

PLAGUE

What attorneys
for Massey coal said
after a dam failed
and slurry poured
into the Big Sandy,
1000 gallons a minute
for days on end,
choking creeks
for a hundred miles,
leaving pyramids of sludge
at Coldwater Fork,
leaking mercury
and arsenic into pipes,
into faucets, into wells,
spewing out turtles
and frogs on the shore
until they were piled
in heaps and the land
reeked of them,
celebrated land
of Hatfield and McCoy
where dust swarms
over ravaged hillsides
and poverty clings
to the body like plague:
"it was an act of God."