity,
- **Human Structure (rows of small white objects)** = (grave yard), cemetery, = place where humans put their dead in the ground and identify with stone signs. order, signification, identification, death, old, decay, stasis, remembrance, history, progenators, past, mortality
- **trees within graveyard plot** = overgrown, old, unmaintained, return of nature. reverversion to natural state after death of developers, withering of human settlement planted (for shade, remembrance (sign), food)

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**Unused Illustration. NGS 1972**

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**APPENDIX C. Sample Representational Analysis Process Sheets.**
II. Comprehensive Denotative Themes

D Signifier: Fourgrounded, bright white building + Graveyard = D Signified: central subject/most important meaning. “Graveyard” and “church” become more identifiable signs when represented in relationship = are mutual signifiers of the other/network to make an entirely expected/yet more meaningful whole carrier of meaning.

D Signifier: “Cades Cove, Tennessee, within Great Smokey Mountains National Park” = D Signified: church yard is proper, expected, ordinary space/site for gravestones. Its is adjacent to a church (which is old), Cades Cove is old, a settlement dating to pioneer days. Cades Cove = a location/settlement. “Cove” is there a water body near?

D. Signifier: “Gravestones of pioneers cast long morning shadows in a churchyard” and imagery = D Signified: establishes a juxtaposition of two polarities. Gravestones, pioneers, shadows, church = past, old, history, death, dark, vis-a-vis morning, bright white of grave stones, and church = new, virgin, purity, life, light.

D. Signifier: Pioneers, Simple structures, isolated in expansive Park, forest & mountains = D Signified: pioneering = backpacker, wilderness, adventure, a cabin/home in the wilderness, just the essentials, fundamentals, simplicity, within the context of this book/subject the building stands in for the individual in the wilderness, the backpacker, and their experience, the push and pull of wilderness and civilization, (wave-on-wave/layers of woods, and pastures) lone light of civilization in the vast wilderness, struggling against the dark.

Foreground: lone church and fields, Middleground: vast forest and layers of fields, background: uniform substantial forested mountain ridges.

Perspective taken from the air, likely from a plane, which requires a level of resources to procure.

Comprehensively the denotative message seems to read. here is a visually striking artifact of America’s founding herraitage. It is isolated, lone settlement in what has been designated a protected wilderness. The wilderness landscape is vast encompassing a great forests and mountain ranges.

III. Connotative/Iconological Meanings

This image is one of several which depict a lone person or structure in a vast undeveloped landscape of forest and mountains. Using Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) terminology, this form of visual grammar (Syntax?) is reflective of a classificational process, which establishes a “Covert Taxonomy” (Image 2. NGS 1988 p. 146-147 is another in this set). It is ‘covert’ because the set (superordinate) is nowhere explicitly identified, but emerges as readings of the visual similarities of multiple images (subordinates) begin to coalesce into a pattern.

My interpretation of this Taxa, is one of framing the performance and landscape of the AT. The Myth conveyed reads, the Landscape of the AT is a vast wilderness, one in which the hiker becomes completely emersed in. Alone, unadorned, stripped of comforts, and civilization, the participant faces raw nature, must be self reliant, but others you the hiker are of a long line of pioneers, seekers, who have gone to the mountains, and woods, to front only the essentials and know when they died that they had truly lived (Walden)
APPENDIX C. Sample Representational Analysis Process Sheets.

1. Individual Denotative Features

1. D Signifier: “Glowing at daybreak” = D Signified: Its a sunny morning, light is shining off the buildings which have an eastern exposure. Town is illuminated, positive, receiving the life/warmth giving rays of the sun. (incidentally it is not apparent from the image that it is morning/glowing).

2. D Signifier: “Shaley cliffs of Maryland Heights” = D Signified: a specific type of rock/formation, ledge above a void (a ‘Height’), it is notable (named) landmark, in the political jurisdiction state of Maryland

3. D Signifier: “Harpers Ferry, West Virginia nestles at the confluence of” [rivers] = D Signified: a settlement named “Harpers Ferry” is located here, which may draw its name from a historical ferry crossing (the rivers) run by the Harpers/Harper. Located in political jurisdiction (state) of WV, the rivers contextualize the location, likely providing an early reason for its establishment

4. D Signifier: Confluence of Shenandoah and Patomac Rivers = D Signified: significant flowing water bodies join at this location, which may necessitate a ferry to cross, i.e. an obstacle to travel

5. D Signifier: Foot travelers passing through town on the A.T. (not depicted) = D Signified: the route of the AT passes through this settlement, people walk the trail, and in doing so arrive here, then leave. Travelers are transient, this is not their destination.

6. D Signifier: Recieving a hearty welcome (not depicted) = D Signified: the AT is know to people here, it is meaningful to them, as it is meaningful to foot travelers, what foot travel is praise worthy, people in trail towns will provide you encouragement and support upon initial arrival

7. D Signifier: Appalachian Trail Conference headquarters, located here (not depicted) = D Signified: the ATC is a group/organization that is administered from this location. They will be here when travelers arrive.

8. D Signifier: Recieving a hearty welcome (not depicted) = D Signified: the AT is know to people here, it is meaningful to them, as it is meaningful to foot travelers, what foot travel is praise worthy, people in trail towns will provide you encouragement and support upon initial arrival

9. D Signifier: Clear/hazy sky “Glowing at daybreak” = D Signified: atmospheric moisture, but with sunshining, portent of fair weather day

10. D Signifier: Rock (Shaley) ledge (cliffs) framing a view out over the scene = D Signified: ledge provides a vantage to city, and specific formation is used to fram a view of the settlement. cliff allows increased visual perspective, but danger of fall. From here the landscape is visible/knowable

11. D Signifier: Background forested ridges, some signs of structures = D Signified: topography shaped by rivers, moist climate facilitates tree growth, development happens here to a limited extent, largely a natural setting/set for HF/landscape

12. D Signifier: Bridge over Shenandoah River= D Signified: the ferry may no longer be needed there is a bridge now. significant infrastructure, requiring organizational and technical competance, river needs spanning for transporation. links two divided parts, or overcomes an obstacle through ingenuity and coordination

13. D Signifier: “Harpers Ferry, West Virginia” three and four story brick/stone buildings with white framed windows, and balconies. streets and telephone/power poles, church steeple pokes out of tree canopy = D Signified: small area in view suggestive of a mere glimpse of a larger settlement, but not very large, colonial style + noted site of a historical political insirection = heratige location, still occupied/evolving technologies


15. D Signifier: Shenandoah River, curving through forested cliffs = D Signified: water, movement, transportation, resource, life, flow, obstacle/divide/boundry, riparian ecology

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APPENDIX C. Sample Representational Analysis Process Sheets.

II. Comprehensive Denotative Themes

D Signifier: Harpers Ferry (dimunitive settlement) nestles + at the confluence of noted rivers + rock/cliff framing + views of forest ridges = D Signified: human presence is small here, encircled, defined, engulfed, by a much larger more dynamic natural landscape.

D Signifier: Glowing at daybreak + Cliffs + River + Ferry/ Bridge + travelers passing through = D Signified: "Glowing at daybreak"= made notable at the transition/ shift between night and day, Cliffs = transition between earth and the void. River = natural flow, impermanence of all things, natural/gavitational forces compelling movement."Ferry"/ Bridge = human tools to facilitate transit. travelers passing through" = people defined/identified by their act of movement, movement seekers, impermanence, not settled in this place. By contrast "Harpers Ferry" and "the Appalachian Trail Conference headquarters, located here" are marks of settlement/ commitment to location, historical, permanent, stationary cultural artifacts + the Rock/ ridge and forest = enduring nature. Therefore a complicated tension emerges between elements representing spatial flux, and those of spatial fixity.

Harpers Ferry then is a spatial nexis where things come to pass: waters, and hikers and days. It like the ATC will be here years hence when you the aspirign hiker travel thru.

the return to the city/ civilized

“Foot travelers passing through town on the A.T. find a hearty welcome”

he Appalachian Trail Conference headquarters, located here” a destination, teh epicenter of order, orginization and meaning, history, a n orgization with an elevated purpose, that can appriciate, disciples and teh enlightened.

III. Connotative/Iconological Meanings

Within the larger narrative this representation is suggestive on differnt levels. As a messanger of denotative meaning it provides the arm cahir traveler/ aspirign hiker with both logistical information: there are towns along the route where I will be able to get supplies, and information, therefore I dont have to be overly worried about bringing everything when I set out. Harpers Ferry is one of these towns, it is notable in that it is the location of teh Headquar ters of the managing body of the AT. It also function asligorically framing the perceived relationship between hiker and town residents: “Foot travelers passing through town on the A.T find a hearty welcome at the Appalachian Trail Conference headquarters, located here” what you are doing is know to people, it is meaningful to them as well, what you are doing is praise worthy, people in trail towns will provide you encouragemetn and support. Hikers reading this may read: people who live in towns have things you may want (food, information, lodging, laundry, etc) and they will be happy to serve you. This establishes an anticipated relationship between hiker and townie that potentially has performative implications.

level about the both to the oft repeated theme of small settlement contextualized in a natural setting, and on less myth: a hybridized reading of the caption and image, with heavy reliance on the caption reads: evervabtely the hikler (you) will return from the wilderness to civilization and society, where you will be embraced and exulted for your darign do, your venturesome spirit, your capability as an adventurer afoot in the classic style, your new found per spectives on the world, by those who also are in the know.

it is notable here how much this is drawn from the caption, and how the caption and Image are so significnatly differnet. both provide teh context/ landscape setting, but there are no people present in the image itself, the narrative is entirety promolgated by the text.

the Image also prompts a different interpretation.

Collectively these illuminate how ready to be filled with meaning images can be, how malleable under the weight of words. , and how textual sign systems are at times worth a thousand pictures.
APPENDIX D. Representational Analysis Process Journal

Process Journaling December 10th 2014

Initial AT Image Representational Analysis

Image Selection for the Representational Analysis portion of this research presented a challenge. How does a researcher select a few images out of hundreds upon hundreds of images, which span nearly one hundred years? I make no claim to have made these decisions as random samples out of a population, they are not in that since representative, they do not stand for the body of others not chosen. But they do stand for the trail. They were chosen, first by the photographer, and alter by editors as representative of the trail in some way. They were chose because they were compelling, aesthetically pleasing, and provocative even.

The question remains have I doomed this research by biasing the selection with what I found to be notable images out of a much larger population? Its difficult to say, but erring on the side of caution I must answer in the affirmative. So I will refrain from even insinuating that they stand for the larger body of images. What I will assert is that each of these images were selected to stand for the AT, and building upon this my central research question is what do they say about the AT?

If therefore there is not a pattern to nor random selection of these images I will at least follow a proscribed methodology. For each image I will explain why I chose it, and the context in which it appears. I will then follow the stepwise process, which hybridizes the Leeuwen & Jewitt 2002 Semiotics and iconographic methods with the Rose 2012 method.

Upon consideration I have decided to follow the evolution of five aspects of the trail, as they are depicted in these images. First, the landscape of the AT. What visual myths are being employed to stand for the vast sweeping elemental context in which the cultural performance of the AT is unfolding? Second, biota of the trail, ie the plants and animals, what is being presented, in what way and why? Third, people of the AT. What people are associated with the trail. Fourth, cultural performance. How has the act of “doing the AT” been represented and evolved. Fifth, the institutional structure as it reaches out into the wider world. For each of these categories I will select five images, apply the deconstructive methodology and relate my findings.

**Landscape (non-human macro):**

**Biota (non-human micro):** charismatic mega fauna the snake, the bear, and the moose

**People:** the crawling development of a pedestrian culture

**Performance:** the liminality of linearity

**Structures:** power and discourse
APPENDIX E. Full 1972 National Geographic Society Map Set

Nantahala, Waushecha, Cheoah: Haunting Indian place names persist in the southermost Appalachians, once the homeland of the Cherokee Nation. From Springer Mountain to Fontana Dam, the trail passes through wooded game preserves sheltering deer, bears, foxes, and wild turkeys. Stubbornly independent highlanders living near this 160-mile section farm and make handicrafts and moonshine, although the number of illegal stills decreases each year. The past few decades have seen a revival of arts and crafts in this economically depressed region; with government and church assistance, several cooperatives have organized in some of the larger towns to sell pottery and textiles, baskets and furniture.
APPENDIX E. Full 1972 National Geographic Society Map Set

High, wild, and remote, the trail follows the ridgeline border between Tennessee and North Carolina through Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Here, nourished by rainfall that averages 85 inches a year at high elevations and 55 in the valleys, more than 150 species of trees flourish. Rhododendrons and azaleas bring masses of color during late June and early July. Black bears roam the park, and hips damaged cars while seeking food inside. At the Oconaluftee Visitor Center, reconstructed log cabins display pioneer crafts. Hikers climbing Clingmans Dome to its summit, 6,643 feet, stand at the highest point on the Appalachian Trail.
Diversity of terrain and plant life marks the 500-mile section of trail between Great Smoky Mountains and Shenandoah National Parks. Leaving behind the bald mountain tops of Tennessee, the trail goes down the main street of Damascus, Virginia, passes within a few miles of Natural Bridge, and swings past Crabtree Falls—a sparkling cascade bounded by hemlocks. It traverses four national forests: Cherokee in Tennessee, Pisgah in North Carolina, and Jefferson and George Washington in Virginia; it also crosses sections of mountain farmland. In June hikers find a profusion of rose-purple rhododendron blossoms on the slopes of 6,286-foot Roun Mountain.
APPENDIX E. Full 1972 National Geographic Society Map Set

Famous for autumn foliage along Skyline Drive, the Shenandoah National Park stretches 80 miles in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains. One of the most heavily traveled sections of the Appalachian Trail crisscrosses the drive for more than 100 miles; numerous side trails—some for horses—lead to canyons and lookouts, streams and waterfalls. Forest has reclaimed the area, which was extensively farmed and lumbered until the mid-1930's. More than 900 plant species flourish here. Wildlife, too, has returned in abundance—white-tailed deer, black bears, and bobcats roam the woods. The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club maintains cabins in the park. Millions of summer visitors use the National Park Service campgrounds and picnic areas.
Too rocky for profitable farming and a barrier to trade, the high ridge country north of Shenandoah National Park carries the Appalachian Trail past, rather than through, history. The footpath skirts Harpers Ferry, where restored buildings and a museum commemorate the Civil War period—and where stand cliffs Thomas Jefferson called "monuments of a war between rivers and mountains."

After climbing South Mountain in Maryland and southern Pennsylvania, the trail crosses rich farmlands in the Cumberland Valley; lack of shade on this level stretch can make summer tramping uncomfortable. North of the Susquehanna River, more than 75 species of wildlife find haven on state game lands. The trail hugs the crest of Blue Mountain, where occasional outcrops offer broad views of the valleys.
APPENDIX E. Full 1972 National Geographic Society Map Set

From the Delaware Water Gap to the Vermont line, the trail passes through several state forests, parks, and wildlife preserves, as well as private land. One of the most popular sections crosses Harriman and Bear Mountain State Parks, part of the Palisades Interstate Park system. Hikers can visit Bear Mountain's Trailside Museum and explore many nature paths. Deer and bears inhabit the Audubon Wildlife Center and Miles Wildlife Sanctuary near Sharon, Connecticut. Music Mountain presents concerts by the Berkshire String Quartet; Tanglewood provides a summer home for the Boston Symphony Orchestra; and Jacob's Pillow offers ballet performances. A day's hike leads to the highest point in the rolling Berkshire Hills, the 3,491-foot summit of Mount Greylock. This 300-mile stretch ends near Williamsport, Massachusetts, where Williams College opened in 1793.
APPENDIX E. Full 1972 National Geographic Society Map Set

Entering Vermont, the Appalachian Trail merges for 94 miles with the famous Long Trail of the Green Mountain Club, begun in 1910. At Sherburne Pass it heads northeast through land once cultivated but now reverted to wilderness, along often demanding paths of the Dartmouth Outing Club. Roads provide access to nearly small towns, where hikers can replenish supplies. To the north in White Mountain National Forest, severe cold and heavy snows create hazards much of the year. "The tragedies and incidents of lost travelers in the Presidential Range, unfortunately increasing in late, illustrate the serious dangers which may be encountered," warns the Guide to the Appalachian Trail in New Hampshire and Vermont: "All travelers here should be prepared physically and have full knowledge of the trip being undertaken."
APPENDIX E. Full 1972 National Geographic Society Map Set

Swamps, lakes, and streams mingle with rugged mountains and deep forests in Maine. The trail winds 275 miles from the New Hampshire line to Mount Katahdin, cutting through an isolated wilderness heavily scored by glaciation. Slim white birches grow in dense stands; thickets of wild cranberries and blueberries bear fruit in late summer. Moose browse and beavers build lodges and dams in the many small lakes and streams along the trail. Foxes and porcupines scurry through camping areas after dark. Starting from Monson—last supply point on the trail—a well-provisioned hiker can travel the 120 miles to Mount Katahdin in ten days. Climbing Katahdin itself and descending again fill a strenuous day.
LITERATURE CITED


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