



Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences
Department of American Culture and Literature

**SLOW VIOLENCE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN
ENVIRONMENTAL LITERATURE: RICHARD POWERS'S *GAIN*,
ANN PANCAKE'S *STRANGE AS THIS WEATHER HAS BEEN*
AND JOHN GRISHAM'S *GRAY MOUNTAIN***

Erden EL

Ph.D. Dissertation

Ankara, 2019

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This dissertation is dedicated to victims of slow violence in every part of the world.

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ÖZET

EL, Erden. Çağdaş Amerikan Çevreci Edebiyatında Yavaş Şiddet Olgusu: Richard Powers'ın *Gain*, Ann Pancake'in *Strange as This Weather Has Been* ve John Grisham'ın *Gray Mountain* adlı Romanları, Doktora Tezi, Ankara, 2019.

Rob Nixon'ın 2011 senesinde yayımlanan *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* [*Yavaş Şiddet ve Yoksulların Çevreciliği*] isimli eseri Çevreci Beşeri Bilimler alanında önemli bir görev üstlenmiş ve o ana kadar adı net bir biçimde konulamamış olan çevre sorunlarını “yavaş şiddet” olarak isimlendirmiştir. Nixon'a göre yavaş şiddet zamana yayılmış olduğundan fark edilmesi zor bir süreçtir. Yavaş şiddetten zarar gören insanların yoksullar olduğu da düşünülürse, çevre tahribatlarının görünürlüğü daha da zorlaşır. Her ne kadar şiddet denince akla anlık olaylar gelse de, zamana yayılmış olan yavaş şiddet daha ölümcül sonuçlar verebilmektedir. Rob Nixon pek çok araştırmacıya ilham vermiş, gelişmemiş ülkelere uygulanan yavaş şiddetle ilgili pek çok çalışma yapılmıştır. Bu tez bir yenilik olarak Nixon'ın yavaş şiddet kavramından yola çıkarak üç çağdaş Amerikan çevreci romanını inceler. Böylece yavaş şiddet kavramının sadece gelişmemiş ülkelerde bulunmadığını, Amerika'nın yoksul nüfusa sahip bölgelerinin de yavaş şiddete maruz kaldığını ispatlar. Tezin ele aldığı ilk roman olan *Gain*'de (1998) Illinois'de bulunan (hayali) Lacewood kasabasına Clare isimli bir şirketin yüzyılı aşkın zamanda verdiği hasar söz konusudur. *Gain* romanının Nixon'ın kuramına göre incelenmesi Laura Bodey isimli karakterin bir Clare ürününe bağlı toksisiteden kanserini ortaya koyar. Laura ile el ele vererek pek çok kişi ve kuruluşun bu şirkete karşı mücadele etmesi Nixon'ın “yoksulların çevreciliği” olarak adlandırdığı dayanışmanın ne kadar önemli olduğunu kanıtlar. Powers'ın Illinois bölgesindeki toksik kirlenmeye dikkat çekip aksi takdirde gözden kaçacak olan yavaş şiddete karşı halkı uyarması Nixon'ın “yazar aktivizmi” kavramını açıklar. Bu kitabın yazımı ile Illinois'de çevre temizliği faaliyetlerine girişilmesi de edebiyatın çevresel hususlardaki başarısını kanıtlar. Tezin ele aldığı ikinci roman olan *Strange as This Weather Has Been* (2007) Nixon'ın tüm kavramlarını barındırması açısından önemlidir. Ann Pancake'in Apalaş bölgesinde doğmuş bir öğretim üyesi/yazar olarak bölgede açık ocak madenciliği ve takip eden sorunlara karşı mücadele vermesi yazar aktivizmi kavramına örnektir. Lace ve Bant gibi karakterlerin aydınlanma yaşayıp çevreci bireyler olmaları yoksulların çevreciliği kavramına örnektir. Olay örgüsü birçok yavaş şiddet olayını barındırır; kömür madenciliği sonrası Apalaş bölgesindeki çevresel hasar, toksik kirlilik, içme suyu kıtlığı, çamur yağmuru ve seller, Corey'nin madencilik için açılan bir çukura düşüp hayatını yitirmesi, madencilik bağlantılı hastalıklar bunlardan sadece bazılarıdır. Tezin ele aldığı üçüncü roman, *Gray Mountain* (2014) daha çok açık hava madenciliğinin yasal boyutları üzerinedir. Aslen avukat olan John Grisham, Apalaş bölgesindeki yasal sistemin yozlaşmasını irdeleyerek çok uluslu şirketler ile otoritelerin dürüst olmayan bağlantılarını ortaya koyar. Apalaş bölgesinde zamana yayılan

bozulmanın gözden kaçtığı ve yavaş şiddet olgusunun yeterince fark edilmediği gözlemlenir. Her ne kadar yavaş şiddet gözden kaçsa da sonuçları, başta siyah akciğer hastalığı olmak üzere, ölümcüldür. Şiddetin Apalaş bölgesinde çoğunlukla yoksulları etkilediği ve çok uluslu şirketlerin kasıtlı olarak kendini savunmakta güçlük çeken yoksul insanların yaşadığı bu bölgeyi seçtiği gözlemlenir. *Strange as This Weather Has Been* ve *Gray Mountain* romanlarında yavaş şiddet olgusunun siyah akciğer hastalığı, kömür madenciliği kaynaklı kazalar, insanların evlerini kaybetmesi, işsizlik ve buna bağlı depresyon şeklinde kendini gösterdiği gözlemlenir. Bu tez üç çağdaş Amerikan çevreci romanında uzun süredir göz ardı edilen çevresel sorunları görünür kılar; ekosistemlerin hassas olduğu gerçeğini gösterir; insan sağlığının kolayca bozulabileceği gerçeğini ortaya koyar. Bu tez “yavaş şiddet” kavramının, uzun bir süreye yayılmış çevre felaketlerinin sonucunda meydana gelen mağduriyetleri ortaya koymaktaki en önemli tanımlayıcı faktörlerden biri olduğunu ortaya koyar.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Yavaş Şiddet, Rob Nixon, Çevresel Adalet, Çevreci Yazın, Çevreci Eleştiri, Apalaş Bölgesi

ABSTRACT

EL, Erden. *Slow Violence in Contemporary American Environmental Literature: Richard Powers's *Gain*, Ann Pancake's *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and John Grisham's *Gray Mountain**, Ph.D. Dissertation, Ankara, 2019.

Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, published in 2011, has undertaken an important mission in the Environmental Humanities; Nixon coined the term "slow violence" for the hitherto unnamed environmental disasters that escape the public eye. According to Nixon, slow violence is dispersed across time and, as such, goes unnoticed. Given that the people most exposed to slow violence are disempowered people, it becomes even harder for the environmental degradation to become visible. Even though violence is typically associated with momentary events, an event does not have to be momentary to be fatal. Although violence is associated with instant events, the consequences of slow violence can be even more fatal. Rob Nixon has inspired many scholars, and a good number of studies have been carried out addressing slow violence in the global South. The novelty of the present dissertation, however, is the application of Nixon's concept of slow violence to three contemporary American environmental novels on disempowered people who are exposed to the scourge of slow violence. In *Gain* (1998), the first novel under focus in this dissertation, the environmental damage wrought for more than a century by the Clare Company is evident, its long-lasting harm exemplifying what Nixon refers to as slow violence. A Nixonian analysis of *Gain* reveals that a product of Clare, Inc., has caused Laura Bodey's cancer—a manifestation of slow violence. The fact that many people and organizations collaborate with Laura and participate in the struggle against Clare expresses the significance of the solidarity which Nixon calls "the environmentalism of the poor." Powers's drawing attention to the toxicity in Illinois, warning people about slow violence – which would otherwise have gone unnoticed – embodies the significance of Nixon's "writer-activism." The fact that Superfund sites were established in Illinois after the publication of *Gain* proves the impact of such literature on environmental hazards. The second novel under focus, *Strange as This Weather Has Been* (2007) is significant in its embodiment of all the Nixonian concepts. Ann Pancake, as a writer and lecturer born in the region who struggles against strip-mining and the ensuing environmental hazards, exemplifies writer-activism. The fact that the characters Lace and Bant experience a revelation and become environmentalists embodies the environmentalism of the poor. The plot features numerous instances of slow violence: the degradation of Appalachia after four decades of mountaintop removal, and the illnesses and deaths caused by coal mining, such as when Corey died after falling into a pond created by the industry. The procedure of mountaintop coal mining creates toxicity in the water, soil, and the air; thus, people continually suffer from respiratory illnesses, the scarcity of potable water, and sludge rains and floods. *Gray Mountain* (2014), the third novel, focuses more on the legal issues related to coal mining. A lawyer by

training, Grisham reveals the corruption of the legal system in Appalachia and the dishonest alliances between multinational corporations and authorities. The long-term wreckage goes unnoticed in Appalachia, rendering its slow violence invisible. However, although slow violence is relatively concealed, its consequences are fatal, black lung disease being the principal one. Further, the violence mainly hits the disempowered people in Appalachia, since multinational corporations' development target locations tend to be inhabited by disempowered people who are unable to defend themselves. It is examined that in both *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and *Gray Mountain*, slow violence appears in the form of black lung disease, accidents related to coal mining, loss of housing, unemployment, and depression. A study of the three contemporary environmental novels makes visible what went unnoticed over a long period of time, illustrates the vulnerability of ecosystems, as well as the vulnerability of human health. The dissertation proves that the concept of slow violence has become one of the defining factors of a collective awareness of the suffering that emerges out of prolonged environmental catastrophes.

Keywords: Slow Violence, Rob Nixon, Environmental Justice, Environmental Literature, Ecocriticism, Appalachian Region

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ABBREVIATIONS

ALF	Animal Liberation Front
AppalReD	The Appalachian Research and Defense Fund of Kentucky
ARC	Appalachian Regional Commission
ATSDR	The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
CWP	Coal Workers' Pneumoconiosis
DDT	Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane
DEP	Department of Environmental Protection
ELF	Earth Liberation Front
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
MTR	Mountaintop Removal
NASA	The National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NIOSH	The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
NTP	National Toxicology Program
OVEC	Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition
PETA	People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
POWER	Partnership for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization
SES	Socioeconomic Status
UDHHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
VOC	Volatile Organic Compounds

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INTRODUCTION

The renowned ecocritic Rob Nixon published his *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* in 2011 and gave voice to a hitherto unexplored problem: the long-term environmental wreckage that escapes the public eye. In this timely book, Nixon asserts that environmental tragedies caused by climate change, toxicity, deforestation, oil spills, and others are often invisible as they take place over a large span of time. Indeed, the violence that Nixon speaks of goes unnoticed in many parts of the world as it mainly hits the disempowered. In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, in which he takes up the literature of the global South, Nixon exposes how writers draw attention to environmental emergencies unfolding over a long period of time. Just as Nixon examines writers from the global South, the aim of this dissertation is to explore the scope of Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence" in three novels written in the United States of America before and after the publication of *Slow Violence*. The study will argue that slow violence is one of the defining causes of the suffering that emerges from prolonged environmental catastrophes. This dissertation examines the novels *Gain* (1998) by Richard Powers, *Strange as This Weather Has Been* (2007) by Ann Pancake, and *Gray Mountain* (2014) by John Grisham, through the lens of Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence." The analysis thus spans a period of almost two decades, during which slow violence has become more visible both in the United States and around the world.

A study of the novels will not only reveal the suffering that emerges from long-term environmental disasters but will also show that such environmental literature is a powerful means of exposing worldwide the activism of the poor communities who suffer from environmental catastrophes. Human-induced environmental problems are caused by multinational giant firms, industry giants, coal mining companies, and energy companies. Extinction rates on a global scale are on the uptick and environmental illnesses have risen dramatically. As Thomashow states in *Bringing the Biosphere Home* (2002), "the planet is on the verge of its sixth mega extinction, a devastating and irreparable loss to the intricate fabric of global ecosystems and the diversity of life" (1). According to Thomashow, the best way of teaching the forthcoming dangers of the sixth mega extinction is to make "informed speculation[s]" (62). By informed

speculation, he means an investigation “employing the ‘facts’ of ecology and global change science” (62).

Thomashow’s term, informed speculation, applies to the novels under focus in this dissertation. The writers, Powers, Pancake, and Grisham, deliver meticulous documentation of environmental hazards and the ensuing health problems on the local and global levels. As Thomashow states, “to address an issue with full urgency requires a good measure of foreboding, but to sustain commitment and resolve, one must summon hope” (62). Powers, Pancake, and Grisham address various environmental threats with full urgency, raising a timely awareness of the slow wreckage wrought on an indiscriminate scale by the giant companies. Simultaneously, however, they also summon hope. All three novels draw attention to “the environmentalism of the poor,” as Nixon calls it, by creating a storyline in which determined environmentalists fight against multinational companies supported by politicians.

The first novel under focus in this dissertation, *Gain* (1998) by Richard Powers, reveals the history of the Clare Company, a fictional company that came into being in the early eighteenth century, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution. The company transforms from a small-scale, environmentally-friendly local company into an industrial giant, a development parallel to the long-term impacts of the Industrial Revolution in the United States of America. As time passes, the company commences mass production and starts using cheaper ingredients, which are also toxic. Therefore, *Gain* is a good example of the long-term wreckage caused by slow violence. In Ann Pancake’s *Strange as This Weather Has Been* (2007), both the characters (kept anonymous) and the setting are drawn from real life. As Pancake is a writer, lecturer, and environmental activist from the region, her work is significant in its embodiment of Nixon’s writer-activism. *Gray Mountain* (2014) by John Grisham reveals the astounding links between policy makers and rich businessmen. As Grisham is a lawyer by training, the importance of his novel lies in its depiction of legal gaps and how multinational companies exploit these legal gaps. The connection among the three novels, spanning a period of two decades, reveals what has been happening in the United States in terms of slow violence. Grisham narrates how slow violence has become a threat in Appalachia by illustrating the connections between wealthy

businessmen and politicians. His novel sheds light on the poverty in the Appalachian region, a poverty which enslaves people and prevents them from fighting for their rights. Despite the pessimistic portrayals, all three novels have a tone that summons hope. All three novels address the environmentalism of the poor and are significant in terms of raising awareness for the environmental wreckage that has gone unnoticed over the decades.

The first chapter of this dissertation analyzes *Gain*, a novel on the history of a family business that grows into a worldwide corporation over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The growth of the Clare Company is analyzed along with environmental health issues, principally Laura Bodey's fight with cancer. It is important to point out that the Clare Company deliberately chose Lacewood because the local people are disempowered and unable to defend their rights. The chapter also examines the health issues caused by the company, as well as the slow wreckage, dispersed over time, which escapes public attention.

The second chapter analyzes *Strange as This Weather Has Been* from the perspective of Nixon's slow violence, and lays bare the long-term wreckage brought about by mountaintop removal in the Appalachian region. As the novel was inspired by the interviews and conversations Ann Pancake made with the local people and the coal miners, the chapter will reveal the scope of coal mining in the region and its outcomes. The study deals with cancer-causing agents used for coal processing, ponds which are filled with toxic water, floods that take place in the region, and the over-all damage mountaintop removal causes in a vast area in the Appalachian region. The chapter points out that the multinational coal company attacks the local people and the land in multiple ways. It does not only affect the health of the people and the land, but it also affects their culture. As the local people of Appalachia are deeply attached to the mountains in economic and cultural terms, blasting a mountaintop and clear cutting a forest means attacking the local people's cultural heritage and economic freedom. The coal mining company wins the local people over by promising them well-paid jobs. Once they accept the offer, however, they neither receive high salaries nor have their healthy environment. The company enslaves the local people's once healthy lands, healthy bodies, sustainable economies, and eco-friendly culture.

The third chapter on *Gray Mountain* is an analysis of how the law supports and perpetuates environmental violence. The chapter examines the ways in which rich companies and policymakers cooperate. It also shows how environmental degradation affects people's lives in a multitude of ways. The chapter examines coal workers' rights, coal-related occupational diseases, the destruction of land through mountaintop removal, coal mining and its corollary economic dependence, legal dimensions of coal mining, and the environmentalism of the poor in Appalachia. The chapter also deals with black lung disease, an affliction which is arguably related to coal mining.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Environmental Justice stands for "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies" ("Environmental Justice"). Clashing with the EPA's definition, all three novels in this dissertation portray a gap between the wealthy and disempowered in terms of environmental justice. Although the EPA's definition of environmental justice focuses on race and color, none of the novels puts forward the view that discrimination stems from color or nationality. However, the third element, income, creates a gap in terms of environmental justice. Income, in particular, is a defining factor which hinders environmental justice in the novels under focus. All the three novels have storylines in which poor local people face discrimination in terms of environmental justice. Multinational companies' stance, after all, is that they can easily suppress any resistance from poor people.

Overall, the study will reveal that there is, indeed, a connection between the rise of corporations and the degradation of environmental health, influencing the human and environmental well-being in the United States. The conclusion will cover the findings of the research on the three novels in relation to slow violence.

HOW DID ECOCRITICISM ARRIVE AT ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE?

The eminent ecocritic Lawrence Buell posits that the history of ecocriticism includes two waves. He defines the first-wave of ecocriticism in his book *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005) as follows:

For first-wave ecocriticism, “environment” effectively meant “natural environment.” In practice if not in principle, the realms of the “natural” and the “human” looked more disjunct than they have come to seem for more recent environmental critics—one of the reasons for preferring “environmental criticism” to “ecocriticism” as more indicative of present practice. (21)

Buell holds that the first wave of ecocriticism concentrated mostly on the natural environment, observing that there was a gap between nature and human beings. These critics dealt with the nostalgic past, lamenting the loss of natural landscapes—they were the pioneers of ecocriticism. Subsequently, ecocriticism evolved, becoming political as well as interdisciplinary, a step that culminated in the second-wave of ecocriticism, one that deals with political as well as transnational issues. The second wave of ecocriticism attached importance not only to the beauty of nature but increasingly often focused their attention on the environmental hazards.

The second wave of ecocriticism recognizes the fact that natural and constructed environments have intermingled, blurring the boundaries between nature and culture. “Urban and degraded landscapes” were now taken seriously (Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism* 22), and integral parts of second-wave ecocriticism became urbanization, the urban landscape, and ensuing environmental problems. Ecocriticism gained a new perspective. The discipline now aims to demonstrate how literary texts display environmental issues and human environmental malpractice. Merely displaying the malpractice, though, will not suffice. The ecocritic has the responsibility to raise awareness of the environment by analyzing works from a nature-oriented perspective. As Glotfelty has put it, “if we are not part of the solution, we are part of the problem” (*The Ecocriticism Reader* xxi).

Buell sees natural environments as having dramatically changed, developed environments as having replaced most of the idyllic landscapes. As natural environments have been mostly replaced by built environments, it is impossible to separate the two.

Second-wave ecocriticism has tended to question organicist models of conceiving both environment and environmentalism. Natural and built environments, revisionists point out, are long since all mixed up; the landscape of the American “West” is increasingly the landscape of metropolitan sprawl rather than the outback of Rocky Mountain “wilderness.” (*The Future of Environmental Criticism* 22)

As Buell mentions, there is a difference in the scope of the first-wave and second-wave ecocriticism. Second-wave ecocritics point out the impossibility of separating natural and built environments from each other since nature and culture are intermingled in modern life. That is to say, the environment does not necessarily mean the natural world. According to Terry Gifford, “ecocriticism is concerned not only with the attitude to nature expressed by the author of a text, but also with its patterns of interrelatedness, both between the human and the non-human and between the different parts of the non-human world” (*Pastoral* 5). Hence, the non-human world has gained importance and its connection with the human world has been studied widely. Jane Bennett refers to the interaction between the human world and non-human world with the statement “there was never a time when human agency was anything other than an interfolding network of humanity and nonhumanity; today this mingling has become harder to ignore” (*Vibrant Matter* 31). As Bennett mentions, the interconnected structure of the human and the non-human world is one of the most important concerns of science and humanities.

The way science and humanities examine the environment and related health issues has dramatically changed in the last three decades. The material world has gained importance and the human-centered approach that was previously in use has been abandoned. Science and humanities have come to focus on the material world and its interrelated connection to the human world. Stacy Alaimo states in her work *Bodily Natures* (2010) that “two particularly striking movements of the late twentieth century—environmental justice and environmental health—mark significant material interchanges between human bodies and the environment” (3). As Alaimo claims, there is a continual exchange between the environment and human beings; therefore, human health is directly linked with the environment. Matter, as Alaimo argues in *Bodily Natures*, is “the vast stuff of the world and of ourselves” (1). To this end, Alaimo objects to a simplistic model of perception of nature which sees the environment as a commodity belonging to human beings (1-2). Alaimo states that “the environment has been drained of its blood, its lively creatures, its interactions and relations—in short, all that is recognizable as ‘nature’ — in order that it become a mere empty space, an ‘uncontested ground,’ for human ‘development’” (1-2). The perception that human

beings are part of the environment instead of its owner has gained momentum with the material turn. Human beings' relationship with nature has been brought into question.

Ecocriticism is a theoretical approach which questions human beings' perceptions of the environment and aims to reconstruct human beings' relationship with the environment. By focusing on a literary work from an earth-centered perspective, ecocriticism makes it possible to realize the current environmental issues and the human factor. According to Donald Worster,

We are facing a global crisis today, not because of how ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function. Getting through the crisis requires understanding our impact on nature as precisely as possible, but even more, it requires understanding those ethical systems and using that understanding to reform them. Historians, along with literary scholars, anthropologists, and philosophers, cannot do the reforming, of course, but they can help with the understanding. (21)

Worster draws attention to the flawed relationship of human beings with nature, advocating a reform in human beings' ways of thinking. Historians, literary scholars, anthropologists, and philosophers should collaboratively struggle for a new ethical system towards a renewed understanding of the human and the non-human worlds (Worster 21).

Being earth-centered instead of human-centered is an important principle of ecocriticism. Glen Love states in his *Practical Ecocriticism* (2003) that "ecocriticism, unlike all other forms of literary inquiry, encompasses non-human as well as human contexts and considerations" (3). As Love mentions, ecocriticism is different from other schools of literary criticism and does not evaluate a literary text from a human-centered approach. Ecocriticism is a school of literary theory which gives wide coverage to the non-human world. According to Barry,

[Ecocritics] turn away from the 'social constructivism' and 'linguistic determinism' of dominant literary theories (with their emphasis on the linguistic and social constructedness of the external world) and instead emphasise ecocentric values of meticulous observation, collective ethical responsibility, and the claims of the world beyond ourselves. (264)

As Barry put it, the egocentrism of human-centered observation of literary texts is here abandoned and a new understanding, with a democratic and ethical outlook on literature, is developed.

Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence* also deals with the human-centered attitude of nature and its long-term consequences. By redefining violence, Nixon has proven that long-term changes in the material world can lead to unexpected consequences. Nixon has expanded the definition of violence made by Galtung, who had also expanded the concept, referring to violence as something which is not limited to physical contact between people (Nixon 10–11). Just as Galtung extended the definition of violence by coining the new term “structural violence”, Nixon extended Galtung's definition, by creating the term “slow violence.” According to Galtung, “structural violence is silent, it does not show - it is essentially static” (Galtung 173). Nixon defines slow violence as a slowly progressing type of violence, which makes it difficult to recognize (*Slow Violence* 2011).

According to Rob Nixon, slow violence is a type of “violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all” (2). In the novels within the scope of this dissertation, there are numerous examples of slow violence. In *Gain*, for instance, the multinational corporation Clare causes environmental degradation and health problems over such a long span – from the 1830s to the 1990s – that environmental degradation caused by the company goes unnoticed. Backed even by the law, the multinational giant corporations both suppress the people and abuse the land. Nixon states that the environmentalism of the poor (which is also the subtitle of his book) is significant in that “communities typically have to patch together threadbare improvised alliances against vastly superior military, corporate, and media forces” (4). Nixon states that “the poor is a compendious category subject to almost infinite local variation as well as to fracture along fault lines of ethnicity, gender, race, class, region, religion, and generation” (4).

It can be inferred that multinational corporations choose those parts of the country inhabited by poor people, a profoundly influential dynamic which occurs in all the novels of this dissertation. It is a purposeful choice rather than a coincidence that the giant companies choose the impoverished parts of a country because of the vulnerability of the disempowered to resist the multinational companies. There is a disproportionate discrepancy between the firms and the local people, and the companies hold not only an

unfair advantage but, essentially, all the cards, over the disempowered. Both figuratively and literally, the companies wage war against the land and the people. According to Nixon, “confronted with the militarization of both commerce and development, impoverished communities are often assailed by coercion and bribery that test their cohesive resilience” (4). In all the novels studied in this dissertation, the multinational companies consistently and harshly suppress their opponents through use of the media and the press, not to mention the support of law. The companies also silence others by providing them with well-paid jobs and keeping them close with bribes. In all three works, multinational corporations target lesser developed areas of the country, which this dissertation considers as an act consciously carried out by the companies. Nixon states that “slow violence affects the way we perceive and respond to a variety of social afflictions—from domestic abuse to post-traumatic stress and, in particular, environmental calamities” (3). In the novels studied in this dissertation, one can see the traces of slow violence in the form of post-traumatic stress as well as environmental calamities caused by long-term environmental abuse.

Human beings have generally regarded nature as a generous supplier of food and other necessities and have assumed that it will last forever. McKibben asserts in *The End of Nature* (1989) that there is a common belief that “nature takes forever,” and it “moves with infinite slowness” (3). However, McKibben insists that people have reached a threshold heralding the end of nature (7). Since the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the world has changed dramatically (4). With the widespread use of fossil fuels and with the increase of carbon dioxide and methane levels in the air, the once healthy lands are disappearing. According to McKibben, it is true that evolution has taken billions of years, “but that does not mean that time always moves so ponderously” (4); hence, “over a year or a decade,” some “big and impersonal and dramatic changes can take place” (5). As McKibben mentions, the world is prone to gigantic catastrophes. McKibben correctly observes that slow violence progresses slowly and invisibly and, further, that this semi-transparency does not mean that the consequences will be invisible. Therefore, more attention needs to be paid to slow violence since the consequences of ignoring it can be fatal.

Dramatic changes have taken place globally in the last century because of human intervention with the processes of nature. The unearthing of petrol and coal alters nature in two ways. Firstly, people unbury a substance that has been in its natural setting for billions of years and make an immediate and dramatic change that would have otherwise taken much longer (McKibben 9). Secondly, people release huge amounts of carbon dioxide into the air. The increase in carbon dioxide causes global warming and climate change. The change, in turn, causes evaporation in oceans, and the evaporation causes methane release. McKibben also states that human beings have “increased the amount of carbon dioxide in the air by about 25 percent in the last century” and it is supposed that the increase in the amount of carbon dioxide will be doubled in the next century (16). While drawing attention to the unprecedented changes human beings have made, McKibben mentions that the changes that would have taken longer have happened due to human intervention (16). The underlying forces of the environmental disasters are overpopulation, technology, and “the economic activity of human beings” (Speth 9).¹ The economic activity of people focuses on consuming natural resources and producing toxic waste. According to Speth, “features of capitalism, as they are constituted today, work together to produce an economic and political reality that is highly destructive of the environment” (10). As Speth mentions, capitalism and its by-products are entirely hazardous to the environment. Speth argues that despite the common belief that climate change will be gradual, it will happen suddenly and irreversibly (35). Therefore, it is time to act before the irreversible effects take place; it will be too late once they occur.

Given that climate change and ecological crises threaten the world, the mission of ecocriticism is vital. Ecocriticism will shed light on the relationship between the human and the environment and reveal the fact that a flawed relationship will do harm on the

¹ James Gustave Speth examines the extent to which capitalism devastates nature in his book *The Bridge at the End of the World* (2008). Speth argues that the global growth economy damages nature and natural sources and that it simultaneously brings our planet to an end. The changes which have taken place recently are unprecedented, and the costs of these changes are enormous. Deforestation, climate change, and extinction of species occur rapidly. The extinction of species happens so quickly that, in fact, “the planet has not seen such a spasm of extinction in sixty-five million years since the dinosaurs disappeared.” (1-2) Human effects on the ecosystem are relatively stronger than the impacts of natural systems (2). The ozone layer has become thinner, and the earth's ice fields are melting.

human and non-human world simultaneously. Richard Kerridge explains the working methodology of the ecocritic in the “Introduction” to *Writing the Environment* (1998), the ecocritic should unearth the representations of nature in a literary text and reread the text from an eccentric perspective (5).

The ecocritics want to track environmental ideas and representations wherever they appear, to see more clearly a debate which seems to be taking place, often part-concealed, in a great many cultural spaces. Most of all ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis. (5)

Therefore, the mission the ecocritic undertakes is very significant because the ecocritic seeks to unearth the environmental issues in a written work. The messages the writers convey may sometimes be very latent. It is the ecocritic’s duty to connect theory with the written work. The ecocritic studies with a scrutiny which is similar to that of an archaeologist working in an ancient site. The ecocritic should try to convey the environmental messages and environmental issues in a written work and, by applying the data, should work to develop a broader awareness of them in the society.

David Mazel presents his opinion on what the aim of ecocriticism should be as follows:

Our reading of environmental literature should help us realize that the concerns are not exclusively of the order of “Shall these trees be cut? Or shall this river be dammed?”- Important as such questions are- but also of the order of “What has counted as the environment, and what may count? Who marks off the conceptual boundaries, and under what authority, and for what reasons? Have those boundaries and that authority been contested, and if so, by whom? With what success and by virtue of what strategies of resistance?” These are the levels on which I would like to see ecocriticism theorize the environment. (143)

According to Mazel, the ecocritic should reveal the power relations in a literary text. The ecocritic should avoid a shallow environmentalism and deepen the research to the level of questioning and deconstructing the meta-narratives that shape human beings’ understanding of the environment. Mazel calls on literary critics to blur the boundaries between the human and the non-human world and to question the extent to which the boundaries are logical and accurate. Mazel also rejects the human-centered approach to the environment and questions what exactly the environment stands for and what it does not. Is the environment what surrounds human life or is human life only one small part of the environment? It is the duty of the ecocritic to question the authorities who draw

the boundaries between the human and the non-human world while theorizing the environment. As both Kerridge and Mazel maintain, as do many other ecocritics, an eco-centered way of looking into literature is necessary to establish a better relationship with nature. The current state of ecocriticism “implies a move toward a mere biocentric world-view, an extension of ethics, a broadening of humans’ conception of global community to include nonhuman life forms and the physical environment” (Branch et. al xiii). An eco-centered attitude will hopefully help human beings understand the vital necessity of the environment for human life.

This vitality has been a defining characteristic of the environmental justice movement since its founding. As mentioned before, Alaimo states in her *Bodily Natures* that environmental justice and environmental health are interrelated (3). Since human life cannot be considered separate from the material world (Alaimo 1-2), the material world around human beings has a direct impact on their health. However, this fact is often ignored, and people are exposed to high amounts of toxicity. The fact that disadvantaged populations suffer more densely from toxicity is one of the central concerns of environmental justice

Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary field which is in the making. Scott Slovic had pointed out in “Ecocriticism: Containing Multitudes, Practising Doctrine” that “ecocriticism has no central, dominant doctrine or theoretical apparatus—rather, ecocritical theory [...] is being re-defined daily by the actual practice of thousands of literary scholars around the world” (161). The state of interdisciplinarity has enabled ecocriticism to deal intensely with issues of environmental justice recently. Tallmadge and Harrington praise the interdisciplinarity of ecocriticism, mentioning that “ecocriticism, as an emerging methodology, remains open, flexible, capacious, and loosely constructed, capable of supporting the most diverse and sophisticated researches without spinning off into obscurantism or idiosyncrasy” (xv). The interdisciplinary structure of ecocriticism is defined by Buell, Heise, and Thornber as follows:

Literature and environment studies— commonly called “ecocriticism” or “environmental criticism” in analogy to the more general term literary criticism— comprise an eclectic, pluriform, and cross-disciplinary initiative that aims to explore the environmental dimensions of literature and other creative media in a spirit of environmental concern not limited to any one method or commitment. (418)

As Buell, Heise, and Thornber state, ecocriticism is not limited within a matrix; on the contrary, there is room for freedom in ecocriticism to cooperate with various fields to work on a variety of different texts and media. This corporation is carried out in an eco-centered approach rather than placing the human being at the focal point. Given the interdisciplinarity of ecocriticism, scholars from all fields engage in ecocriticism, an ad hoc formation that exists alongside the more structured collaboration of several specific fields to develop the emerging discipline. Focally, the structure of recent ecocriticism is closely related with the issue of environmental justice. As Buell mentions, recent developments in ecocriticism and the interdisciplinarity of ecocriticism have enabled “nature-oriented literature and on traditional forms of environmental education to take into account urban as well as rural loci and environmental justice concerns as well as nature preservation” (7). Thus, environmental justice is studied within the context of ecocriticism.

SLOW VIOLENCE

Rob Nixon’s *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011) has changed the concept of environmental catastrophes. In *Slow Violence*, Nixon examines the interlocking connections that environmental issues share with colonialism, neo-liberal policies, and race. He defines slow violence as “violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all” (2). For him, slow violence is a type of violence which is not easy to determine unless specific attention is paid to it (2). The invisibility of slow violence is encouraging for those who apply it because of the inherent difficulty in distinguishing whether the act actually involves violence or not. As slow violence is an attritional type of violence, its effects are not recognized immediately. It advances so slowly that it is not, by its nature, easily recognizable. Therefore, slow violence is “a different kind of violence,” which is “rather incremental and accretive” (Nixon 2). Nixon argues that “the representational, narrative, and strategic challenges posed by the relative invisibility of slow violence” should be examined (2). To this end, this dissertation intends to examine the ways in which slow violence manifests itself in the novels studied and how the writers overcome the above-mentioned challenges.

Nixon starts his book by criticizing the policies of the World Bank, locating blame on it for the injustice between classes regarding environmental health. In a speech by then president of the World Bank, Lawrence Summers, on December 12, 1991, Summers claimed that there is inequality in the air quality of developed countries and Africa, and that Africa is unfairly under polluted (Qtd. in Nixon 1). Summers claimed that the World Bank should encourage developed countries to establish dirty industries in developing countries (Qtd. in Nixon 1). Summers thought that if developed countries establish their dirty industries in developing countries, this would satisfy the environmentalists of developed countries, and the damage in Africa would escape the public attention (Qtd. in Nixon 1). Summers also believed that the inequality of the air quality is a disadvantage for the developed countries and that developing countries should suffer from equal pollution (Qtd. in Nixon 1). The argument that an inequality in the air quality exists and therefore less polluted countries must be equated in terms of pollution is nonsensical. It means sacrificing Africa for the benefit of the developed countries. Summers defended his “poison-redistribution ethic as offering a double gain: it would benefit the United States and Europe economically while helping appease the rising discontent of rich-nation environmentalists” (Qtd. in Nixon 2). This argument is a total misunderstanding of environmentalism. Summers ignores the fact that environmentalism is a transnational movement and acts for global issues. Charlene Spretnak points out the impossibility of toxic distribution without ill effects. According to Spretnak,

The entire planet is now imperiled by climate destabilization and ecological degradation, resulting from the modern assumption that highly advanced societies could throw toxic substances “away” somewhere and could exude staggeringly unnatural levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into our atmosphere without ill effect. (*Relational Reality* 1–2)

As Spretnak points out, advanced societies believe that they can get rid of toxicity without experiencing its ill effects. One of the methods to dispose toxicity is by redistribution. However, the pollution of local environments causes the pollution of the whole planet gradually, which is an example of slow violence.

Another ethical problem of poison-redistribution is that although the consequences of the planning that was underway would mainly affect Africa, the African people had not been asked for their opinion. In this case, the priority is for whatever benefits America

and Europe, while the greatest harm is given to Africa. Thus, Nixon criticizes the environmental policies of the developed countries. The fact that the people mostly affected by the environmental disasters are not asked for their opinion on the matter is evident in all three novels studied in this dissertation. It will be seen that in all of them the multinational companies choose their setting according to profitability, without considering the health of the people and the land.

Summers's ideas also represent a profit-centered outlook on nature. If Summers had defended the idea of waging war against Africa with weapons, it would have been perceived as real violence and an unacceptable imperial invasion (Nixon 3). However, the distribution of toxic materials to other countries is itself a different type of violence. In the long run, slow violence can kill as many people as a bombardment does.

A host of [...] slowly unfolding environmental catastrophes present formidable representational obstacles that can hinder our efforts to mobilize and act decisively. The long dyings—the staggered and staggeringly discounted casualties, both human and ecological that result from war's toxic aftermaths or climate change—are underrepresented in strategic planning as well as in human memory. (Nixon 2,3)

As catastrophic as the events explained above are, because they do not appear instantaneously, they are not perceived as catastrophic. Therefore, strategic planning does not take them into the depth of consideration that they deserve. And this is because the results of the above-mentioned incidents can be as fatal as an instantaneous event. According to Nixon, if Summers had “advocated invading Africa with weapons of mass destruction, his proposal would have fallen under conventional definitions of violence and been perceived as a military or even an imperial invasion” (3). However, when Summers suggested that developed countries should dump their toxic waste in Africa, claiming that Africa is under-polluted, it was perceived as a developmental plan (Nixon 3). Regarding the indifference of human beings to the significance of slow violence, Nixon poses the question, “how can we turn the long emergencies of slow violence into stories dramatic enough to rouse public sentiment and warrant political intervention?” (3). In fact, literature can be a useful device to raise awareness of slow violence.

Flight Behavior (2012) by Barbara Kingsolver is significant novel, dramatic enough to have roused public sentiment. It is, therefore, a good example of how literature can be a useful device in warning people about climate change and environmental catastrophes.

Flight Behavior narrates the story of Dellarobia Turnbow, a young wife and mother of two, who experiences an epic encounter of orange butterflies covering a mountain and its trees (2). The butterflies have swerved from their optimal flight trails, an analogy for the diffusive threats of global warming. Kingsolver narrates that the butterflies migrated from their natural habitat in Mexico due to ecological sabotage which resulted in flooding and mudslides. Although many people are fascinated with the butterflies, the fact is that they display a “disastrous manifestation of a changing climate” (7). However, the species in its new habitat not only faces threats of extinction from the forthcoming cold winter but also deforestation by the character Bear, who in a bid to negate his financial losses signs a logging contract to clear-cut the whole mountain. The locals are ignorant about the causes of climate change and believe that butterflies are a divine sign from God. Pastor Bobby Ogle’s warnings and the inputs of Ovid Byron, a scientist who studies the monarch’s migratory patterns, eventually convince Bear to cut off the contract and save the natural ecosystem of the mountain and the endangered monarch butterflies. Ovid as a scientist informs people that the advent of the butterflies is a symbol of catastrophe, although they look marvelous (2). Ovid Byron interprets the dramatic change in the flight behavior as a “bizarre alteration of a previously stable pattern” (2). Dellarobia’s encounter with Ovid enlightens her on the plight of climate change, flooding, and mudslides caused by logging.

The butterflies try to adapt their migratory schedule in the new environment. However, the monarchs encounter a sudden climatic difference with an intense snowstorm but miraculously, to Dellarobia and Ovid’s great relief, some survive and resume their new flight patterns. The environmental awakening and desire to increase her knowledge of the world around her, prompt Dellarobia to consider ending her marriage and moving with her kids from the farm to pursue a college education. Kingsolver ends the story on the positive note that both Dellarobia and the butterflies will successfully adapt to their new flight paths. Therefore, the enlightening becomes a *flight* and an ascent for Dellarobia.

This ascendancy is similar to the task climate change fiction attempts to motivate people to carry out, to become enlightened. This is the function of the discipline’s aim to warn people about what is going to happen unless rapid action is taken, in a manner which

Thomasow calls “informed speculation” (1). *Flight Behavior* is significant because it is based on scientific truth as well as (a necessary) “informed speculation”, shown in the destruction of weeds by pesticides changes the flight patterns of monarch butterflies (Thomasow 60). As mentioned in the beginning of the paragraph, *Flight Behavior* is a good example of how literature can be a device to warn people because it is “dramatic enough to rouse public sentiment” (Nixon 3), and it blends scientific facts with fiction.

To return to *Slow Violence*, it should be emphasized that Nixon deals with the problem of the widespread lack of comprehension of slow violence. Nixon states that the problem with developing awareness of the fact that slow violence exists stems from human beings’ tendency to hold spectacular events in high esteem and to undervalue times or experiences that are unspectacular (6). The fact that catastrophes occur slowly does not mean that they are inconsequential. Nixon gives the example of radioactivity to reveal how slow violence affects the human body in an irremediable way, remaining unnoticed and often untreated. Nixon states that “chemical and radiological violence, for example, is driven inward, somatized into cellular dramas of mutation that—particularly in the bodies of the poor—remain largely unobserved, undiagnosed, and untreated” (6). Since economically disempowered people receive less health care, their illnesses related with slow violence, such as those induced by chemical and radiological toxicity, go unnoticed. However negligible it may seem; slow violence arguably bears fatal consequences.

Nixon also deals with the environmentalism of the poor in *Slow Violence*. He particularly emphasizes the poor because they are the people most affected by environmental disasters. The reason why Nixon attaches significance to the environmentalism of the poor is that they are the people who experience the difficulties, and, because of their inbuilt economic disadvantages, they are seen as vulnerable people who will surrender in the end. Capitalists believe that the poor can easily be silenced with bribery. A good example to the fact that rich companies attract poor people with well-paid jobs is Ana Castillo’s work *So Far from God* (1993). *So Far from God* depicts the story of a Mexican woman named Sofia and her daughters Esperanza, Caridad, Fe, and La Loca. The life and career of the character Fe set an example for the phenomenon of slow violence. Fe works for a bank and, although she devotes herself to

her work, fails to get a promotion (177). After a girl Fe meets at the bank tells her about a new job opportunity, Fe decides to leave her job and work for Acme International (177). The new job appeals to her because she can earn twice the amount of her bank salary, and she will receive salary increases and promotions in parallel with her performance (177). It turns out, though, that there is a downside. The company forces their workers to work with toxic, highly fatal material. After various health problems surface caused by the toxic materials, the company goes on to deny the truth. Nixon points out in fact in *Slow Violence*, that companies responsible for slow violence deny their responsibility (163). The company in *So Far from God* also tries to get out of their responsibilities by denying the truth, that they force their workers to handle toxic material. The company nurse keeps claiming that the symptoms seen in the company workers “had nothing to do with working with chemicals” (178). Despite her misgivings, Fe is convinced and continues to work for the company. Her duty is to clean aircraft parts. The company uses a toxic chemical which they claim to be harmless. Fe contracts cancer and later understands that the material which the company claims is harmless is in fact a lethal toxin. The plot of *So Far from God* reveals that some powerful companies flout the law and take no notice of – in fact, *devastate* – public health.

The pathetic character Ana Castillo has created in *So Far from God* befits the portrayal Nixon draws in *Slow Violence*. Vulnerable people who need money and are unable to resist rich companies, become prey for the companies. Castillo successfully draws the portrayal of Fe’s suffering. After Fe accepted the job, she buys the household goods she had always dreamt of buying. Her new household items were an “automatic dishwasher,” a “microwave, Cousinart and the VCR” (171). These items are certainly not a luxury; however, she had not been able to own them before, even though she needed them. She was unable to buy even very basic items. That is why she could not resist the job. That new job that she got, however, slowly killed her (171).

The same tragedy applies to people around Fe. They were not aware of the fact that the environment was killing them slowly. They either have no idea of the environmental slow violence around them or they intentionally ignore it. The intentional indifference, which likely stems from lack of power, is very apparent because people seem to have

turned a deaf ear to the catastrophes. They do not seem to comprehend the significance and the grandeur of the catastrophes even when they see “dead cows in the pasture” or “raining starlings” which “dropped dead” (172).

The conditions under which Fe works are horrendous. The company forces her to do a toxic job which slowly kills her. In other words, Fe becomes the disposable heroine of the story; she is literally meant to be killed by the company, in whose eyes she has no value. The company’s lack of care for its workers becomes evident when Fe complains that she has not been provided with a mask. It is true that even if the company does provide her with a mask, it may not be effective because of the high toxicity level of the material. However, the fact that they do not even bother to give her a mask shows how worthless the workers are in the eyes of the company. The staff, whom the narrator calls “the useless and ineffectual rotating foremen,” are not eager to help the workers (183). Fe finds a mask for herself, which she admits will not be helpful but wears it just to feel better. The foremen provide her with orange gloves which melt after being exposed to ether. The extent of the damage in her hands is so great that she loses most of her fingernails and is given special gloves after the incident (183).

Fe’s disillusionment takes place after an issue with one of the supervisors of the company. She pours the chemical substances into the drain just like the other workers. One morning, a supervisor sees her pouring the chemicals into the drain and gets angry with her. Although she was simply following the instructions given by other supervisors, this supervisor tells her to leave the chemicals to evaporate after using them. Fe reflects that if the chemical is harmless, there is nothing wrong with pouring it into the drain. After that she understands that she has been fooled by the company (184).

The company does not only ruin Fe’s health, but it also lays the guilt on her when authorities determine that they are pouring toxic material into the drain. Although Fe was simply following the company’s instructions, the company pretends not to know about the incident, and acts as if Fe had decided to pour the chemicals in the drain on her own (184). This incident shows how sinister companies can be, a refrain repeated throughout Nixon’s book.

Fe's suffering is depicted very vividly by Castillo. She contracts cancer, and the cancer advances very quickly. Although it is clear that the toxic chemical exposure in Acme International is the cause of Fe's cancer, lawyers hesitate to sue the company because she already had skin cancer before she started working for the company (185). The support in the law itself for the strong companies, a reality that Nixon repeatedly gives examples of, is evident in the case of Fe. Before her death, Fe refers to the medical treatment she received as torture. The treatment was so wearing that "there was so little left of Fe to be buried" (185). Fe's illness shows how much suffering slow violence causes despite its gradual structure.

To return to the book *Slow Violence*, poor communities are much less powerful than capitalist firms, who are supported by the media and government for the sake of growth. In such a context, if the disempowered fight for their rights, it is a valuable resistance. Nixon states that "if the neoliberal era has intensified assaults on resources, it has also intensified resistance," and adds that the struggle takes place "whether through isolated site-specific struggles or through activism that has reached across national boundaries in an effort to build translocal alliances" (4). This is to say; the environmentalism of the poor local people is a necessity as neoliberalism targets environmental activism as well as natural resources. As Nixon mentions, an unexpected side effect of the assaults has been the environmentalism of the poor (4), and this struggle is addressed as the victory of the disempowered in the books studied in this dissertation.

Another concern of Nixon's book is writer-activism. Writer-activism raises awareness of slow violence. In writer-activism, the writer draws attention to slow violence and engages in environmental activism to raise awareness of environmental disruptions. Nixon's aim here is to point out the "inattention to calamities that are slow and long-lasting" as such calamities fail to reach the attention of the media (6). Slow violence escapes public attention, as it is gradual and unspectacular. However, in the long run, the damage incurred by slow violence will be equivalent to that of a spectacular instantaneous event.

Nixon makes a comparison between slow violence and indirect or structural violence. The gap between the rich and the poor can be a kind of structural violence (10). The fact that the poor have limited access to health care reflects such structural violence. A

systematic hindrance of someone's self-realization can be a type of structural violence. A wide range of situations can be considered structural violence as structural violence stems from disproportionate access to opportunities. Structural violence and slow violence share a common ground. Both have incremental effects that do not appear instantaneously. However, the difference between the two is that "structural violence is a theory that entails rethinking different notions of causation and agency with respect to violent effects," whereas slow violence "might well include forms of structural violence, but has a wider descriptive range in calling attention, not simply to questions of agency, but to broader, more complex descriptive categories of violence enacted slowly over time" (11). Nixon seeks to engage the geological changes that take place as well as technological experiences.

The term Anthropocene implies an intrinsic relevance to Nixon's geological concerns. Crutzen coined the term "the Anthropocene Age" for the current age. Crutzen stated that the era after Holocene, which marks the post glacial-epoch, which lasted ten to twelve thousand years, must be called "The Anthropocene." According to Crutzen, advancements in health care and medicine have increased human life expectancy and led to an increase in the population (14). As a result of the changes humans have caused on Earth, "greenhouse gases, in particular, CO₂ and CH₄" have started to rise dramatically (14). The reason why Crutzen refers to the era as the Anthropocene Age is that the new era is shaped by human-induced climate change. "During the past three centuries human population increased tenfold to 6000 million," and the enormous growth in population increased the need for food supplies which has led to "growth in cattle population to 1400 million" (14). In direct proportion to the growth of the population, "urbanization has even increased tenfold in the past century" (14). As a result of urbanization, people started to live in apartments, and the density of people per square meter grew enormously. The fact that the density of people intensified led to the growth of human waste and the waste increased too much to be tolerated by nature. As a result, "the release of SO₂, globally about 160 Tg/year to the atmosphere by coal and oil burning, is at least two times larger than the sum of all-natural emissions, occurring mainly as marine dimethyl-sulfide from the oceans" (14). These factors have led to an unprecedented change in nature – and the reality of human-induced climate change.

Developed countries' perception of toxic distribution is flawed. These countries believe that they can keep clear of the negative effects of toxic waste by dumping it in poor countries. According to Spretnak, the flaw of advanced societies in terms of toxic distribution is the "assumption that highly advanced societies could throw toxic substances 'away' somewhere and could exude staggeringly unnatural levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into our atmosphere without ill effect" (1–2). Advanced societies believe that they can dump their toxic waste in poorer lands and in the poorer parts of their own countries and protect themselves from the hazards that stem from it. However, as Spretnak also mentions (along with many others), such a view of the human world is flawed as all entities are inextricably intertwined (4). Therefore, advanced societies suffer—as is currently on clear display in our time of climate change—since any hazard given to nature will damage the whole ecosystem rather than just one single part of it.

To connect the Anthropocene to slow violence, it would be appropriate to state that Crutzen's concept of the Anthropocene also characterizes slow violence. Although the damage resultant from human produced changes on Earth is inflicted slowly, its consequences are grand. It is important here to consider the nature of our perception of violence, a construct greatly affected by the singularly cataclysmic expressions of violence punctuating the twenty-first century. To accept an event as violent, people expect it to be imposing, even monumental (Nixon 13-14). The collective memory of the post-traumatic society has come to perceive an event as visible enough as long as the event is spectacular and instant. Casualty in the first place became the criterion of a tragic event (13). However, it is not obligatory for an event to be instantaneous to be significant. The twentieth century witnessed environmental disasters which progressed very slowly but caused dramatic consequences (13-14). One such disaster is the drying up of the Aral Sea. The desiccation of an entire sea did not occur overnight. It was spread over time, unfolding gradually. The reason for the desiccation was the harmful agricultural policies in the region. Given that the Aral Sea was the fourth biggest lake in the world after the Caspian Sea, Lake Michigan, and Lake Victoria (the Aral Sea is usually referred to as a sea because of its width; however, it is in fact a lake), the loss of this body of water should be classified as a huge event. However, as the environmental degradation occurred gradually, meting out its destruction day by day, month by month,

it was not – at least suddenly enough – marked as a grand event. This catastrophe proves Nixon’s argument that environmental disasters do not have to be rapid in order to be categorized as violence. The long-term consequences of the desiccation of the Aral Sea are not less devastating than those of an instantaneous event. The reason for the sea’s vanishing is the overuse of the water from the Oxus and Jaxartes rivers for irrigation before they enter the sea (Yilmaz 95). That is to say, the rivers which used to feed the Aral Sea can no longer do so sufficiently because of human intervention. Artificial canals built for cotton agriculture make it impossible for the water to reach the sea. With the increase in cotton agriculture, the demand for water increased, causing the desiccation. Although the damage unfolded slowly, it resulted in the loss of the fourth largest lake in the world.

The fate of the Aral Sea is an example of slow violence leading to dramatic results. As Nixon discusses in his book, the very concept of violence must be questioned. In order, then, to evaluate slow violence from another perspective, considering whether a dramatic event or its aftermath is more significant, an analysis of a book associated with an instantaneous environmental catastrophe may be instructive, as it demonstrates that even a spectacular event can be an outcome of slow violence. It is thus worth mentioning *White Noise* (1984) by Don DeLillo, whose spectacular event, the Airborne Toxic Event, devastated people’s lives in the story. The Airborne Toxic Event represents the effects of environmental catastrophes in the first place and in the long run. *White Noise* shows that more attention must be paid to the long-term consequences than the initial casualty. In *White Noise*, the characters ignore the environmental pollution until it results in a big explosion. The grand event which takes place in *White Noise* is an instantaneous event which people rapidly recognize. However, the characters in the novel sound unaware of the fact that the event is a consequence of slow violence. There is too much technological waste in the area, and the outburst of toxicity causes an unexpected disaster. The Airborne Toxic Event is just the tip of the iceberg and the ensuing consequences are typical of slow violence. Therefore, *White Noise* is a significant work because it gives the message that it is essential to accept slow violence and its dangers.

White Noise is the story of Jack Gladney, a college professor who serves as the chair of

Hitler studies at the College-on-the-Hill in a small American town. Gladney lives with his wife, Babette, and their children from their earlier marriages: Heinrich, Steffie, Denise, and Wilder. Their lives change dramatically after a train car derails and causes the central issue in the novel: the airborne toxic event. *White Noise* is a very significant work by the post-modern writer DeLillo, in which he examines environmental issues developing rapidly as a result of industrialization. There are two major narratives in the novel: The Airborne Toxic Event and the study of a new psycho-pharmaceutical called Dylar. The two narratives intertwine when Gladney decides to take the unlicensed drug to cope with his post-traumatic fear of death. The reason for the trauma is the airborne toxic event, which causes Gladney to feel the need to use Dylar, which is also a toxic material. That is to say, the type of psychological violence experienced by the character is post-traumatic slow violence.

Gladney's interaction with the material world is an example of trans-corporeality, a term used to explain the interconnection of bodies, the environment, and toxicity, and how they overlap. According to Alaimo, "trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world, underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from the environment" (*Bodily Natures* 2). Therefore, the human world cannot be separated from the non-human world. *White Noise* is a good example of the attempt to understand the human world both individually and separately; however, it is understood in the end that human agencies are not independent of non-human agencies and human will is not superior to non-human agencies. Alaimo also states that "trans-corporeality reveals the interchanges and interconnections between various bodily natures" (2). The interaction among bodies is seen in *White Noise* as interconnections between human bodies and non-human agencies such as toxicity, wind, noise, pollution, and nutrition. According to Iovino,

Trans-corporeality discloses a dimension of practical and epistemological complexity: one made not only of the 'interchanges and interconnections' between humans and more-than-human natures, but also of the often unpredictable and always interconnected actions of environmental systems, toxic substances, and biological bodies. (37)

As Iovino mentions, toxicity is a part of interactions between humans and non-humans and the interaction of toxic materials and the ensuing problems are apparent in *White Noise*. The toxin Nyodene D., which is released from the hole in the train car after the

airborne toxic event, contaminates the soil, harms people and animals, and the fact that the toxic exposure does not necessarily kill instantly is an example of slow violence. It is mentioned in the novel that the toxin Nyodene D. has a lifespan of forty years in the soil and thirty years in the human body (DeLillo 164). The long duration of toxic poisoning exemplifies slow violence in the gradual contamination, which can escape attention and requires a long time to surface. The fact that the airborne toxic event causes significant events in the long run rather than in one specific event proves that the aftermath of an event deserves more attention. The airborne toxic event forces people to evacuate their homes – a consequence of the aftermath, and a display of the dynamic of slow violence. That is to say, the consequences of the aftermath of the event are so strong that people are deprived of their homes. A train derailment causes the airborne toxic, but the aftermath of the event is much more significant than the event itself and the casualty in the first place is negligible when compared to the slow violence of its aftermath.

According to Dietering, *White Noise* “depicts a society whose most distinguishable feature is its waste” (197). Arguably, the waste Dietering refers to is one that is toxic. Therefore, toxicity is a prevalent feature in the novel, and it contaminates the entire surrounding area. The poisoning in the aftermath of the airborne toxic event gives immeasurable harm to people. The event causes a vicious circle for Gladney, who develops an addiction to Dylar to cope with the fear of death. The fact that the characters keep questioning who will die first shows the depth of the trauma. This question becomes a major theme in the novel, which is certainly an outcome of the accident. Death is not a terrifying event, but an escape from the harshness of the post-traumatic world. Even the concept of fear changes meaning in the post-traumatic world. Fear is so intense that people cannot help but dwell on it and develop theories about it to normalize their anxieties, an undertaking that reveals their isolation, obsession, and the intensity of the fear. At the beginning of the novel, the characters are somewhat happy in the rat race of modern life. By the end, however, all the characters are devastated, and their devastation proves the psychological consequences of the aftermath of the event. People face a scarcity of food, and many lose their lives to the toxicity. Gladney, now a Dylar addict, expects to use the drug to cope with his fears but the addiction becomes a

bigger problem than his anxieties. The drug, still at the trial stage, has such side effects as “outright death, brain death, left-brain death, partial paralysis, other cruel and bizarre conditions of the body and the mind” (251). Industrial contaminants poison people’s blood. Heavy metals are found in blood samples. The characters’ longing for death stems from post-traumatic stress. People cannot tolerate the harsh consequences caused by the disaster. *White Noise* demonstrates what dramatic consequences slow violence can cause in the long run.

White Noise also underlines the long-term fatal effects of toxicity, a good example of slow violence. The novel draws attention to post-industrial toxicity by revealing that “Heinrich’s mother lives in an ashram” which “is located on the outskirts of the former copper-smelting town of Tubb, Montana” (28). In real life, Montana was a setting for copper mining for decades. According to a case study by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on copper mining in Montana, “the Anaconda Copper Mining Company conducted copper smelting” activities between the years 1884-1980 (“Anaconda Smelter, Anaconda, Montana, Superfund Case Study” 9). Significantly, DeLillo touches upon this environmental issue, in addition to many others. In the year *White Noise* was published, copper smelting had already ended; however, the area was not yet a Superfund site. It is meaningful that DeLillo refers to Montana as toxic land. It is meaningfully ironic that the ashram, a spiritual healing center, is located in a toxic place. The scene is also significant because it reveals that spiritual healing is not possible without physical healing of the land. The connection between the material environment and the health of the people is evident. On the other hand, the deaths of those who perished are expressed as “prolonged” and “hideous” (28). These deaths must be closely related with copper-smelting because it is certain that copper processing is carcinogenic and metal processing contaminates the soil, and the reason they are prolonged is that they are a result of slow violence. The EPA study proves that slow violence that has taken place in the area nearly for a century contaminated the area and the accumulation of toxicity has become fatal in the long run. The EPA states that “records beginning in 1907 indicate that each day the smelter released over 30 tons of arsenic, copper, lead, sulfur, and zinc into the environment” (“Anaconda Smelter” 2). The amount of toxicity that the EPA announces in its report is huge and more than

enough to be fatal. In ecology, the toxicity circle is central to the soil because the carcinogens contaminate the soil and the soil contaminates the water, and through water and food consumption, people absorb the toxins into their bodies and their bodies are contaminated from the toxicity. As Karen Barad mentions in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007), human beings cannot be thought of as separate from their environment because

Human bodies, like all other bodies, are not entities with inherent boundaries and properties but phenomena that acquire specific boundaries and properties through the open-ended dynamics of intra-activity. Humans are part of the world-body space in its dynamic structuration. (172).

That is to say, the intra-action process in the long-run has caused toxic poisoning, which fits the definition of what Nixon has called slow violence. The toxic circle affects people one way or another, and human beings are prone to toxic effects. It is after the publication of *White Noise* that the Superfund site was established. Although it is not possible to know whether DeLillo's book directly caused the establishment of a Superfund area, it is certain that such literature creates awareness of toxicity.

The artificial detachment of human world from the natural world is an important theme in *White Noise*. Glen A. Love mentions in *Practical Ecocriticism* (2003) that:

While not often ostensibly present, nature intrudes in *White Noise* in its apparent absence, even in its commodification, as seen in the garishly lighted vegetables and fruit in the gleaming supermarket where the Gladneys spend their evenings shopping on a trancelike wave of white-noise-bathed acquisition. Nature is the eclipsed farm, now replaced forever by a forest of signs and tour buses and camera-snapping tourists leading up to the most photographed barn in America. Nature is behind the spectacular sunsets, technicolored by releases of poisonous gases. Nature drives the fickleness of the wind carrying the airborne toxins. It obtrudes its presence in the fear of death that possesses the main characters, a relentless hold of coporeal mortality upon even their presumably postnatural, postmodern bodies. (30)

A critique of the perception of nature that minimalizes it to a mere background issue is seen in the above quotation. DeLillo's novel draws attention to the flawed idea of detachment of human beings from nature and creating what Iovino and Oppermann call "the chasm between the human and the nonhuman world in terms of agency" ("Introduction" 2).

Further, *White Noise* deals with the post-traumatic experiences of the characters, which

is also a kind of slow violence. Jack Gladney develops a constant fear of death and hypochondria after the traumatic event. Gladney says “a little breath of Nyodene D. has planted a death in my body” (DeLillo 150). In this expression, Nyodene D. is likened to a seed which enters Gladney’s body and plants death inside him, a depiction indicating that it will kill him slowly. Here, exposure to toxic Nyodene D. is not a spectacular type of violence that kills in an instant but rather slow violence, which will exact an immeasurable toll in the long-run.

To return to Nixon’s book, the notion of visibility is important in understanding the meaning of slow violence. If the problem is invisible, it is difficult to reach a solution. Nixon poses the critical question: “what happens when we are unsighted, when what extends before us—in the space and time that we most deeply inhabit—remains invisible?” (15). By drawing attention to the environmental catastrophes which unfold only gradually, the writer-activist can help people see the processes involved in slow violence, which are otherwise invisible to the public. Through true-to-life settings, the writer-activist draws attention to slow violence as it occurs in a location, something which mainstream media refuse to do.

Nixon mentions that well-funded organizations hinder the environmental activism of the poor by spreading doubt (39). Having spread doubt, they indirectly postpone the necessary precautions against climate change. They sponsor scientific research, the conclusions of which are expected to claim that either no harm or minimum damage exists. Some anonymous people set up a Facebook group, right-wing think tanks support the multinational organizations for the sake of the growth of the country, and “pseudo-scientific websites [a]nd university departments...demonstrate conclusions friendly to Big Oil, Big Coal, and Big Tobacco and to sponsor uncertainty around climate change” (39). Public opinion on climate change is thus influenced by black propaganda and pseudo-science (39).

Despite the overwhelming, virtually unanimous, consensus among climate scientists that climate change is happening, is human-induced, is accelerating, and will have catastrophic consequences for human and much nonhuman life on earth, all the misnamed ‘denialists’ need do is keep ensuring that, in the public’s mind, the jury remains permanently out, so that irresolution rules. (39)

As Nixon states, although it is unanimously agreed by climate change scholars that climate change is a reality and will have harsh consequences, denialists continually try to convince the public that climate change is not a threat (39).

The first chapter of *Slow Violence*, entitled “Slow Violence, Neoliberalism, and the Environmental Picaresque,” addresses the 1984 Bhopal disaster and the 1986 Chernobyl explosion. The Bhopal disaster occurred in Madhya Pradesh state of India, Bhopal on 3 December 1984 (Nixon 46) when methyl isocyanate gas leaked from Union Carbide’s pesticide factory. Up to 15,000 people were killed in the event itself, and in the years that followed, thousands of people became sick or died from toxicity connected to gas exposure. *Animal’s People* (2007) by Indra Sinha is chosen as an example to symbolize slow violence in concrete form. The Bhopal disaster is a historical fact that stands for slow violence whose effects are gradual. The number of people who die in an event itself is a concern for modern society because it is direct violence, but the aftermath of the disaster is a matter of slow violence.

Through the creation of the character Animal, Sinha overcomes the imaginative challenges of slow violence. The aptly named character, whose childhood human name is forgotten even by himself (Sinha 23), embodies the post-disaster mutilations in the human body. Animal, who was able walk on his two feet in childhood, says that he “used to be human” (1). Later, though, he starts to walk on all fours as a result of a toxic spinal disease. This metamorphosis displays the gradual, delayed, and incremental consequences of slow violence. Animal’s crawl represents the transformation from human into animal, that is to say, dehumanization. The dehumanization of the character Animal explicitly displays the value given to poor local people of the global South by authorities.

The Bhopal disaster and Chernobyl explosion received different levels of attention from the Western world (Nixon 47). The Bhopal disaster was treated as something relatively unimportant because its location, India, was remote, while Chernobyl received far more attention as it posed a threat to the West due to its proximity (47, 48). After the Chernobyl disaster, the world witnessed a bizarre event; “four months after the initial Chernobyl explosion, the Soviet authorities sent in robots to remove radioactive debris; when off-the-charts radiation levels rendered the robots dysfunctional, young men were

conscripted to replace them” (54). The young men refused to remove radioactive debris after they had realized that they were being used as “bio-robots” (54). The fact that authorities see the disempowered local people as disposable epitomizes the body politics of capitalism on the disadvantaged and disempowered. Nixon states that “the bio-robots exemplified the dissolution of the boundaries of their humanity through the slow, corrosive violence of environmental catastrophe,” and are a good example of how far capitalism can go to defend its gains (54). If blatantly sending people to death is an acceptable deed in capitalism, then to argue that the system does not sacrifice individuals for its own benefits is a sheer delusion. This reality is frequently encountered in the books under focus in this dissertation. For instance, the Clare Company sells toxic materials for its own benefit without worrying about public health in *Gain*. Coal companies give wide damage to the people and the environment in *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and *Gray Mountain*.

In the chapter titled “Slow Violence, Gender, and the Environmentalism of the Poor,” Nixon mentions the Green Belt Movement in Kenya as a collective action against slow violence (128). This is, in fact, a good example of environmental activism among poor communities. As a reaction to the soil loss taking place in Kenya, a group of women planted seven trees to commemorate Kenyan environmental activist women (128). The Green Belt Movement became internationally known and drew attention to the environmental disasters in Kenya. The movement went down in history as a victory of environmentalist women. According to Nixon, the land loss of Kenya as a result of environmental disasters is not less than what Kenya would have lost in a war (130). The impacts of the aftermath of slow violence are as egregious as those of a war. However negligible and derisory it may seem; slow violence induces consequences which are more fatal than those of classical violence. Although at first sight the action of the women activists of the Green Belt Movement may seem too symbolic and ineffective in fighting against the loss of soil, their activism has made slow violence visible by overcoming the representational challenges of slow violence and the inattention of the media and the public. Maathai, as a writer-activist, pioneered the movement to make slow violence visible, and her tool in doing so was literature. In this event, the Nixonian terms writer-activism, which applies to Maathai, and the environmentalism of the poor, which applies to Maathai herself and her followers, have proven to be very effective,

and this event demonstrates how these terms function. Slow violence is highlighted in literary works and, upon engagement with the work, local people engage in environmental activism.

Nixon calls the representational symbolism of the Green Belt Movement “The Theatre of the Tree” (132). He states that the metaphorical meaning of tree planting has surpassed its literal meaning. Tree planting drew media attention to the area, which would otherwise be ignored. Secondly, the movement enabled the public to comprehend that the act of the colonialists was “territorial theft” (Nixon 132). Therefore, the power of the written work and writer-activism is inarguable, and the Green Belt Movement stands as a significant example for writer-activism and the environmentalism of the poor. The power of the literary work is seen in the novels in this dissertation.

Needless to mention, Rachel Carson was the forerunner of and the most influential person in the environmental movement. Carson proved how effective books can be to raise awareness of the environment. As Özdağ has put it, “Carson became an inspiration for future researchers on the connections between environmental contamination and health” (“Introduction” 15). Thus, as Özdağ has pointed out, the legacy of Rachel Carson continues to inspire researchers to deal with environmental problems and related health issues. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* is a groundbreaking work which pioneered the environmental movement. She proved with the book how effective writing can be in the fight against the exploitation of nature by making the public aware of the circumstances. Carson's groundbreaking book addresses the issue of the use of DDT and its hazards. The company which manufactured DDT distributed propaganda for DDT claiming that it is thoroughly harmless for humans and animals and that it only killed insects. An advertisement of *Killing Salt Chemicals* published in *Time Magazine* on June 30, 1947, claimed that “the great expectations held for DDT have been realized” (Qtd. in Dobrow 12). Despite all the controversies and the hazardous chemical structure of DDT, the magazine also claimed that “during 1946, exhaustive scientific tests have shown that, when properly used, DDT kills a host of destructive insect pests, and is a benefactor of all humanity” (Qtd. in Dobrow 12). There was a world-wide propaganda effort undertaken to support DDT. In *Time Magazine*, it was claimed that DDT was useful for cows as it enabled them to grow bigger by means of protecting

them from parasitic insects. It was also claimed that DDT was a useful product for dairies, children, and fruits (Qtd. in Dobrow 12) and, further, that DDT was fatal only for insects (Qtd. in Dobrow 12). However, Carson's examinations in nature enabled her to put forth the dangers of DDT. During her observations, she realized that DDT caused death in birds. Carson stated that "the history of life on earth has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings. To a large extent, the physical form and the habits of the earth's vegetation and its animal life have been molded by the environment" (Carson 5). As Lear states, "Carson's writing initiated a transformation in the relationship between humans and the natural world and stirred an awakening of public environmental consciousness" ("Introduction" p.x). Such a change in attitude is significant since nature and humans are the integral parts of a whole. As human and non-human beings are in continual interaction, it is inevitable that what damages the health of non-human beings will simultaneously damage human beings, too. Therefore, it is obligatory for policymakers to consider non-human life while making decisions which affect human life. All kinds of implementations which are planned without considering nature as a whole—of which various examples are seen in the novels studied in this dissertation—are bound to damage human health as well.

Carson asserts that "the most alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials" (6). The writer renders the attitude toward nature, itself, as an assault. Humanity's attitude toward nature is arguably hostile and such an attitude is seen in various examples in the novels in this dissertation. Such a problematic attitude is the most significant cause of environmental catastrophes, a dynamic which can be seen in various examples in the novels studied in this dissertation.

While demonstrating the environmental hazards human beings have caused, Carson uses a narrative strategy which simultaneously anonymizes and generalizes the setting. She talks about an imaginary land which can be seen everywhere. Similar strategies are used by the authors of the novels studied in this dissertation. Powers writes about the environmental contamination of imaginary Lacewood, situated in the real-life Illinois. Pancake writes about Appalachia, reporting real-life incidents blended with imaginary ones in which the characters remain incognito. Grisham writes about the legal

dimensions of coal mining in Appalachia with totally imaginary characters who experience fictional events which are, however, not only probable but quite *true-to-life*.

Carson embellishes extensive scientific knowledge with a lyrical tone. She explains the scientific fact that DDT is fatal by employing a lyrical style in which the story of *a real world* is told prior to and after DDT. In “A Fable For Tomorrow,” Carson describes the beauty of nature before the advent of DDT.

THERE WAS ONCE a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings. The town lay in the midst of a checkerboard of prosperous farms, with fields of grain and hillsides of orchards where, in spring, white clouds of bloom drifted above the green fields. In autumn, oak and maple and birch set up a blaze of color that flamed and flickered across a backdrop of pines. Then foxes barked in the hills and deer silently crossed the fields, half hidden in the mists of the fall mornings. (1)

Carson makes use of a literary tone to reach people from all walks of life. What makes her style unique is that she abstains from scientific jargon in order to make her message more accessible. She describes a place where a community involving of human beings, animals, and the natural world celebrating the advent of spring. The drastic event that destroys the harmony is the advent of DDT. The striking conclusion of Chapter One warns how this anonymous setting can stretch out anywhere in the country unless the necessary precautions are taken immediately. Carson states that:

This town does not actually exist, but it might easily have a thousand counterparts in America or elsewhere in the world. I know of no community that has experienced all the misfortunes I describe. Yet every one of these disasters has actually happened somewhere, and many real communities have already suffered a substantial number of them. A grim specter has crept upon us almost unnoticed, and this imagined tragedy may easily become a stark reality we all shall know. (3)

Naturally, Carson was attacked harshly by authorities who benefited from the DDT trade. The hardships she faced were explained by Linda Lear as follows:

In 1962, however, the multimillion-dollar industrial chemical industry was not about to allow a former government editor, a female scientist without a Ph.D. or an institutional affiliation, known only for her lyrical books on the sea, to undermine public confidence in its products or to question its integrity. It was clear to industry that Rachel Carson was a hysterical woman whose alarming view of the future could be ignored or, if necessary suppressed. She was a ‘bird and bunny lover,’ a woman who kept cats and was therefore clearly suspect. She was a romantic ‘spinster’ who was simply overwrought about genetics. In short, Carson was a

woman out of control. She had overstepped the bounds of her gender and her science. (“Introduction” xvii)

Carson faced gender discrimination and humiliation and was constantly attacked by those whose only intent was to increase their own gain. She was seen as a threat and they believed the only option to overcome the threat was to discredit her and to damage her reputation. All these efforts did not, however, manage to daunt her. The efforts to discredit Carson did not, in the end, discourage her or diminish her determination. She now stands as a powerful example of what writer-activism can be. As Lear points out:

Rachel Carson’s alarm touched off a national debate on the use of chemical pesticides [...] When Carson died barely eighteen months later in the spring of 1964, at the age of fifty-six, she had set in motion a course of events that would result in a ban on the domestic production of DDT and creation of a grass-roots movement demanding protection of the environment through state and federal regulation. (“Introduction” p.x)

Another reason behind Carson's success is her use of language. Carson made her meticulously scientific book more readable for the public by using a literary and lyrical language. As Özdağ mentions, “nature writings, which tell natural observations by the first-person narrator, take their basis from science and are a lyrical statement of the justifiable facts in the relationship between nature and the living beings in nature” (“Introduction” 15). In that sense, Carson's message might not have been so convincing if it had not had such lyrical language. Çetiner points out the fact that Carson was able to reach millions of people and to disseminate technical knowledge through her use of approachable language. In his essay “*Sessiz Bahar* Ne Diyordu? [“What Was *Silent Spring* Saying?”]” (2012), Çetiner states: “the organisms living in the water, the formation of the soil, the microorganisms living in the ground, and the relationship among them are expressed so well in the book that people can acquire the knowledge more efficiently than they do with biology books” (19). Carson’s significant efforts brought about a ban on the use of DDT in agricultural fields. Also, *Silent Spring* marks the beginning of the environmental movement.

Nixon refers to Carson in his book to demonstrate the extent to which writer-activism can and does succeed in enlightening people. Arundhati Roy is another writer-activist whom Nixon analyzes in the chapter “Unimagined Communities.” Nixon uses the title of the chapter to refer to Benedict Anderson’s term *imagined communities*. According

to Anderson, nation-states which spread after the fall of empires consist of imagined communities. A nation “is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). The situation of unimagined communities is entirely different; they are not united by the system, just the contrary, they are cast away. Imagined communities unite for the sake of the nation-state and do not have a link with the land and culture. However, unimagined communities consist of citizens who must leave their land, culture, past, and people. Slow violence, one cause of such disruption, not only negatively affects people’s health, but also affects their economy and culture, to disastrous effect. The class-segregation in environmental policies is inarguable. When authorities make rules concerning resource development, the policies affect mostly poor, rural people. As Nixon states, “they are ecosystem people, dependent for their survival on the seasonal cycles of adjoining ecosystems and therefore often living in circumstances of necessarily adaptable mobility” (151). The people Nixon refers to are eco-friendly people, and they have strong ties to the earth. Therefore, choosing these people as a target because of their political weakness is class-segregation as well as cultural apartheid.

“The Greater Common Good” (1999) is a significant essay by Arundhati Roy, which Nixon deals with to convey the dimensions of slow violence in India. Roy takes as an example the megadam project on India’s Narmada River. In the essay, Roy illustrates the political invisibility of the people in the hydrological zone, elucidating these poor, local people’s sufferings. Nixon expresses Roy’s struggle for the visibility of poor, local folk as follows:

[Roy’s] essay protesting the mass damming of the Narmada River engages the imaginative dilemmas posed by an unequally distributed catastrophe. Here, the primary quandary becomes how to bring into imaginative focus threatened communities and ecosystems rendered invisible by the celebratory developmental rhetoric that gushes from big dam technocrats, cabinet ministers, World Bankers, and media moguls. (160)

It is apparent from the above quotation that the people in power, namely the technocrats, ministers, and World Bankers, celebrate growth and deny the rights of rural people who are against so-called development. It is apparent that the environmental catastrophes are distributed in an unfair way, which favors the rich and wreaks havoc on the poor. In

addition, the environmental catastrophes and slow violence are invisible and are purposefully hidden from the public. As rural people have a deep connection with the soil, they feel severed from their land, time, and culture when they compulsorily leave their land. They are attached to their land with memories. When they abandon their land, they leave behind their culture, their past, and their relatives' graves. Therefore, the trauma is not only economic but also psychological and cultural.

In her essay, Roy poses the following questions: "Who owns this land? Who owns its rivers? Its forests? Its fish?" (282). Roy's questions speak to environmental justice. Her questions consider the whole biotic community, namely the local rural people, animals, plants, and the river itself as a whole. On the contrary, the rulers are hostile toward nature and the locals. Roy states that when someone poses these critical questions, the power-owners answer in a chorus and the questions "are being answered in one voice by every institution at its command- the army, the police, the bureaucracy, the courts. And not just answered, but answered unambiguously, in bitter, brutal ways" (282). It is apparent that authorities inflict violence against those who resist. This resistance, as Nixon calls it, is an "unacknowledged war" (162).

According to Nixon, authorities use five different strategies in India to suppress the people who resist the construction of megadams. These strategies are examples of the ways in which authorities suppress the disempowered. These strategies are arguably not limited to India, and this dissertation will lay out the way in which both the same and similar strategies are used by authorities in the novels studied in this dissertation. The first strategy is direct violence. Morarji Desai, for instance, makes a dreadful statement while speaking at a public meeting. He says "we will request you to move from your houses after the dam comes up. If you move, it will be good. Otherwise, we shall release the waters and drown you all" (Qtd. in Nixon 163). Authorities go so far as to threaten to kill people.

The second strategy is to convince people that their suffering is for the benefit of the majority. For instance, Jawaharlal Nehru, former prime minister of India once said, "if you are to suffer, you should suffer in the interest of the country" (Qtd. in Nixon 47). In doing so, the system tries to convince its citizens that the suffering of the poor people is obligatory and meaningful. However, the reality is that some privileged people

victimize poor people for their own benefit. This is an infringement of human rights and is arguably a type of class-segregation. On the other hand, the policymakers who defend the greater common good do not consider the poor locals as worthy citizens. The mentality that poor people have to suffer for the benefit of the rich must be questioned to achieve environmental justice.

The third strategy of the government in denying the rights of the hydrological zone inhabitants is to use a specific terminology which tends to diminish the visibility of the inhabitants (Nixon 163). They use the term PAP, which stands for project-affected people, to define the hydrological zone inhabitants. In reality, hydrological zone inhabitants are people whose lives are threatened by the construction of megadams. They are the victims of a natural massacre. By calling the massacre a project and the fatal consequences an effect, the government hides the brutal reality, which is, arguably, a way of denying facts. The government does not only soften the terms, but also willingly diminishes the visibility of slow violence.

The fourth strategy is to claim that the hydrological zone inhabitants are culturally inferior and are unable to express themselves. As such, their ideas should be ignored. Moreover, people who consider themselves elites claim that inferior cultures should give way to the development of superior people (163). Capitalism divides countries into categories and within the so-called underdeveloped countries, people are also divided into groups. Class discrimination among countries and within countries is the emblem of capitalist neo-liberal economies. If a country must be polluted by industrial pollutants and byproducts, it must be an underdeveloped country, and within that underdeveloped country, the most rural, native, and poor societies (preferably inhabited by people of color) are exposed to toxicity, certainly not the privileged classes. Roy explicitly states that megadams are not for the greater common good:

[Big Dams] do more harm than good is no longer just conjecture. Big Dams are obsolete. They're uncool. They're undemocratic. They're a Government's way of accumulating authority (deciding who will get how much water and who will grow what where). They're a guaranteed way of taking a farmer's wisdom away from him. They're a brazen means of taking water, land, and irrigation away from the poor and gifting it to the rich. Their reservoirs displace huge populations of people, leaving them homeless and destitute. Ecologically, they're in the doghouse. They lay the earth to waste. They cause floods, water-logging, salinity; they spread disease. There is mounting evidence that links Big Dams to earthquakes. [T]he

dam-building industry in the First World is in trouble and out of work. So it's exported to the Third World in the name of Development Aid, along with their other waste like old weapons, superannuated aircraft carriers and banned pesticides. ("The Greater Common Good" 284)

Roy's use of the words "uncool" and "undemocratic" to express megadams is significant. According to Roy, megadams are exactly the opposite of what technocrats claim. They are not cool, they are not emblems of success, and they are *undemocratic* because the inhabitants of the megadam areas have never been asked for their opinion, even though they are the people who will be negatively affected by the projects. Undemocratic is a very timely word as it expresses the lack of environmental justice in the megadam zones. Roy's words also prove that the megadam construction was a racist act of theft because it stole the poor farmers' water to bestow it on the rich elite. This theft stands for the unfair distribution of natural sources.

The fifth strategy is to put pressure on the people in the megadam zones, which is an easy act for the multimillionaire companies. The people of the hydrological zones are poor people who do not own the land they live in, so it is easy to expel them from it. The opinions of the people affected by the construction were not solicited. The consent of the local people was not taken. The only people who matter in the decision-making process, and who are naturally satisfied with the consequences of the creation of megadams, are the small group of privileged people who benefit from them. The consequences that will appear in the long run are uncertain. It is the fifth strategy related to slow violence that powerful companies use their economic and political power to suppress the poor local people and this fact is evident in each novel in this dissertation.

Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge* (1991) is a literary work whose plot can be considered an early example of slow violence in American environmental literature, as the book details a delayed destruction, which fits the definition of slow violence. In the book, Williams refers to herself as a member of the "Clan of One-Breasted Women" because many women in her family have lost one of their breasts to cancer (281). Beginning from January 27, 1951 until July 11, 1962, nuclear testings took place in Nevada (283), where Williams grew up. The local environment suffered from destruction during that time, but the greatest harm started to be seen only after thirty years had passed, with the development of cancer among the affected population – a

textbook example of slow violence. Nixon explains how the poor are prone to environmental toxicity:

Poor communities, often disproportionately exposed to the force fields of slow violence—be they military residues or imported e-waste or the rising tides of climate change—are the communities least likely to attract sustained scientific inquiry into causes, effects, and potential redress. Such poor communities are abandoned to sporadic science at best and usually no science at all; they are also disproportionately subjected to involuntary pharmaceutical experiments. (Nixon 16)

The above-mentioned situation applies to Williams's work because the poor local people of Nevada were exposed to toxicity, which in her case took the form of nuclear tests. The ensuing environmental destruction precipitated long-term health disruptions because of the huge accumulation of toxicity that had accumulated. When the book was published, most of the female members of Tempest's family were either diagnosed with cancer or had died of it.

Williams reveals events stemming from a long-lasting procedure of contamination caused by the nuclear testings in the region. The longevity of the process and the fact that it escapes public attention makes the set of events slow violence. What makes Williams's work interesting and special is that Williams published it in 1991, twenty years before Nixon's work. The fact that what Nixon calls slow violence had already existed as an argument—if not as a term, though—demonstrates simply that Nixon was able to put this slow but devastating damage into words. Nixon filled the gap by coining the term slow violence and communicated how it unfolds over a long period of time, supporting his argument with a wide range of solid examples from the global South. This dissertation, however, intends to reveal that slow violence is not limited to the global South, an assertion which Williams's work supports.

Terry Tempest Williams's family history is, in a certain sense, the history of the region. Williams uses the expression "Clan of One-Breasted Women" to refer to her relatives who are ailing from or have died of cancer, stating that she also belongs to the clan as she herself has had her "own problems: two biopsies for breast cancer and a small tumor between (her) ribs diagnosed as a borderline malignancy" (281). The word clan indicates a small family, here one in which there have been ten cancer issues including Williams herself. Seven of the diagnoses were fatal, and two people in her family who survived need to undergo chemotherapy and radiotherapy (281). Williams thus uses her

own story to reveal the number of cancer issues in the region. If the percentage of cancer incidences in such a small family is so high, the cancer incidence in the region must also be very high.

The International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW)'s report on nuclear testing, which is one of the most significant works on nuclear testing in the United States of America, states that the long-term consequences of nuclear testings are more destructive than the consequences of the testing in the first place. That is why Williams's family members suffer from cancer decades after the nuclear testings. According to the IPPNW Report, "except for at very high doses, radiation damage is not immediately apparent. Most of the damage occurs over years, decades, and even centuries, after which causal connections are difficult to establish" (3). This situation exemplifies the term "slow violence" because the damage takes place gradually, rather than with the causal event. Apparently, the damage that takes place in the long run is much more dramatic than the damage that takes place suddenly. Therefore, the term slow violence must be paid more attention to and the concept of violence needs to be redefined.

Both Williams and the IPPNW report reveal the misguided policies and pressures of the period when the nuclear tests occurred. The notion of patriotism was on the rise, the Korean War was in progress, and McCarthyism – in which every regime opponent was blacklisted – was rampant (Williams 283-284). In such a period, people who tried to express their ideas against the testing had a difficult time doing so, as the nuclear tests were thought to be performed for the sake of the nation, and opposing the tests meant being in opposition to patriotism. Policy makers completely disregarded public and environmental health. The IPPNW report reveals how public health, environmental health, and especially the health of the workers in the testing sites were ignored:

During the period of atmospheric testing in the United States, radiation protection limits on doses to participants in nuclear weapons programs were set higher than radiation protection guidelines for civilians, and even these high limits were regularly exceeded. For example, in the early days of U.S. nuclear weapons testing, the official limit was 3.9 rads per year for the public downwind of atmospheric tests, but in practice, ... action tended not to be taken until doses reached or exceeded the level at which immediate radiation symptoms became manifest. (IPPNW 2)

The quotation explains that the limits for radioactive exposure were kept high and, even when they were exceeded, authorities tended to ignore the fact. Exceeding the limits did not occur rarely. On the contrary, it occurred on a regular basis. This point is significant because it clearly highlights the distinction between Nixon's slow violence and violence as it is classically understood. The authorities tended to ignore radioactivity unless it caused an instantaneous event. Therefore, authorities disregarded slow violence and accepted classical violence as the real violence. However, in the long run, it would come to be seen that slow violence was as deadly as direct and instant violence. The lack of interest in public health stemmed from the policies of the United States of America. At that time, being a powerful country with nuclear weapons was more important than the health of the public and the environment.

Williams questions medical authorities in *Refuge* and poses the question whether they really intend to find the cause of cancer in the region. The connection between nuclear toxicity and mortality from cancer go intentionally or unintentionally unnoticed. Doctors take cancer events individually and abstain from researching their link with nuclear toxicity. Williams criticizes the medical authorities' lack of concern in revealing the connection of nuclear toxicity to cancer mortality, stating that "most statistics tell us breast cancer is genetic, hereditary, with rising percentages attached to fatty diets, childlessness, or becoming pregnant after thirty" (281). According to Williams, "what they don't say is living in Utah may be the greatest hazard of all" (281). The lack of concern stems obviously from fear, because, as Nixon highlights in *Slow Violence*, the organizations responsible for the pollution are both economically and politically strong. However, Williams also states that the carcinogenic factors doctors come up with as explanations are not evident in her family. Doctors state that the common carcinogenic factors are "fatty diets, childlessness, or becoming pregnant after thirty," none of which is present in her family (281). It is apparent in this scene that medical authorities abstain from revealing the environmental background of illnesses. Coming from a Mormon family, Williams and her relatives have always followed a special diet which excludes coffee, tea, tobacco, and alcohol, and Williams states that Mormons normally have a low cancer rate in comparison to other communities (281). The most significant fact proving the cause of the cancer in the region is that there was only one person to have breast cancer in her family before the 1960s (281). Including Williams herself, the

number of cancer incidents rose to ten, which means the rate increased ten times in her family after the nuclear testings in the region. On the other hand, the testings were still being performed in the 1960s. Therefore, instead of a before-after comparison, Williams makes a comparison between during and after the nuclear testings, which makes it possible to comprehend that the environmental catastrophes in the region are exactly what Nixon calls slow violence.

The “Epilogue” of *Refuge* reveals a number of the issues involved in slow violence. Besides providing plenty of examples, Williams also reveals that the aftermath of the bombings was very costly. Test bombing is a huge event, so people directly think of it as violence. However, the aftermath is more fatal. Therefore, the second one is an issue of slow violence. Therefore, Williams’s book gives the opportunity to compare both sides of violence. The “Epilogue” of Williams’s book is similar in theme to Nixon’s chapter “Ecologies of the Aftermath” because both reveal the aftermath of nuclear toxicity. They both criticize the way people think of a spectacular event. By focusing on the spectacular and instantaneous event, people ignore the long-term casualties caused by slow violence. Nixon criticizes the common perception of violence and states that when people hear the word “war casualty,” they expect to see shredded bodies in order to call an event violence, spontaneously visualizing an image such as “a torso shredded by a roadside bomb; a bloodied peasant spreadeagled in a ditch; a soldier, cigarette dangling nonchalantly, crashing his boot into a dead woman’s head” (200). However, the casualties of the aftermath of wars go unnoticed. Casualties can occur even years after a war has been concluded. As there is no instantaneous event and the long-term casualties take a long time to occur, the media and the press simply ignore the consequences.

Williams describes the children who grew up in the toxic area as “children growing up in the American Southwest, drinking contaminated milk from contaminated cows, even from the contaminated breasts of their mothers” (283). The IPPNW report reveals the toxic circle in the contaminated areas. According to IPPNW “Iodine-131 is inhaled directly from the air. It is also concentrated in milk when cattle graze on grass where it has been deposited in fallout. When this contaminated milk is consumed, the iodine enters the bloodstream” (8). Long-term health issues, prime examples of slow violence, are an outcome of exposure to toxic materials. Therefore, the long-term consequences of

an event determine whether an event is violence, a nomenclature that cannot simply be bestowed in the immediate aftermath of an event.

Williams ends her book with a dream vision which delivers a similar message to what Nixon calls the environmentalism of the poor. The author summons women to unite and fight for the rights of the land. Williams dreams that women from all over the world will unite around a fire (287), which symbolizes the power women have in them. Women dance so strongly that flames from the fire enter “the night sky as stars” (287). This scene symbolizes the potential power that women have, if they come together as one. The meaningful participation of women in environmental issues is praised in this scene. Women start singing afterwards. The message Williams gives after this scene is very essential. She explains that “the women danced and drummed and sang for weeks, preparing themselves for what was to come. They would reclaim the desert for the sake of their children, for the sake of the land” (287). The necessity of reclaiming the land for the coming generations is important to Williams. The act of reclaiming the desert, especially for the sake of children and the land itself, reveals the strong bond between the land and women. The connection between the land and women becomes even more evident when she says:

The women couldn't bear it any longer. They were mothers. They had suffered labor pains but always under the promise of birth. The red-hot pains beneath the desert promised death only, as each bomb became a stillborn. A contract had been made and broken between human beings and the land. A new contract was being drawn by the women, who understood the fate of the earth as their own. (288)

The fact that “women [c]annot bear it any longer” (288) shows that resistance is necessary. Women's suffering has become unbearable (288). The above quotation displays the degree to which the test bombings affected the female body. Women lost their babies because of stillbirths as a result of chemical poisoning (288).

The word contract is used in a very timely manner by Williams. Williams states that the test bombings have devastated the land and have caused people to suffer. Ironically, the suffering was presented as something which is worth going through for the sake of a better future. However, this propaganda has proven to be wrong. The only thing the test bombings have brought is cancer, stillbirth and an unbearable suffering. The contract

which already exists represents the distorted relationship between human beings and nature. Therefore, the new contract must be written by women. The new contract which is written by women represents an entirely new understanding of ethics. Williams, by referring to the broken contract, points out that human beings have developed a flawed relationship with nature. It is expected that—as the novels studied in this dissertation will highlight—women will pioneer the new environmental understanding. Williams calls for new policies of nature which hold in high regard the health of the land and people, especially women.

Williams's work exemplifies slow violence and reveals a type of violence which is meted out over time. To return to Nixon's work, *Slow Violence* reveals the environmental violence which is particularly evident in but not limited to the global South. Heise calls the discrepancy between the global South and North "the geography of difference" and adds that "this geography, both material and symbolic, traces transfers of resources and capital at the same time that it functions as a metaphor for the social divide between rich and poor" by which she means a social divide "between those who are protected from environmental risks and those who are fully exposed to them" ("Globality" 639). Nixon reveals the discrepancy between the geographies of the global North and South, which Heise points out. However, a discrepancy between the rich and poor regions in the United States of America is also a reality. Therefore, the discrepancy between rich and poor regions translates to the geography of difference.

In conclusion, Nixon's groundbreaking work invites scholars of Humanities, Literature, and Post-colonial Studies to take part in an environmentally-conscious, anti-mainstream outlook on literature. The work questions capitalism, the neo-liberal economy, and multinational corporations, namely every institution that mainstream ideologies understand as representing economic growth. Nixon proves that the implementations promoted as growth by neoliberal economies wreak havoc on disempowered people. Although the system prides itself on promoting the idea that growth is for the benefit of every citizen, in reality it favors only the wealthy ones. As seen in Nixon's work, authorities may claim that the progress is in favor of the disempowered people. However, this claim does not reflect the truth. Nixon's work, although it conveys pessimistic realities, summons hope. It reveals how the seemingly weaker side

surprisingly won the battle against powerful giant firms. It demonstrates that the task of raising awareness of environmental issues is undertaken by both the writer-activist and the environmentalism of the poor – which is pioneered by writer-activists. The initial movement is expected from writer-activists, to which environmentally conscious citizens respond with the following step. It proves how worthy the environmentalism of the poor is in terms of fighting the ills of slow violence. As Jamieson puts it, “the main obstacle to taking action on climate change [and the like] is the deep sense of its inevitability and our powerlessness to affect its course” (15). However, although it seems inevitable, climate change, toxicity, and environmental pollution should not be considered normal. Normalizing the catastrophes gives way to their internalization. Environmental catastrophes are the consequences of human beings’ corrupted relationship with nature.

Thus, the solution is to (re)establish an eco-friendly relationship with nature. A determined struggle is necessary; a struggle like what Nixon calls the environmentalism of the poor. It is inarguable that the struggle is a difficult one. It is true to some extent that fighting for environmental justice is a painful process. The inequality between the opposing forces; namely, the giant multinational firms and the disempowered environmentalists, is clear. It might seem disheartening to fight against the multinational companies. Despite all the hardships, it is still worth fighting for the rights of the people and the land, because there are no other options. The struggle can be achieved by recognizing slow violence, disseminating the enlightening views of writer-activists, and deepening the environmentalism of the poor. In this process, much work falls to environmentalists, ecocritics, and writer-activists. To attempt to participate in this struggle, the following chapters will seek to analyze in three American environmental novels how writer-activists and the environmentalism of the poor disclose slow violence.

CHAPTER 1

THE QUESTION OF INDUSTRIALIZATION AND ITS COSTS IN RICHARD POWERS'S *GAIN*

What is the use of a house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?

— Henry David Thoreau

Richard Powers, in his novel *Gain*, deals with environmental degradation, environmental health, environmental justice, and slow violence issues in his fictional setting of Lacewood. Lacewood, as a fictional microcosm of the United States of America, witnesses the Industrial Revolution, the growth of capitalism, and, ultimately, the onset of mass production. Beginning with the establishment of the Clare Company, the story runs parallel to actual historical events and their historiographic reflections. Two different narratives employed by Powers, namely, the history of the Clare Company and Laura Bodey, symbolize the rapid growth of capitalism in the United States of America and its effects on human and environmental health.

Gain is an American environmental novel based on the emergence of corporations from the nineteenth century and their impact on the environment in the twentieth century. Powers narrates the history of the Clare Company, a corporation established in the nineteenth century as a family enterprise producing soap and candles and which is currently run by three brothers. The company changed its structure and ventured into consumer, agricultural, and chemical products within its first century of existence, a development to be understood as a transformation rather than a change. *Gain* employs another narrative by telling a parallel story of Laura Bodey, a mother of two teenagers who suffers from ovarian cancer. However, it is probable that Laura's illness stems from the toxic emission of the Clare Company as she lives in Lacewood, a town that is literally the company's headquarters. The company puts on a mask of community responsibility and charitable works towards the residents, but in reality, it is very aware of the poisonous pollutants to which it exposes the people. The cancer victims open a lawsuit against the company, though Laura is hesitant to join them. However, after it becomes evident that Laura contracted cancer because of Clare's products, Laura changes her attitude and decides to take part in the lawsuit. The company's carcinogenic products are the primary cause of cancer, despite the company's claims to the contrary –

a denialist defiance which Powers uses to illustrate the dark side of the corporate world and its capitalistic despotism in the American economy.

1.1. THE NARRATIVES IN *GAIN*

This part of the chapter aims to analyze the narrative style of *Gain* and, in doing so, to display how Powers's narrative structure carefully weaves together two separate plots. The narrative of *Gain* is a combination of two stories: that of Laura Bodey, a divorced mother with two children who lives in the small town of Lacewood, Illinois and works as a real-estate agent, and the story of the Clare Company, a soap manufacturer established in the region during the Industrial Revolution. The novel gives a detailed history of the company, a narrative employed to symbolize the growth of industry in America. Through flashbacks and flash forwards, the novel depicts how probable it is that the cancer issues in the vicinity are caused by industrial toxicity. As Williams puts it "the two plots take opposite trajectories, the Clare plot one of a bustling and entertaining ascent, Laura's a tragic and moving descent" (9). Thus, the two narratives which look separate from each other in the beginning, in fact become related and subsidiary to each other. Jeffrey Williams defines the unique style through which Powers juxtaposes two different narratives and the company advertisements as follows:

Gain does this by interweaving three contrapuntal strands. First, a tour de force historical narrative charts the course of Clare, a Proctor and Gamble-like company, from its birth in a small office front of candle and soap manufacturers in early nineteenth century Boston to its contemporary apotheosis as an earth-spanning mega-corporation, producing everything from soap to fertilizers, from floor wax to pharmaceuticals, from artificial cheese to house siding. Second, a tour de force sentimental narrative depicts present-day citizens of Lacewood, the hometown to Clare's corporate headquarters, in particular real estate agent Laura Bodey, her diagnosis and treatment for cancer and its concentric effects upon her family and those around her. Third, heterogeneous discursive and graphic bytes (ranging from nineteenth-century soap recipes and early advertisements to contemporary Clare fact sheets and slogans) interspersed between these two narrative strands provide intensifications of or rests between the two anachronistic plots. ("The Issue of Corporations: Richard Powers' *Gain*" 1999)

As Williams mentions, there are three different levels of narration going on independently throughout the novel which at first glance seem unrelated. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the initial family firm is totally different from the company it has become. Therefore, it would be appropriate to say that the alteration of

the company, the ailment of Laura Bodey, and its link with the Clare Company are bridged by the inter-textual references, advertisements, and ironic slogans of the company. The irony in the company advertisements is that they demonstrate the contradiction in the Clare and Sons' claims of being honest and environmentally friendly. Whenever there is a scene in which the Clare Company indulges in unfair trade, subjugates the rights of its workers, or threatens the health of the people and the land, an ironical inter-textual reference appears to highlight the contradictions. It is surely a reflection of the hypocrisy of capitalism and the fact that capitalism and its proponents highlight values like honesty and helpfulness, but in practice lack them. As will be seen, the quotations are either from the Bible or from eminent writers and there are references to historical events which relate to the past of the Clare Company. By revealing such contradictions, Powers makes it clear that capitalism is hypocritical and leans on virtues which it preaches but does not practice. It can even be felt throughout the novel that the more dishonest the company becomes, the more it uses propaganda to hide its dirty deeds. The state of the Clare Company may be called moralism instead of morality.

Greg Garrard also defines the style of *Gain* as unique. According to Garrard,

The singularity of Richard Powers's novel *Gain* has two main sources in its narrative organization: a dual plot that juxtaposes the story of Laura Bodey, who ultimately dies of ovarian cancer, with the history of how a soap and candle manufacturer became a multinational conglomerate; and a liberal sprinkling of intratexts— mostly advertisements and real or invented maxims about cleanliness — presented without comment in the gaps between the dual narratives. (2014)

The advertisements or, to put in another way, the propaganda of cleanliness has two different interpretations; firstly, getting rid of the dirt of wild nature thanks to chemical industry, and secondly, honesty in business, portray an irony between the company's discourses and actions. As Garrard mentions, the inter-textual references and advertisements motivate one to think. The fact that comments are absent in these sections of the book gives one the freedom to think about the contradictions of the company in terms of its words and actions.

The novel begins with a description of spring in Lacewood. While describing the spring, the narrator highlights the rejuvenation of nature. The narrator's style represents the

religious townspeople who believe that overworking is a part of their duties. The people are deluded by the system and have been made to believe that putting up with the exploitation is their duty. The submissive townspeople sound content with their heavy working conditions. As the beginning of the novel is set in the first half of the nineteenth century, a period associated with hard working conditions, low wages, and poor living conditions, it can be inferred that the people in the town are facing the negative effects of industrialization. They try to make their lives bearable by thinking that they will be awarded with heaven for their hard work and “there is no work in the place [t]hey are going” (1). This is, it turns out, very common propaganda in the nineteenth century. Just as William Blake sarcastically pointed out at the end of the eighteenth century in “The Chimney Sweeper” in his famous work *Songs of Innocence* (1789), “So if all do their duty they need not fear harm,” referring to the tragedy of the young boys who were enslaved to sweep chimneys where they worked for their board. The system made people believe that it is a blessing and reward to do one’s duties. However, in this case, it is different from doing one’s own duties. It is rather a type of slavery to the system. One can see the rise of capitalism and its propaganda in the very beginning of the book.

After a short introduction, there is a shift in the narrative. The all-knowing third person narrator shifts to the story of Laura Bodey, who is introduced as a Lacewood woman who lives on the riverside and works in her garden (4). Here, the connection between Laura and nature becomes apparent, as her life is identified with her garden and the riverside. Laura’s interest in using Clare products is clear, as she is “a woman who has never thought twice about Clare” (4). Clare, in fact, constitutes an important part of Laura’s life. She has great respect, even admiration, for the company, and thinks that “the town cannot hold a corn boil without its corporate sponsor” (5). The Clare Company does a lot of charity work in the town to make people believe that they are honest businesspeople, and this produces Laura’s sense of indebtedness and thankfulness towards the company for sponsoring the town. Her attitude changes throughout the process of her illness, and this shift can be called an awakening.

The wide spectrum of Clare products is mentioned regularly throughout the novel. Clare is the biggest company in the region, and its products are widely used by the

townspeople. Laura uses the soap, fertilizers, cosmetics and every type of “life-changing...substances” produced by Clare (5). In fact, Powers’s use of the word life-changing in reference to Clare products is ironic, for it will turn out that the products are life-changing, but in a negative way. There are two minor competitor product lines, Grace and Dow. However, as they do not have as wide a spectrum of products as Clare, using Clare products is more an obligation than a choice for the townspeople.

Powers must have drawn the Laura Bodey character as such a nature loving woman to make visible the environmental hazards that are the central focus of the book. From this perspective, it is possible to trace the deterioration of environmental health alongside the deterioration of public health. In the beginning of the novel, Laura is represented as a healthy, nature loving woman. The times she works in her garden are depicted as a ritual and a therapy for her. Laura “transplants flowers outdoors from their starter beds” and for her “the work is play; the labor, love. This is the afternoon she slaves all week for. The therapeutic complement to the way she makes a living: moving families from starter homes into larger spreads” (5). The character associates her life with the act of gardening. For Laura, gardening is part of her life. Laura uses home remedies to combat pests in her garden. She pours beer on the ground to “ward off slugs,” and “lemon scented dish soap in solution... to counter beetle insurgencies” (5). As a hobby farmer, Laura spends a lot of her free time in her garden. Therefore, she is exposed to chemicals which are harmful for her health. Although she uses home remedies to get rid of pests, she takes “stronger measures when strength is needed” (5), meaning that she uses pesticides in her garden. As the Clare Company is the only manufacturer of pesticides in the region, one might easily infer that Laura’s ovarian cancer is caused by toxic contamination from pesticides produced by the Clare Company.

The novel begins by describing the establishment of the company. The representatives of the company come to inspect Lacewood to find out whether the place is appropriate for the establishment of their company. They investigate the appropriateness of the location in terms of land, water, and human labor. They invest a huge amount of money in the business. However, while performing this investigation, they never consider whether the company is appropriate for the place or not. As the company is profit-centered, they do not even care about nature, nor do they abstain from polluting the

land. In fact, Lacewood, which was a backward place before the arrival of the company “would have stayed a backwoods wasteland” had the company not come. But it did, and “with Clare, Lacewood grew famous.” The beginning of the book represents the point of view of the lay people who have a sense of thankfulness toward the company (Powers 4). The town is advertised as follows:

WELCOME TO LACEWOOD. POPULATION 92,400. ROTARY, ELKS, LIONS. BOYHOOD HOME OF CALE TUFTS, OLYMPIC LEGEND. SISTER CITY OF ROUEN, FRANCE, AND LUDHIANA, INDIA. SITE OF SAWGAK COLLEGE. NORTH AMERICAN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS DIVISION HEADQUARTERS, CLARE INTERNATIONAL PLEASE BUCKLE UP. (4)

The town is proud of the company, which it advertises as one of its assets. The informatory signboard at the entrance to the town bears the name Clare International together with other features of the town. The company makes people feel very excited as the company has prestige, exemplified, for instance, in the utterance “teens in Bangkok covet anything bearing the company's logo” (4). Indeed, the company's reputation is not limited to the United States. On that level, Powers writes from the viewpoint of the average American and this viewpoint represents the perspective of common people who praise industrial growth and evaluate it as only a gain.

After the the company's growth, the book gives the news that a young girl named Nan, who is an acquaintance of Laura, dies of cancer. Nan, upon her death, is described as “half the size of the girl five years ago” (14). Over the course of her illness, “Nan weakened with each meal she failed to work down her throat. Her muscles frayed like shoelaces tugged on beyond their allotted span” (14). Nan's death gives a signal that the company began devastating human health. The unplanned growth of the company caused environmental degradation and the ensuing health problems, including Nan's, a poor young girl whose suffering is represented with a careful choice of words. This event is additionally significant, as Greg Garrard mentions (48), in that it is given without commentary, a literary choice that encourages a contemplation on the event. The narrator reveals Nan's death without giving many details and without commentary. However, as mentioned before, Powers's style here has a shocking effect, as the news comes suddenly after a long string of praise for the company. Therefore, one can infer that Powers, from the very beginning, is encouraging the questioning of the

environmental issues and their human cost by creating suspicion and arousing curiosity.

Another interesting part of the narrative style in *Gain* is that it includes timely inter-textual references. The inter-textual reference to *A Report on the Insects of Massachusetts* (1841) by Harris thoroughly represents the idea of conquering the land. The point of view of the settler mentality was arguably one that rendered the land as savage together with its components such as the biota, insects, flora and fauna, and even its inhabitants. This perspective sees insects as an enemy to fight against. Insects were not considered as an integral part of the environment's biodiversity. On the contrary, they were thought to be enemies and an obstacle against civilization. It is evident that the notion of civilization was mistakenly perceived as the abuse of the land. Every citizen is invited to wage war on insects in the report.

Let every able-bodied citizen, who is the owner of an apple or cherry tree, cultivated or wild, within our borders, appear on duty, and open the campaign on the first washing-day in May, armed and equipped with brush and pail, as above directed, and give battle to the common enemy; and let every housewife be careful to reserve for use a plentiful supply of ammunition, strong waste soap-suds, after every weekly wash, till the liveried host shall have decamped from their quarters, and retreated for the season. If every man is prompt to do his duty, I venture to predict that the enemy will be completely conquered, in less time than it will take to exterminate the Indians in Florida. (Harris 271)

The fact that the report calls people with bodily health as every able-bodied citizen is discrimination against people with special needs (formerly referred to as "handicapped"). Also, the choice of words, such as "armed," "enemy," "ammunition," "decamped," and "battle" (Harris 271) demonstrate the clear hostility toward insects. The report uses militaristic words and is in a state of war against nature. The settler Anglo-Saxon mind is dominant in this quotation, for the text likens the battle against insects to the conquering of the land from Indians and their extermination. Both insects and the Indians, as the original inhabitants of America, represent nature in this context and the text takes up a perspective which renders nature as a savage entity that needs to be tamed. In fact, humanity has not only long believed that it can conquer nature, but in fact endeavored to "conquer, humanize, (and) domesticate" nature (Rueckert 113). The inter-textual reference is therefore significant as it leads to think about the fallacy of such an attitude. It is also evident that the excessive use of pesticides has given way to slow violence which slowly kills people, as will be seen in the case of Laura Bodey.

The irony of such a misconception of nature is deconstructed in the narrative of Laura Bodey. In the above quotation the company sees nature as savage and uncivilized, claiming that the modern world should dominate it with technology. However, the using technology to process natural products does not bear successful results. When Laura learns that one of the chemotherapy medicines which she is given is made from tree bark, she starts questioning the intervention of technology to nature by saying “how can tree bark hurt you? Tree bark is 100 percent natural. The Native Americans used to make all kinds of things out of tree bark” (126). Chemotherapy medicines cause pain and side effects in Laura and she draws attention to this truth by questioning the pain she suffers due to the procedure. Tree bark is normally not supposed to cause any pain because it is a natural product. However, the irony is that the tree bark is no longer natural after the intervention of technology. Hence, interference with nature causes painful and fatal consequences.

The ecophobia of the company is revealed when Powers states that “Native Balm embodied all the natural wisdom lost to the onslaught of modern industrial chemistry, while each package remained immaculate, milled, dependable” (197). It is not a coincidence that the company’s disuse of Native Balm and the health issues in the region occur contemporaneously. In this quotation, the Native Balm arguably represents nature and the natural world and industry represents the fight against it. It is evident that industry won the war; however, the victory came with fatal results.

The company encourages people to declare war on insects and calls the authorities to command people to do so. The company motivates the people of the region just like a commander motivating his soldiers.

It would not be difficult, by such means, very considerably to reduce the number of these destructive insects; in addition to which it might be expedient, during the proper season, for our city authorities to employ persons to gather and kill every morning the caterpillars which may be found in those public walks where they abound. (228)

The company not only calls insects “destructive” but also invites authorities to engage in the war against them. There is irony in this quotation since the real destructive force is the human being, and not the insects. Powers, who is a scientist and a writer, must have purposefully referred to the post-industrial modern era of the company as hostile to

nature and employed the militaristic language the company uses to reflect the perception of the relationship between human beings and nature. It will later turn out that the pesticides the company produces are deadly for people as well as insects, proving from a holistic perspective that giving any kind of harm to nature will inevitably return harm to the people around it. This chain reaction is also part of slow violence because the destruction of any kind of natural being slowly gives way to the prolonged and somewhat invisible sufferings of the people and the land.

To sum up, Powers combines two different narratives, the Clare Company advertisements which do not appear very often and historical facts which demonstrate the suffering of the twentieth century America in terms of environmental contamination. The advertisements and inter-textual references have been purposefully chosen as contradictory to reality.

1.2. THE HISTORY OF CLARE: THE BIRTH OF CAPITALISM IN LACEWOOD

Historical facts play a significant role in *Gain*. Events are taken from the actual history of the United States, and these events are interwoven with the story of the fictional Clare Company. In doing so, Powers highlights the environmental hazards in the post-industrial society and its human cost. In the case of the Clare Company, the residents of the surrounding area suffer from disproportionate toxicity and correlated health problems. Environmental degradation and the ensuing health issues are directly linked with social class and income. Environmental laws, regulations, and policies are in the service of the bottom line of the multinational Clare Company. This part of the dissertation seeks to display the *local* environmental problems and their connection to health issues together with the environmental policies of the United States as seen in the novel *Gain*.

Unprecedented growth took place in the United States of America after the Industrial Revolution. Its direct impacts on England were apparent, but it also affected the United States of America. The movers and shakers of the revolution carried their impact to the new continent. White settler families, such as the Clares in the novel *Gain*, used the new continent as a new market. The Industrial Revolution marks the rapid shift from

handicraft to the use of industrial machines. Naturally, the advent of the revolution had both positive effects and negative effects in history, but the overwhelming effect is the oppression of the proletariat because of the excessively hard work, small income, and bad living conditions that the revolution made commonplace. According to Deane, the Industrial Revolution is the first revolution related to the industry in the world and the exact date when it started is a “matter of controversy” (2). Deane also states that “[the Industrial Revolution] occurred spontaneously, without the government assistance” (2). Considering this, one might draw the conclusion that the revolution was brought about by the necessities of the age. However, this does not change the fact that the revolution exacted a harsh toll on the working class. New machinery such as the steam engine and power loom were introduced to the world of industry and the advent of these new machines brought about environmental pollution and unemployment as they gave way to production with fewer people. That is to say, the Industrial Revolution brought novelties which were to the advantage of the bosses, on the one hand, and the disadvantage of the poor working class, on the other.

The dramatic changes the Industrial Revolution caused are uncontroversial. According to the French philosopher Henri Bergson, the changes the Industrial Revolution brought about had such a colossal impact that they will be remembered more intensely than wars in the future (138-139). Bergson argued “in thousands of years ... our wars and revolutions will count for little” and he also argued that “the steam engine, and the procession of inventions of every kind that accompanied it, will perhaps be spoken of as we speak of the bronze or of the chipped stone of pre-historic times: it will serve to define an age” (138-139). In that sense, the effects of the Industrial Revolution and especially the steam engine are seen in *Gain* as a negative impact on environmental health and public health.

The exploitation of labor, which is a typical feature of the post-industrial society, is echoed in the story. “Every boy over ten turned builder” in order to prepare the town in the way that Clare representatives desired (3). It is clearly seen that Clare exploited the labor force of young people, changed the culture and appearance of Lacewood, and transformed the place. The fact that “Lacewood decided to doll itself up, to look like what it thought Clare wanted” reveals the extent to which the company transformed the

town (2). The company interferes in the lives of the townspeople, changes the natural structure of the land, and damages the health of the population. However, to reveal the viewpoint of the average townspeople, the growth provided by the company is purposefully presented by the third-person narrator as if it were a positive attribute. The existence of the town is associated with the company, and it is stated that “there must have been a time when Lacewood did not mean Clare, but no one remembered it” (2). Despite the wide spectrum of environmental hazards and environment-related diseases the townspeople suffer from, the industrialization that changed the structure of the town is presented as a “grace” and is likened to an “alchemical transformation” (2). The choice of Lacewood as the company’s industrial headquarters represents the exploitation of land. The land is chosen by the Clare Company as the “land in this vacancy was still dirt cheap” (2). Although it was not a central location, the fifth Mr. Clare predicted that the place would ultimately become central as it connects St. Louis, Indianapolis, and Louisville (2). The town is connected to these cities via railroad and this would make trade with the surrounding cities possible. As the technology of the day made train journeys possible only by steam engine, operating a trade outfit from there would necessarily lead to a certain amount of carbon release. It was inevitable that coal mining would pollute the air and water, harm the coal miners’ health and, most importantly, carbon monoxide would be released from the burnt coal. The discrimination towards the poorer communities, which is also seen in *Gain*, is called environmental racism. David Newton defines environmental racism in his book *Environmental Justice* (2009) as follows:

The issue has been described as environmental inequity or environmental racism, terms that refer to the generally accepted evidence that environmental hazards are not distributed equally among various groups of people, either in the United States or throughout the world. Instead, communities of color and, to a lesser extent, poor people in general are exposed to hazardous and toxic wastes, dangerous working conditions, polluted air and water, and other environmental insults to a greater degree than are non-colored communities and people of higher economic status. (3)

Therefore, the story of Clare is from the beginning a story of the exploitation of nature and human labor, which one can call environmental racism. Considering that the company deliberately chose a backward land and did not abstain from polluting its nature and damaging its people’s health, one can easily infer that the exploitation is

deliberate and class-related. The Environmental Justice Movement raises the question of why it is always the poor local people who must pay the price. This is not a coincidence. Giant multinational companies choose a specific location whose townspeople are culturally and educationally unable defend themselves through the law. On the other hand, as the people are in serious need of employment, they do not tend to stand against the company. On the contrary, they often side with it.

There are two different perspectives in the beginning of the novel, one that represents the excitement of the townspeople to indulge in the development that has come with the company, and one that represents the all-knowing narrator. While referring to the choice the town makes, the narrator uses these shocking words to reveal how thoroughly misguided the town's choice was:

Forever, for anyone who would listen, Lacewood liked to trot out the tale of how it trickled its way into fortune. At its deciding moment, when the town had to choose between the sleepy past and the tireless nineteenth century, it did not think twice. With the ease of one born to it, Lacewood took to subterfuge. (2)

Arguably the choice was related to the zeitgeist of the century. The nineteenth century was a period of rapid growth and the decision must have been shaped by this. The rapid (and unplanned) growth is implied by the word “tireless” (2). The fact that the townspeople did not think twice clearly shows that the development captivated the townspeople and they chose to be part of “the tireless nineteenth century” (2), unaware of the dangers they would suffer from. However, the all-knowing third person narrator displays the wrongness and dishonesty of the deed by using the word “subterfuge” (2).

The Clare family's journey is directly linked with historical events. Their grandfather Jephthah Clare moved from England to America in 1802 after his house in Liverpool burned, and the company he founded has a shameful past from the beginning. It turns out that the grandfather Clare, a sugar manufacturer, cheated a trade partner.

Jephthah fled the mother country in a hurry, on a wager gone wrong. He left in 1802, the year aristocrat du Pont, escaping the French turmoil, set up his gunpowder mill in Delaware. Jephthah Clare ran from a more prosaic chaos: not wrongdoing, exactly, but failure to share inside knowledge of a collapse in sugar beet prices with an excitable trading partner upon whom he had just settled a considerable shipment. (7)

Although the narrator, reflecting Jephthah Clare's point of view, claims that the deed was not an absolute wrongdoing, not informing a trading partner of a probable collapse in prices and, further, allowing the shipment to be made is an arguably dishonest act. No sooner than it is revealed that the company has a dishonest founding father, does the narrator quote Emerson: "the greatest meliorator of this world is selfish, huckstering trade" (Qtd. in Powers 7). This irony is purposeful, and the narrator continually employs this style. Whenever there is an issue of dishonesty, the narrator either quotes from the bible or from a renowned person to indicate that the company contradicts its values.

Although the inter-textual references ironically praise honesty, the Clare family is devoid of business ethics. The family does not abstain from making war profits, smuggling, or doing illegal trade.

France and Britain, eternally at war, blockaded each other's colonial trade. Clare sent the *Rough Bed* down to Jamaica and loaded it with coffee and molasses. He called these barrels back to Boston Harbor, where they became, by the magic of paperwork, American coffee, American treacle. These he could then take to London, where the pinched combatants paid hand over fist for their deliverance. In the interests of fair play, he now and then took American rum to Le Havre, courtesy of Guadeloupe. (8)

Jephthah Clare, who represents the Clares' past, profited from the war between England and France, engaged in smuggling after the embargo of Jefferson, and, to keep his business running, paid bribes to numerous officers. Smuggling, bribery, and environmental pollutants make up the history of the Clare Company. Thus, from the very beginning, the company has a past associated with dishonesty and disgrace.

The textile industry, which is the sector that experienced the most significant development after the Industrial Revolution in England, is found as a theme in *Gain*. The Clares were also involved in the textile business. They shipped raw cotton to the textile mills in Liverpool and imported it as white cloth. Given the fact that black slaves worked in cotton fields at that time, one can infer that the Clares exploited the slaves as well as the land. That is to say, the Clare Company's trade is associated with the exploitation of human labor as well as pollution of the environment. The company has no respect for the land and the people and exploits them simultaneously. The development in the textile industry did not provide people with job opportunities, on the contrary, it caused unemployment. Hand-made cloth was a means of earning a living

across Great Britain until the invention of the flying-shuttle. The flying-shuttle was invented by John Kay in 1773, an invention that, alongside the steam engine, was one of the most important inventions of the Industrial Revolution. The steam engine made it possible to transport cloth made in flying-shuttles, a development which caused unemployment. As Ashton stated, “there was probably no county of England and Wales in which woollen cloth was not produced by the part-time work of peasants, farmers and agricultural labourers” (23). Once again, it is clearly seen that development was for the rich and against the poor. In such a context, the *gain* needs to be questioned.

Jephthah Clare is responsible for bringing termites from Africa to Canada in order to clear away the northern forests (18). He does not hesitate to intervene in the natural structure of the environment. His colonial mind exploits nature and people concurrently.² Although *Gain* is a novel which shows how capitalism can devastate the environment of a local setting, as Thomashow has argued, “there is no such thing as a local environmental problem” (7). Every environmental problem has a global effect. As seen in this example, someone who pollutes a local area would normally also pollute another place. Samuel and Resolve Clare represent different mentalities in *Gain*. Unlike Jephthah, they do not have a colonialist’s mentality. From their perspective, the narrator states that “a third of everything ownable lay in the hands of a mere one per cent” (21). This is a direct social criticism about the unfair distribution of wealth. Samuel and Resolve aim to make soap affordable for everyone. However, they do not hesitate to exploit other life forms, using whale oil as raw material for their candles, soap, and light. Through a flash-forward, the narrator points out the company’s inherent contradiction as one who promotes themselves as eco-friendly, despite their past. The company of the 1830’s and the company of the 1990’s is found on the same page and the huge gap between the two states can be seen. The company’s energy and fuels groups develop alternative

²As Aldo Leopold stated in his famous work *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), “we abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” (“Foreword”, xiii) The attitude to which Leopold drew attention is evident in this case. Jephthah Clare does not hesitate to interfere with the ecosystem because of his need to open new fields. Jephthah Clare’s regard of nature as a commodity rather than a community to which he belongs.

energy methods based on recycling and clean energy resources. The advertisement reads, “how would you like to run your lawn mower... on garbage? To power up your computer... with light? To light your whole house... with bacteria? To take a little joy ride... on hydrogen? To play your favorite hits...with nothing but the heat of your hand?” (26). At this point, there is a great contradiction. The company starts to produce environmentally friendly products, which is a very positive development. However, the same company produces toxic and hazardous products. Therefore, the company’s environmentally friendly image must be just a mask.

As mentioned before, the Clare Company’s advertisements appear in an ironic way. The above advertisement is also timely and carefully chosen by Powers, since after the advertisement, it turns out that Lacewood has not improved in terms of its distribution of wealth (27). The town’s wealth is extremely disproportionately allocated, and the town cannot get its share from development. The title *Gain* is ironic as it indicates the gain is valid for only a minority of privileged people. Laura criticizes the state of affairs in Lacewood and wonders why it is “sitting in the middle of this scattered Stone Age” despite “its billion-dollar money machine” (27). The altering state of Lacewood is growth; however, the growth has nothing to do with development; the growth is for the favor of the rich elite. As Daly mentions, growth is costly and does not make a country richer; on the contrary, with rising costs and transportation needs, as well as “biodiversity loss,” in fact, “economic growth makes us poorer, not richer” (11). It is also evident that growth has not made Lacewood a developed town. Quite to the contrary, the growth that the Clare Company brought about caused not only unfair distribution of income but also acute toxic exposure.

The Environmental Justice Movement draws attention to the injustices done to and unfair treatment of people and land. Numerous studies show that certain communities with low income are under a disproportionate health risk. For instance, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “low-income populations experience higher exposures to [...] air pollutants, hazardous waste facilities, contaminated fish and agricultural pesticides in the workplace. Exposure does not always result in an immediate or acute health effect” (*Environmental Equity: Reducing Risk for All*

Communities 3). Thus, the data provided by the EPA is significant as they reveal slow violence and its relation to environmental (in)justice. Low-income populations suffer from huge amounts of toxicity, which slowly disrupts their health. What the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) demands is simple: *justice*. However, although living in a healthy environment is a basic human right, this right is often ignored. As Adamson, Evans, and Stein state, “environmental justice movements call attention to the ways disparate distribution of wealth and power often leads to correlative social upheaval and the unequal distribution of environmental degradation and/or toxicity” (*Environmental Justice Reader* 5). The communities most profoundly harmed by toxicity are firstly people of color; secondly, the poor communities. In the case of Lacewood, which this dissertation investigates, the poor community is targeted by capitalism and the health of women is threatened more severely than that of men.

Timothy Morton, in his book *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (2008), states that “no matter where in the world capitalism puts its industry, giving rise to the recent illusion of a ‘post-industrial’ landscape, all societies are affected” (84). The post-industrial landscape is an illusion as Morton has put it because it is a way of softening the term environmental degradation (just as in Nixon’s example of project-affected people, see *Slow Violence* 163). No matter how capitalism sugarcoats terms, it does not change the fact that the world is slowly dying. Denial is a strategy of capitalism—as Nixon points out several times in his book (see *Slow Violence* 60, 163, 187, 188, 221, 277)—through which it tries to diminish the visibility of the environmental hazards that it causes. The hazards wrought on nature by industrialization have heavy consequences. In addition, in the case of Lacewood, the Clare Company does not seem eager to eliminate the hazards, on the contrary, it tends to deny them.

The Clare Company evolves from a small firm into a giant corporation over time. The change in the structure of the company encompasses a change in its business ethics, which sees a dramatic shift in the firm’s eco-politics. Samuel Clare even delivered the native balm soap to the doors of his customers (38). The company funded a research project pertaining to its customers’ needs, being seemingly open to outside advice. However, with the growth of the company, its attitude changed thoroughly. The company whose representatives personally communicate with their customers is

succeeded by one controlled by heirs who ignore people and their health. Supported by the law, the Clare Company denies the environmental hazards they cause and their link with human health.

The newspapers, Don, the lawyers: everybody outraged at the offense. As if cancer just blew in through the window. Well, if it did, it was an inside job. Some accomplice, opening the latch for it [...]. She brought them in, by choice, toted them in a shopping bag. And she'd do it all over again, given the choice. (346)

The Clare Company, which is said to have transformed Lacewood, has also captured the whole market of the region. As an informed citizen, Laura believes in the power of boycotts on companies. However, as Lacewood has become a cartel in the region selling all kinds of food from paper to food, it is not possible to boycott the company. The most basic house needs are met by the company. This strengthens the probability that Laura's health problems are directly linked with the consumption of Clare products.

[L]aura vows a consumer boycott, a full spring cleaning. But the house is full of them. It's as if the floor she walks on suddenly liquefies into a sheet of termites [...]. Clare hiding under the sink, swarming her medicine chest, lining the shelves in the basement, parked out in the garage. Piled up in the shed [...]. Her vow is hopeless. Too many to purge them all. Every hour of her life depends on more corporations than she can count. And any spray she might use to bomb the bugs would have to be Clare's, too. (345)

As is seen in the above quotation, the corporation has made the townspeople dependent on their products by monopoly. Every product Laura uses at her home is manufactured by Clare. Most of the products by Clare are directly connected to human health. Termite pesticides, detergents, and aerosol sprays are absorbed by the porous structure of the human skin. Therefore, it is simply not possible to avoid using these products. In such a context, running a boycott against the company is practically impossible because of the monopolized structure of the company.

The common feature of all these products is that they are consumed by the human body in one way or another. An edible product like "Heat 'n' Eat" is consumed directly, a supplement like "Complete Daily Supplement" is swallowed and digested, and other chemicals like sterisol, cleaners, and wipers are absorbed by the body through the skin. Considering that the goods that the townspeople consume are nearly exclusively sold by the company, and that the townspeople are experiencing health problems, one can easily conclude that the products cause health problems unless they are produced very

carefully. In fact, such consumer goods as detergents, supplements, and food need a long period of research and development before being brought to market. It can be easily inferred that the company may not have carried out research and development within the limited time it took them to bring such products to market. Nevertheless, the company does not seem to care about anything but its own gain. The company heirs make business visits abroad. In one of their trips they import soap “to fill their empty holds” on their return from London (20). The soap is called Pech’s Cleansing Ovals, and as it is made from “waste fats, potash and brine,” it is just a simple soap (20). The company, however, promotes it as a miracle product, displaying its profit-centered focus. Later, “pech’s soap grew exotic, exclusive, foreign without the taint of immigration” (20). The narrator draws attention to the poverty in the region and the inequality by saying “in a land where a third of everything ownable lay in the hands of a mere one percent, the ruinous price of import produced a premium that domestic soap makers couldn’t duplicate” (21). Therefore, the company did not improve the economy of the town. Instead, it improved only its own economy.

The novel takes the dichotomy between natural and unnatural and pure and toxic very seriously. The dichotomy is as harsh as the one between liberty or death (28). Laura experiences the dichotomy in herself while shopping.

‘Paper or plastic?’ the fifty-year-old bagger asks her. What is she supposed to say? Liberty or death? Right or wrong? Good or evil? Paper or plastic? The one kills trees but is hundred percent natural and recyclable. The other releases insidious fumes if burned but requires less energy to make, can be turned into picnic tables and vinyl siding, has handles, and won’t disintegrate when the frozen yogurt melts. She panics. ‘Whatever is easiest,’ she tells the bagger, who grimaces. (28)

Hence, she is unable to make a decision and chooses convenience. However, all together, the carcinogenic factors, one of which is plastic, cause cancer. In fact, the natural substance is liberty as it is perfectly recyclable and the toxic material is deadly. The novel draws attention to the careless use of materials in daily life.

The novel raises a very important ecocritical question. “Does the world get poorer when a hundred dollar bill falls down a sewer? For that matter, does the world get richer when we strike gold or cut down trees?” (54). In that sense, the book questions *gain*, which is also its title. It questions the notion of wealth and tries to figure out whether what the

system promotes as wealth is real. The book also criticizes the modern way of living in a capitalist society.

Buell's concept of "toxic discourse" can be adapted to the novel *Gain*. Toxic discourse offers a balance between ecocentrism and anthropocentrism. As is known, at the outset of the ecocriticism movement, ecocentrism was the main stance. The most recent formulation of the movement, however, seeks to establish a balance between ecocentrism and anthropocentrism. Buell expresses his notion of toxic discourse as follows:

Toxic discourse challenges traditional understandings of what counts as an environmentalist movement or ethos. It calls for a new history of U.S. environmentalism that would place the wilderness preservationist John Muir and the urban social reformer Jane Addams in the same narrative. It insists on the interdependence of ecocentric and anthropocentric values. ("Toxic Discourse" 639-640)

Buell's toxic discourse can be an ideal platform to discuss environmental issues and their human cost. To concentrate merely on ecocentric values may not be realistic. In addition, to concentrate merely on anthropocentric values cannot be the principle of the environmental movement. Thus, Buell suggests a balance between ecocentric and anthropocentric values.

[Toxic discourse] underscores the point that environmentalism must make concerns for human and social health more central and salient than it traditionally has if it is to thrive, perhaps even to survive. Partly in consequence, toxic discourse also calls for rethinking certain standard expectations normally brought to the work of critical reading. It unsettles received assumptions about the boundaries of nature writing and environmental representation generally; it provides a striking instance of the hermeneutics of empathy and suspicion as they are pitted against each other, and potentially high stakes at issue in that conflict; and it reopens fundamental questions about both the cultural significance and the ethics of metaphor. ("Toxic Discourse" 639-640)

A study of the toxic discourse in *Gain* reveals that the novel depicts a place where the company is the main issue, the workers' rights are not mentioned, working conditions are harsh, and the company itself is more important than even its owners. Business is the central issue in the novel. Thus, the ethics in *Gain* are not developed enough to befit toxic discourse. As Buell mentions, human health issues should be at the focal point in toxic discourse, however, there are health issues and deaths for which Clare company

does not assume any responsibility. Ironically enough, they create slogans like “he that hath clean hands grow stronger and stronger” (79). This is a quotation from the Bible (Job 17:9) and its use is one of many such ironic elements in the novel. In fact, the company draws attention to clean hands, using a biblical quotation as a slogan. On the contrary, the quotation arguably points out the importance of honesty at work. The company preaches a merit which it lacks.

Laura learns that she has ovarian cancer. She tries to figure out whether it was genetic and thus inevitable or whether it stemmed from her own faults and lack of self care. She wants to know “whether she should have done something. Might still do something. Whether she would have had had to go through this” (84). However, as Laura is a keen user of Clare products, it is inevitable that she has been exposed to toxicity by Clare’s wide spectrum of products.

Laura's endeavor to overcome cancer and the hardships she faces as a cancer patient are depicted in the novel. These are the outcomes of the “material agency” of chemicals. According to Iovino and Oppermann:

Material ecocriticism proposes basically two ways of interpreting the agency of matter. The first one focuses on the way matter’s (or nature’s) nonhuman agentic capacities are described and represented in narrative texts (literary, cultural, visual); the second way focuses on matter’s “narrative” power of creating configurations of meanings and substances, which enter with human lives into a field of co-emerging interactions. In this latter case, matter itself becomes a text where dynamics of “diffuse” agency and non-linear causality are inscribed and produced. (“Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency and Models of Narrativity” 79-80)

It can be inferred that the non-human agentic capacity of matter makes itself manifest as the hazards of chemicals that cause health issues. The latter can be understood as the rapid change in the society.

Nature is represented as a unifying effect in *Gain*. Nature is a home, a relief, and even a shelter for Laura. It is stated that “only gardening gives her some relief. Pruning the cosmos, she almost forgets herself” (94). However, when she tries to reach the narcissus, she cannot bend over, an analogy implying the deterioration of her health. This metaphor can be interpreted as the detachment from nature. Although she wants to hold the narcissus, she cannot reach it, a scene which can be interpreted as representing

the unnatural toxins severing her ties from nature.

The novel also shows us that even the privileged class may suffer from toxicity. Neeland from the company dies of toxic poisoning. Neeland develops a fast-dissolving soap and makes great profit for the company. Out of fastidiousness, Neeland tastes the chemical materials that he produces. This causes toxic poisoning and his exposure to toxic chemicals brings about his demise. This proves how deadly toxicity can be and, moreover, calls the *gain* into question. Unlike the company's claim, the Clare Company's products are highly toxic. As Stacy Alaimo states, "chemical substance may poison the workers who produce it, the neighborhood in which it is produced, and the web of plants and animals who end up consuming it" (18). In accord with Alaimo's claim, it is seen that the people who consume, produce, and are exposed to Clare's products are vulnerable to diseases. The net of transcorporeality, which is the continual and autonomous transaction among bodies, makes it harder to determine the extent to which a product will be hazardous to people. Toxicity can damage the health of any people regardless of their economic status, a fact which is seen again and again throughout the novel as people from different walks of life suffer from and die of toxicity. Therefore, claiming that developed technology will enable companies to ease the lethality of toxicity is pointless. As seen in numerous examples, the Clare Company caused health disruptions in the region and caused people to die. Therefore, it is possible to adapt Rob Nixon's famous quote to *Gain*. "Had [Clare] advocated invading [Lacewood] with weapons of mass destruction, [their] proposal would have fallen under conventional definitions of violence and been perceived as a military or even an imperial invasion" (3). However, Clare purposefully chooses Lacewood as a target because it is backward and populated by poor local people. This type of violence is not instantaneous but dispersed over time. In a phrase, it is slow violence.

1.3. SLOW VIOLENCE IN *GAIN*

1.3.1. The Invisibility of Slow Violence in *Gain*

Slow violence in the novel *Gain* occurs, just as Nixon mentions, gradually and out of sight (2). It is a type of violence "that is dispersed across time" (2). The reason why slow violence is so hidden and out of sight is that it occurs over a long span from the

1830's to the 1990's. The span is two times more than the life expectancy of an average person. Therefore, no one can actually witness the violence. According to Nixon, this property of slow violence makes it invisible and incremental. One of the most significant problems of slow violence which restrains the local people from even understanding that it exists is its invisibility. This invisibility is favorable for multinational companies because low-income communities are indifferent to a type of violence which is incremental. It is easy for a corporation to manipulate the local people and draw them to its own side as the local people's priority is to make a living. And here, it is clearly seen that the people of Lacewood have accepted the company. More than just acceptance, in fact, the town of Lacewood has come to be associated with the Clare Company. It is apparent that the town and the company have intermingled when the narrator says "there must have been a time when Lacewood did not mean Clare, Incorporated. But no one remembered it" (2). It is inarguable that no one alive actually witnessed the establishment of the company. Thus, it is impossible to make a comparison between the current state and the former state of the town of Lacewood. Therefore, slow violence escapes the public eye.

The town of Lacewood is addressed by the omniscient narrator as an emblem of transformation. The change that took place in Lacewood is so dramatic that it is called "human wizardry" and an "alchemical transformation" (2). However, although the change is dramatic, no resident of the town gives any significant information about the change. It is only through the omniscient narrator that information about the change is received. As the narrator mentions, "no one alive is old enough to recall" (2). The invisibility of slow violence stems from its gradual nature. People are accustomed to calling an event violence if it is instantaneous (Nixon 6). Therefore, even if the change is so dramatic—the writer calls it an alchemical transformation—it remains invisible. It is appropriate, in the context of the above, to state that Clare Incorporated not only shaped Lacewood, but created it. In this respect, it is certain that when Lacewood suffers from environmental hazards, Clare Incorporated has induced it.

Nixon states that "western nations' toxic waste sites tend to be placed near poor or minority communities" (226), and this is also valid in the setting of *Gain*. At the beginning of the book, it is narrated that the fifth Mr. Clare is in search of a factory site.

His criteria were to find a cheap site where he could dump the toxic waste of the factory without objections. It is understood that Clare chose the location because it was “dirt cheap” and “sat on train lines connecting St. Louis, Indianapolis, and Louisville” (2). As the establishment of the company in Lacewood occurs immediately on the heels of the Industrial Revolution, one can easily infer that the trains used steam power produced by burning coal. It is certain that coal smoke is toxic and produces a high amount of carbon dioxide. Considering the carbon footprint of the company between the 1830’s and 1990’s, it is beyond doubt that one of the main reasons of the slow violence induced by the Clare Company is coal toxicity.

The fact that the company chose its industrial site in a remote place makes slow violence harder to detect. As to the remoteness of Lacewood, the narrator says:

How can Lacewood live, so far inland? The best that developers can do here is to set fake lakes lapping at the shores of new subdivisions. All the latest living communities, even the strip outlets, named for nonexistent water. Baytowne. Harbour View, with that silly little sailboat logo. Insane, of course. But anything vaguely nautical is easier for her to sell. (53)

It is clear that the setting of Lacewood is inland and far from both coasts of the United States of America. As a remote and neglected place, Lacewood does not attract the attention of the media. On the other hand, the fact that the Clare Company established the town out of nothing is appreciated by the local people. Therefore, slow violence remains invisible.

Another important factor which enables slow violence to escape public awareness is that the people exposed to it are not capable of understanding what slow violence is and how it functions. It requires consciousness to understand what the phenomenon entails. One can understand that the more consciousness a person gains, the more sensitive the person is to environmental issues, and such is apparent in the situation of Laura Bodey. She initially rejects that the products sold by the Clare Company must have caused cancer. However, only after investigating the causes of cancer, doing research, and visiting libraries to grapple with this issue does she accept that the products she uses must have caused her cancer.

The policies of the multinational corporations do not consider the well being of poor

local people. Quite to the contrary, their policies are designed to satisfy the needs of the elite. As Taylor mentions in *Toxic Communities: Environmental Racism, Industrial Pollution, and Residential Mobility* (2014), “the global marketplace and multinational corporations have created incentives for elites, regardless of their social location, to act to reinforce elite and corporate interests rather than those of poor and marginal populations” (51). Therefore, the town of Lacewood and its inhabitants are not considered during Clare’s policy making process. The location was chosen for its remoteness and the fact that it is dirt cheap. As will be seen in the other novels under focus in this dissertation, multinational companies purposefully choose their locations in the poorer areas of the country; this eases the exploitation of the land. In doing so, they take it for granted that the poor local people cannot stand against them, either because they need the jobs provided by the companies or that they are too weak to defend their own rights.

The town of Lacewood, which is located near railroads, is likely to be contaminated by coal particles in the air. As an emblem of the Industrial Revolution, machines operating with coal thermal energy came into wide use after the revolution. Carl M. Shy reveals how hazardous coal consumption was during the time from the Industrial Revolution until the 1960’s in his article “Toxic Substances from Coal Energy: An Overview.”

Environmental concerns over increased coal consumption are fully justified by the past history of coal use, from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in England and the U.S. to the decades of the 1950’s and 1960’s. Exploitation of miners, mine disasters, black lung disease, strip mining, air pollution episodes, acid rain, blackened cities, and blackened lungs of the cities’ inhabitants are only among the more obvious health and environmental burdens imposed on industrialized society by the uncontrolled use of coal. (291)

The time span Shy refers to in his article coincides with the period the novel *Gain* covers. His words make clear that the beginning of the Industrial Revolution necessitated the excessive use of coal, which emits far more than any reasonable amount of carbon dioxide. The industrial parts of the United States, of which Lacewood is a good example, were contaminated by overly used, uncontrolled coal toxicity.

Air pollution is an inarguable cause of asthma. While the Clare Company pollutes the air of the region, they are also the producer of an asthma medicine called Respulín. This

is solid proof of the contradiction between economic growth and health. The company who is responsible for asthma cases in the region produces the medicine to fight the illness. In doing so, the company profits from the sales of its products and from the sales of the products which heal the ensuing health issues.

BREATHING EASY

This year, Melissa blew out all her candles. In one breath. By herself. Last year, just humming along while the other kids sang Happy Birthday left her gasping for air. Until Respulid appeared among the rest of her life's presents, each new candle taxed her lungs to the breaking point. She could not run, sing, shout, or even jump a rope. She lived in constant fear. A spring day felt like being buried alive.

Melissa turned nine today. Maybe she still can't spell oral leukotriene D4 receptor antagonist. But she does know how to spell Happiness.

The Biological Materials Group

CLARE MATERIAL SOLUTIONS. (130,131)

The irony is that the Clare Company both causes asthma and sells products to treat it. If one evaluates the situation from the perspective of gain and loss, Clare's is a double gain because they sell products to the people in the region which cause asthma and other diseases, and, on the other hand, they sell products to the same people for the treatment of their illnesses. The irony in the advertisement is that it puts forward the happiness of the little girl Melissa and presents itself as the source of happiness. However, the company is in fact the source of the health issue. The decade the narrative refers to in this advertisement, the 1990s, witnessed an increase in asthma. Bush mentions in his book *Environmental Asthma* (2001) that:

Asthma prevalence and mortality have been increasing in the past two decades. Children and young adults seem to be most susceptible to the increase in asthma prevalence and children residing in inner city environments have a greater risk for asthma mortality. Although the exact cause of the increase in asthma prevalence and mortality is not known, environmental factors are felt to play an important role.
(v.)

As the above lines reveal, living in the city center is a factor which causes asthma, as city centers are prone to air pollution. Asthma is a reality which is clearly portrayed in the novel *Gain*. Parallel to industrialization, environmental pollution increased and, consequently, asthma appeared in local peoples.

The Clare Company uses another toxic material called Phenol in its soap--a cheaper product for mass production. The material is mentioned as a “cunning reconfiguration of coal tar” (164). Phenol, however, is defined as a toxin by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. According to The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) (part of UDHHS), “Long-term exposure to phenol at work has been associated with cardiovascular disease... ingestion of liquid products containing concentrated phenol can cause serious gastrointestinal damage and even death,” and “application of concentrated phenol to the skin can cause severe skin damage” (ATSDR, “Toxicological Profile for Phenol.” 2008. P4). Thus, the company triggers numerous illnesses with its toxic products, which leads to the suffering of those who use its products and reside near the company’s factories. As mentioned before, the company ironically appears to develop medications that cure the diseases the company itself causes. The vicious circle of capitalism, in which the Clare Company takes part, is evident in this situation.

One of the strategies that capitalist organizations use is, as Nixon puts it, to diminish the visibility of the people who suffer (163). Clare, Inc. uses the same strategy to cope with the inevitable objections and complaints that arise. The company sends a public relations message to media outlets in which they deny the fact that their products are carcinogenic.

Recent and somewhat misleading media coverage of the Environmental Protection Agency's annual Toxic Release Inventory has generated concern in those communities near Clare's three downstate Illinois agricultural chemical facilities. While public concern over health is never unreasonable, we would like to take a moment to address these concerns and to reassure the residents living near our plants of their complete and unqualified safety. (297)

The company targets the EPA, which is considered an authority in the United States of America. The EPA struggles to defend the right of the people to live and work in a clean environment, and because of this struggle the agency continually receives threats. The fact that environmentally-hazardous companies threaten, accuse, or at least underestimate environmental organizations is reflected here. This, according to Nixon, is a strategy multinational companies use to target environmentalism. The strategy that the Clare Company uses here is an underestimation of the potential dangers. They claim that the EPA is exaggerating the possibilities of potential danger. They further maintain

that their own regulations are even more stringent than the law, holding that their plants are routinely monitored.

To define slow violence, Nixon uses the words “incremental, exponential, and far less sensationally visible” (13). However, towards the end of the book, slow violence becomes more visible in *Gain*.

The lives of Clare’s thousand employees had grown both lighter and darker. Work grew to fill every hour of the year. Boiling-house temperatures rose an average of fifteen degrees in as many years. The heat of the works climbed with each boost in output and power. The stench of animal fat curdled in the living cauldron, dissolving in the perpetual sea of human sweat and sticking forever to the skin of the soap-makers. (300)

With the addition of machines in the factory, the laborers’ workload intensifies instead of decreasing, which leads to poorer living conditions. To compensate for the money sent on machines, Clare, Inc. lowers the workers’ wages, which leads to even poorer living conditions. Therefore, the only *gain* in this example is the company’s profit. Contrary to the claim of the Clare Company—and by extension all capitalist companies in general—the public does not benefit from the development brought by the company. The so-called development brings about longer work hours, lower wages, and unemployment.

Another strategy which capitalist companies use in their fight against the environmentalism of the poor is to apply direct violence on them by using their power, money, and lawyers, and this dynamic is also seen in *Gain*. The company learns that Laura Bodey is going to sue them, so they threaten her. Even though the company has economic power, Laura is not afraid to sue them. Through the inclusion of such a strong-willed defense of environmental justice in the face of nearly insurmountable odds, the novel encourages the environmentalism of the poor, as do all the other novels studied in this dissertation.

1.3.2. Inattention to the Lethality of Toxicity

One can easily infer that from the founding of the company, the Clares have assumed a profit-based understanding of trade. It is apparent that they do not hold any principles regarding environmental health or public health. Soap manufacturing began as a side

business to their colonial, trans-national trade. Considering the lack of ethics in the colonial trade of the nineteenth century, one can easily state that the company sought to make as much profit as possible, without regard to public health. They do not seem to attach any significance to the products they sell, apart from the goods' profit capacity. Their trade of Pech's soap emerged out of the necessity to reload their ships on their return journey from London to America. Otherwise, "Clare and Sons would not have touched the product, but for the need to fill their empty holds upon return from England" (20). They find the idea of importing soap ridiculous, except for the fact that they make profit from it. It is apparent that they do not have any thoughts about public health or toxicity.

No one in his right mind would pay to import soap. Waste fats, potash, and brine: a household produced soap as the body made excrement. Importing taxed soap made as little sense as bottling spring water or charging a fee for air...But on this side of the Atlantic, the Tariff of Abominations suddenly marked up the banal into the realm of luxury. Pech's Soap grew exotic, exclusive, foreign without the taint of immigration. (20)

The manufacturing of soap began at Clare and Sons coincidentally without their undertaking any research on the product or market. The fact that Tariff of Abominations (as it was called by the opponents) obliged Clare and Sons to manufacture soap without any previous experience. In order to compete, they had to produce their own soap because they could not afford to import any more. In American history, "in 1828 Congress passed and President John Quincy Adams signed legislation setting the highest import duties the United States imposed before the Civil War. Opponents of high tariffs and of Adams reveled in calling this the Tariff of Abominations" (Dobson 47). The soap Clare and Sons brought from England was imitated successfully by opponents and ultimately ended up causing a great economic loss for the company. The only solution the company found was to produce low quality mass produced soap to compete with its opponents.

Nan, who is a minor character in the novel, symbolizes a premature and painful death. The young girl Nan dies unexpectedly at an early age. The expressions the narrator uses are dreadful and reveal the amount of slow violence this young girl has endured. The health of the local people is threatened by the company. However, the people are unaware of the fact that they are slowly being killed by toxicity. This situation befits the

characteristics of slow violence. The violence occurs so slowly that people cannot ascertain that it is an act of violence. As slow violence is “a violence of delayed destruction... that is typically not viewed as violence at all,” the characters of the novel do not associate Nan’s illness with the company (Nixon 2). The tragedy of the young girl is expressed as a fact “everybody knew, and no one admitted” (14). This expression arguably proves the company’s inattention to the lethality of toxicity. The symptoms Nan experiences are horrifying. Nan’s muscles fray so much that “[Nan] was half the size of the girl four years ago, the one Laura met when she sold the Liebers that split-level on the rolling lot across from what was then still cornfield” (14). Laura follows the period of Nan’s illness as an eyewitness. During this period, she witnesses that “Nan weakened with each meal she failed to work down her throat” and that “her muscles frayed as shoelaces tugged on beyond their allotted span” (14). While the tragedy of Nan is unfolding and being witnessed by friends, family, and others, no one seems to blame the Clare Company, which shows us that slow violence escapes the attention of the characters. According to Nixon, the reason why slow violence escapes public opinion is that violence is generally associated with being spectacular. People expect a gigantic explosion or a huge catastrophe to call an event violence. However, in the long run, the fatal results of slow violence are equal to those of direct violence. Also, it is more painful, as seen in the case of Nan in *Gain*. Nixon states:

The insidious workings of slow violence derive largely from the unequal attention given to spectacular and unspectacular time. In an age that venerates instant spectacle, slow violence is deficient in the recognizable special effects that fill movie theaters and boost ratings on TV. Chemical and radiological violence, for example, is driven inward, somatized into cellular dramas of mutation that—particularly in the bodies of the poor—remain largely unobserved, undiagnosed, and untreated. From a narrative perspective, such invisible, mutagenic theater is slow-paced, and open-ended, eluding the tidy closure, the containment, imposed by the visual orthodoxies of victory and defeat. (6)

What is very significant in Nixon’s statement is that toxicity remains undiagnosed and undetected. Toxicity remains undiagnosed because doctors hesitate to reveal the facts that they are aware of because of their fear of retribution. The company’s power and the authorities’ support for the firm leave the doctors in a difficult situation. The toxicity also remains undetected because a thorough autopsy is required to prove that the dead person’s body bore toxins. In the case of Nan, there is no reference that she was

diagnosed, treated, or even autopsied. As a low-income citizen, Nan is neglected even in death. Capitalism sees a low-income, lower-class citizen like Nan as insignificant. Although an autopsy could have revealed the facts of the case, none was carried out. It is thus, under such circumstances, inevitable that slow violence remains unnoticed as it mainly affects the poor and the poor receive less health care.

1.3.3. The Suffering Caused by Slow Violence

Through the main character Laura, the suffering caused by slow violence is displayed by comparing the past and the present. She questions the so-called advancements in health care. She also demonstrates that people's immune systems have weakened. This disturbing state of affairs is related to environmental factors and it is certain that the deterioration in public health is bound together with industrialization and industrial toxins.

A universe of things can go wrong with you. More all the time. When she was twelve, science had conquered all diseases. Now look at the place. And the cost of the smallest accident: five days in the hospital-that weird thing with Tim's joints that they have never diagnosed-would have wiped her out if it hadn't been for the Next Millennium group emergency coverage. How can people out west of the tracks live? Just going to the dentist must ruin them. (29)

Through the experiences of Laura Bodey, Powers criticizes the deterioration of public health and the commercialization of health care. When Laura was twelve, some thirty years ago, public health was much better at a time when the town was ostensibly "less developed." That is to say, the development of the town did not bring with it more advanced health care. Quite the opposite, it brought about an impairment of public health.

David Schlosberg articulates in his book *Defining Environmental Justice* (2007) how injustice functions in low-income communities:

Environmental injustice is seen as a process that takes away the ability to find individuals and their communities to fully function, through poor health, destruction of economic livelihoods, and general and widespread environmental threats. (80)

The situation Schlosberg refers to matches the lack of health care in *Gain*. Although industrial development causes environmental problems and the diseases they create, it offers nothing to compensate for the destruction it brings about. As Schlosberg has put

it, “social justice, environmental justice, and ecological justice are tied together... as the poor suffer both social and environmental inequity and nature is drained of resources for economic gain” (83). It is evident that the disempowered people suffer both socially and economically in *Gain*.

Laura talks about the unexpected premature deaths she has seen, a literary technique the author uses to foreshadow her premature death. As Laura tells about her relatives whom she lost at an early age, it can be inferred that her relatives who lived in the same town lost their lives because of the poor living conditions in the town. The first death she mentions is the death of her uncle, Robert, who is presented as a man who died ten years younger than Laura's present age. Not one sign of illness was present. It can only be inferred, then, that Uncle Robert died a sudden unexpected death caused by the poor living conditions in the town. Considering Laura's age of forty-two in 1997 and the fact that her uncle died ten years younger than her current age when Laura was eight, it can be inferred that Uncle Robert died in 1963 at the age of 32. Therefore, it can be concluded that industrial toxicity is a factor which causes premature deaths.

The outcomes of industrialization combined with the lack of sufficient maintenance make it inevitable that fatal accidents will occur. The death of a young man who was electrocuted while swimming in a river in Wisconsin is an example of that in *Gain*. Throughout the novel, Powers draws a portrait of a post-industrial dystopia. Although the establishment of the company was received with joy by the local people, it is the only catastrophe that the company brought about. Although no detail is provided by the narrator, one can infer from the situation that the man died while swimming in the lake when a sudden thunderstorm knocked down the electric pole. That is why Laura and little Scotty had to “learn forever never to swim in a thunderstorm” (13).

Stacy Alaimo states that “tracing the traffic in toxins, for example, may allow us to notice that carcinogenic chemicals are produced by some of the same companies that sell chemotherapy drugs” (18). The fact that environmentally hazardous companies sell chemotherapy drugs to make a *gain-gain* situation is apparent in the novel *Gain*. Dr. Archer, who is skeptical toward medical companies, reveals during a conversation with Laura that Clare sells cheap raw material to “Bristol-Meyers Squibb, NoDoz, Ban and a few cancer and AIDS gold mines” (171). It is interesting that the doctor calls the

companies “gold mines,” and it reveals the fact that these companies earn a fortune from these diseases.

The novel gives examples of suffering caused by slow violence from different places and decades. While giving information about the Clare Company’s transnational trade, the narrator reveals the suffering of people in and outside of Lacewood. The steam engine has been a significant factor in the growth of trade. The negative changes, uncontrolled growth, industrialization and ensuing pollution is expressed as follows:

Life now headed, via a web of steam-cut canals, deep into the interior. No later chaos would ever match this one for speed and violence: the first upheaval of advancement without advance warning. The back-pressure of governed steam erupted in railroad. Schuylkill, Delaware, Mohawk, and Hudson: every Valley exalted, and every hill laid low. Rail threatened to render distance no more than a quaint abstraction. America at last split open its continental nut. Populace consolidated; the week vanished into hours. (74, 75)

Although these advancements might sound beneficial for the local people at first sight, they were not the ones to benefit from the progress; just the contrary, they are negatively affected. The fact that the advancement came without advance warning precipitated a sudden pollution. Opening canals for trade is an intervention in nature the consequences of which are hard to predict. It is seen that both nature and people are negatively affected by the growth. Therefore, it is only beneficial for the company. It is also meaningful that Powers uses the word violence to define the change.

It is common among multinational companies to mount a self-defense that emphasizes the increase in employment that they are responsible for and to downplay the environmental damage they cause; in their words, this is not intolerable and, in any case, certainly not as big a problem as unemployment. However, the advent of the steam engine caused people to lose their jobs, which means that the claim of giant companies in justifying their slow violence against nature is not a valid excuse.

In turn, the energies released by this energy launched ocean steamships and set machine presses stamping out the tools needed to make their own replacements. Infant factories forged a self-cleaning steel plow, which beat a reaper, which called out for vulcanized rubber, which set in inexorable motion a sewing machine that left half of Boston out of work, turing upon itself, poor against poorer. (75)

Therefore, slow violence does not only damage people's health, but also brings about economic loss and unemployment. The advent of the steam engine, which is the emblem of the Industrial Revolution, together with the sewing machine, left many people unemployed as work meant handcraft in the pre-industrial era. The steam engines went through the canals of the town, leaving its carbon footprint behind without bringing any prosperity. The newly invented self-cleaning technology left reapers unemployed while the sewing machine left "half of Boston" unemployed. Considering such historical realities, it is ridiculous to talk about an advancement. There is only one side that profits from the change: the rich.

Accidents which occur as a consequence of slow violence can be lethal. The educated and sensible character Benjamin Clare, who has a different attitude than the other members of his family, reveals that several occupational accidents took place one after another.

He read of the collapse of a nearby mill on the Waltham model. Two hundred girls died inside. He could not keep track of the accelerating factory explosions Brooklyn and Baltimore. He only noted that the industrialists always managed to escape prosecution on the grounds that their works had done more cumulative good than harm. (76)

That Benjamin, as an industrialist himself, notes that industrialists pollute the environment, is remarkable. Throughout the novel, both Laura and Benjamin reach an awakening by reading, researching, and becoming conscious. As mentioned before, the novel summons hope and, despite the pessimistic portrait it draws, ultimately calls for unity, consciousness, and cooperation.

The suffering of the people in and around Lacewood is not only physical but also economic. The growth of the multinational companies in the region bring small-scale companies to the point of bankruptcy. Soap making is a very common trade in the region and many people earn their wages from that trade. However, Clare, Inc. competes unfairly with small-scale firms by slashing prices. It is revealed that "as the market for soap doubled and redoubled, smaller manufacturers dropped away. The public proved large enough for several large competitors, so long as growth let each one make every new bar of soap a little more efficiently than the last" (271). Therefore, Clare made people suffer not only physically, but also economically.

Laura's struggle with cancer calls the health care system into question. With the increase in industrial toxins and the dissemination of unhealthy cheap toxic products, the number of cancer mortalities has risen. Research has proven that "cancer mortality significantly increased among white women during 1998-2000" and that "during 1990-2000, a significant increase in cancer mortality was observed among white women in [the USA]" (Stewart et al. 2004). Through the character Laura, one can survey the beginning of a cancer case and its developmental, metastatic, and lethal phases.

The doctor initially diagnoses Laura with a "benign fibroid mass on her right ovary," which is not a serious condition (44). Although doctors believe that the illness is insignificant, they treat her with chemotherapy. She receives "thiopental sodium, fentanyl, tubocurarine, halothane" during chemotherapy (79). From this point on, Laura's health deteriorates instead of recovering. Therefore, the chemotherapy sessions become another suffering for Laura. The suffering of Laura is so great that "the smallest movement makes her wish for death" because "she never imagined that pain on this scale existed" (80). Laura's health worsens instead of recovering since she started taking chemotherapy. Laura's doctor, Dr. Jenkin, takes omentum and peritoneal washings from her. The doctor, who is an experienced oncologist, states that "there's a 90 percent chance that one or the other will come back positive" (83). It is understood from the pessimistic comments of the doctor that, according to his experience, chemotherapy is not very effective in healing cancer.

It is not until the end of the novel that it is proven that the company's products cause cancer. Scientific research, in the end, proves that some of the company's products cause cancer by means of mutating the tissues and forcing the female bodies to produce xenoestrogen. Don says "the theory is that certain ring-shaped molecules...ones with chlorine in them, get taken up into the tissue of women. The body turns it into something called xenoestrogen...These fake estrogens somehow trick the body, signal the reproductive system to start massive cell division" (363). The dangerous substances are found in pesticides produced by the Clare Company. Don asks Laura several questions about the suspected products, namely Clarity Nature-All hair dye, Sof'n'Sure talc powder and an herbicide called Altra-..., and it is revealed that Laura had used the pesticide. After learning her cancer was induced by the herbicides of Clare, Inc., Laura

decides to sue them. The novel reaches its resolution with the awakening of Laura and Richard Powers, summoning hope for the environmentalism of the poor when it turns out that, although she does not survive the cancer, Laura wins the case.

Gain is a novel which examines issues surrounding environmental justice and slow violence in a new light. Using two different narratives, Richard Powers reveals both the past and present state of environmental degradation in the United States of America. The author uses the Clare Company figure to critique multinational corporations and executes a meticulous documentation of historical facts combined with fictional events. Despite drawing a pessimistic portrait, Powers' work nonetheless summons hope. Although Laura Bodey cannot survive cancer, her struggle is worthy of appreciation and is rewarded by the writer by winning the lawsuit. No matter how strong the company was and how many laws supported it, Laura Bodey wins the fight and becomes the tragic heroine of the story.

When a low-income community sues a multinational company, the group stands little chance. There is, relatedly, a common belief that low-income groups must suffer for the benefit of the whole country. Low-income communities consist of unemployed people, and as such, the majority of the members of such communities will either hesitate or disagree to sue the corporation. Low-income communities are underrepresented in the media and press. As Martinez-Alier mentions in his book *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation* (2000), "sometimes the social groups negatively affected or threatened can get their act together in a collective social protest or in a judicial action, but favourable political and social conditions are required for this" (187). Thus, the prerequisites for a trial are hard and varied. However, the environmentalism of the poor requires courage, and one can clearly see this courage and hope in *Gain*.

As mentioned in the Introduction, according to Thomashow, the best way of teaching the forthcoming dangers and the plausibility of the sixth mega extinction is to make "informed speculation[s]" (1). In accord with the term "informed speculation," by "employing the facts of ecology and global change science" (1), Powers raises awareness of environmental degradation and *summons hope*; he addresses unity as the solution.

The momentum that the environmentalist movement gained in the 1990's is reflected in *Gain*. Even though the poor communities are underrepresented in the media and the press, they have started to win cases in the court, make their voice heard in the Senate, and force passage of the necessary laws. As Rhodes states in *Environmental Justice in America: A New Paradigm* (2003):

By the beginning of the 1990s, specific legislation, agency policy, regulatory rule-making, and judicial determination in environmental justice were actively being discussed at the federal and state levels. In a few cases, specific remedies had already been enacted or regulated by the end of the 1990s. (44)

The victory of the environmentalism of the poor has been achieved by the participation of low-income communities in activism. NGO's have supported poor local people. At the end of the novel, Laura receives a letter from her supporters which is "an open letter, a larger database. It takes up a quarter page in the Sunday Post-Chronicle" (323). This is a great achievement because slow violence is underrepresented in the media. However, thanks to the environmentalism of the poor, slow violence receives more attention. The open letter which Laura receives calls for the active participation of the local people living in Base Line, Kickapoo, McKinley, and Airport Road, which means all of Lacewood and Kaskaskia, in the lawsuit against Clare, Inc. The report announces that everyone "suffering from any ailment that... might have an environmental basis" can join the case as a plaintiff (323). In this case, the law suit of Laura transcends individualism and becomes a collective resistance. That is to say, the name Laura Bodey becomes the embodiment of the collective struggle which Nixon calls the environmentalism of the poor. This is an example of the environmentalism of the poor and a victory over corporations. Therefore, although the wealthy multinational corporations are strong, it is possible to defend the rights of the low-income communities by becoming conscious. Therefore, the end of *Gain* heartens the environmentalism of the poor.

CHAPTER 2

STRANGE AS THIS WEATHER HAS BEEN: ANN PANCAKE’S NOVEL ON SLOW VIOLENCE IN APPALACHIA

How can we turn the long emergencies of slow violence into stories dramatic enough to rouse public sentiment and warrant political intervention, these emergencies whose repercussions have given rise to some of the most critical challenges of our time?

—Rob Nixon



Fig. 1. Clear-cut forests in Appalachia. Courtesy of the photographer, Vivian Stockman from the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition.

This chapter examines *Strange as This Weather Has Been* by Ann Pancake, analyzing the author’s use of language in terms of how it represents nature, the environment, and environmental (in)justice. By analyzing slow violence in the novel, this chapter aims to reveal the extent to which the health of the environment and the people in Appalachia are threatened by coal companies. The first part (2.1.) will give information about Appalachia, as the following two novels are set in the region. The second part (2.2.) will analyze the language used by Pancake to highlight the environmental issues in the

region and the ways in which they are represented by the language and the narrative in *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. The third part (2.3.) will trace the Nixonian concepts of slow violence, environmentalism of the poor, and writer-activism in *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and the ways in which they are represented in the novel.

2.1. INFORMATION ON APPALACHIA, THE LAND SHAPED BY MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL

Appalachia is a region that stretches from New York's Southern Tier to Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi (Appalachian Regional Commission "Appalachian Region," Collins 235, Rehder 8). The Appalachian Mountains start from Belle Isle in Canada to Alabama's Cheaha Mountain. The 2010 United States Census determined the population of the Appalachian region to be 25 million people (Ludke, Obermiller and Rademacher 52). Appalachia has a rich biodiversity. The mountainous parts of the region host around 78 different mammals, 250 birds, 76 amphibians, and 58 reptiles. The largest concentration of salamander species in the United States of America is in the mountains of Appalachia (Dykeman, "Appalachian Mountains"). That is to say, a rich biodiversity exists in the region, a biodiversity that is, however, threatened by coal mining. Environmental injustices, indeed, are a threat not only to human beings, but also to other species and life forms.

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) was established in 1965 as a regional economic development agency by an act of Congress (ARC "ARC History," Bradshaw 27). ARC defines Appalachia as a geographic region consisting of 420 counties (The Appalachian Regional Commission, "The Appalachian Region," Denham 1). The reason for the establishment of the Appalachian Regional Commission was the regional poverty suffered by the inhabitants (Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness and West Virginia University *Appalachia Then and Now* 2). According to The Appalachian Regional Commission, "one of every three Appalachians lived in poverty, per capita income was 23 percent lower than the U.S. average," and "high unemployment and harsh living conditions had, in the 1950s, forced more than 2 million Appalachians to leave their homes and seek work in other regions" ("ARC History"). The fact that Appalachian people suffer from poverty is echoed in the novel *Strange as This Weather*

Has Been (and *Gray Mountain* as well). The characters in *Strange as This Weather Has Been* feel obliged to leave Appalachia to look for employment and better working conditions. It seems that coal mining did not bring prosperity to the region, as the people face poverty and unemployment.

According to ARC, forty percent of the Appalachian population is considered rural, whereas twenty percent of America's overall population is rural. That is to say, the rural community of Appalachia is much higher than the United States of America in general ("The Appalachian Region" 2018). According to ARC, the poverty rate is in decline in Appalachia ("The Appalachian Region" 2018). However, the advancement has caused economic inequality. This situation typifies economic inequality and environmental injustice. The positive change in the economy is not reflected in a parallel increase in the health of the population. The region is still threatened by coal mining, and both the people and the environment are simultaneously under risk. The reduction in dependency on coal mining is certainly a positive development for the region. However, it is not likely that the region will regain its public and environmental health until the law prohibits strip-mining. It is simply not possible that a prohibition on coal mining will save the environment. The contaminated land must go through rehabilitation, and Superfund sites must be established.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the coal industry was declining in the region, causing poverty (Blaacker et al. 390). Thus, to improve the socioeconomic structure of the region, Congress established the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC "ARC History," Bradshaw 27). The primary goal of the commission was to support the region's social and economic development. As conservation and environmental efforts increased between 1950 and 1960, a total of 640,000 individuals lost their coal and agricultural related jobs (Sokol 2005). The unemployment continued to expand in the following years, and between 1988 and 1998, 42,000 workers in the coal industry lost their jobs (Jones 2000). As mentioned before, coal mining has not brought prosperity to the region.

The Obama administration recognized the significant commercial problems facing the Appalachian people and initiated the Partnership for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) scheme (Kahn 21). The aim of the agency was "to

help communities and regions that have been affected by job losses in coal mining, coal power plant operations, and coal-related supply chain industries due to the changing economics of America's energy production" (The Appalachian Regional Commission, "POWER Initiative"). However, the Trump administration openly supports energy companies. Popovich, Albeck-Ripka, and Pierre-Louis state in their *New York Times* article that "[Trump] administration, with help from Republicans in Congress, has targeted environmental rules it sees as overly burdensome to the fossil fuel industry, including major Obama-era policies aimed at fighting climate change" ("78 Environmental Rules on the Way Out Under Trump" Dec. 28, 2018).³ According to Popovich, Albeck-Ripka and Pierre-Louis, the Trump administration has made nine decisions (at the time the article was written), which cause air pollution ("78 Environmental Rules"). To name a few, Trump administration "canceled a requirement for oil and gas companies to report methane emissions," made it easier to establish "new power plants," and "directed agencies to stop using an Obama-era calculation of the 'social cost of carbon'" ("78 Environmental Rules").

Mountaintop removal (MTR) is among the various surface mechanisms used in coal mining. Although the 1960s were the first years MTR appeared, the method was not used in Appalachian coal mines until the 1990s, when the increased need for coal pushed miners to find more profitable methods of coal extraction (Kaneva 932). MTR involves removal of mountain tops, frequently ranging from 800 to 1000 feet, in order to access the coal deposits. After an entire deforestation of the terrain, removal is carried out using explosives. The material removed is also known as spoil, which consists mainly of broken rock and soil. The overburden is moved to adjacent valleys, resulting in permanent valley fills, that can extend between 1000 feet wide and several miles long (933). Although the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act ("SMCRA") claims that after completion of mining activities, the land is reclaimed and restored to its natural condition, wide-scale tree planting has not, in fact, occurred. The terrain has either not been replanted or been replanted with non-native species (932), which translates to the loss of endemic biodiversity.

³ The support of the Republicans for multinational companies is echoed in *Gray Mountain*, the second Appalachian novel studied in this dissertation.

Trees are essential for preventing erosion and removing carbon dioxide from the air, and the deforestation of Appalachia increases air pollution and erosion risk. The impact on wildlife is tremendous as many wild animals either migrate or die. Such a reality is demonstrative proof that damaging ecosystems means damaging human and non-human health simultaneously. The change in the plant cover has given way to the change in animal species in the area. For instance, grassland birds have replaced the entire species of forest songbirds in the area. Additionally, amphibians – for example, salamanders – have been replaced by reptiles such as snakes. The continuous destructive procedure is a type of slow damage to biodiversity in the region (935). This slow but dramatic change fits Nixon's slow violence.

Water pollution caused by mountaintop removal affects aquatic life. High concentrations of selenium and sulfates are found in waterways, a phenomenon which occurs due to MTR. Excessive selenium levels lead to deformities in larval fish. Such effects cause a chain reaction and birds that feed on fish are affected and face reproductive failure (936). Different species, in other words, are affected by environmental pollution, which is to say that environmental pollution affects every life form in an unselective way. The transcorporeal structure of environmental pollution (which is explained in the "Introduction" — see Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*) makes it transferable among species. Any kind of damage given to the environment ultimately thus results in a disruption of human health.

Apart from problems that arise from continuous mining activities, human communities around the affected area frequently face the effects of mining accidents and flooding. Floods are one of the negative impacts of MTR operations in which deforestation damages a natural absorptive blockage to excessive water movement. Improper construction of sedimentation sludge dams and ponds threatens humans around the mining sites due to their high toxicity levels (936). Damage to underground waterways causes contamination of drinking water supplies. For instance, in 2000, in Kentucky, just a single sludge dam breach led to close to 300 million gallons of toxic sludge entering Big Sandy Lake, resulting in what some people considered the most significant environmental disaster in Mississippi. The consequences of MTR increase mortality rate and put the lives of many people in these regions at risk (935).

Rob Nixon's description of slow violence as a type of violence that "is typically not viewed as violence at all" (2) fits the situation of Appalachia. The lack of visibility of slow violence encourages those who commit it because it is unlikely to be recognized a remarkable event (2). It is an attritional type of violence whose impacts are not recognized suddenly. On the contrary, slow violence advances so slowly that it is not easy to identify. Therefore, it is "a unique type of violence, which is neither instantaneous or spectacular, but accretive and incremental" (2). Nixon suggests that "the representational, narrative, plus the strategic challenges that are posed by the invisibility of slow violence" needs to be examined to make the relatively invisible slow violence more visible and spectacular (2). The concept of slow violence is instructive here as it can be used to describe the situation in the Appalachian region. Several plants, animals, and aquatic species have been destroyed throughout the region. Given these changes, it is also possible to state that the outcomes of slow violence in Appalachia speak to the Anthropocene, which means the human-made change in climate and topography. Slow violence as a type of environmental violence whose impacts cannot be seen at only one particular moment (Nixon 2) explains the destruction of the Appalachian region by human activities. The impacts of slow violence there can only be seen gradually.

The human intervention in the Appalachian region through coal mining alters nature in a number of ways. Mountaintop removal causes the displacement of substances that have been in their natural condition for billions of years, which dramatic and immediate change that would have taken a longer span. Moreover, the burying of waterways following mountaintop removal is a further negative aspect of the practice, also prominent in the Appalachian region, whose health implications include its affect on drainage patterns and movement of water (Kaneva 936). This is all not to mention coal mining itself, which releases enormous amounts of carbon dioxide gas into the atmosphere. The rise in carbon dioxide leads to global warming and contributes to climate change. Climate change, in turn, leads to evaporation of the oceans, causing a release of methane (Moellendorf 1). The burning of fossil fuels and deforestation cause carbon release (Thomashow 128). The rise in carbon dioxide and methane causes entrapment of solar rays, which causes an increase in temperature on earth know as the

greenhouse effect. Therefore, a local environmental disaster has global impacts, a truth embodied in the trans-corporeal structure of environmental disasters.

The notion of visibility is essential in determining the meaning of slow violence. Since there are more visible problems in Appalachia, such as poverty, slow violence is likely not to be a concern for the local communities. The fact that the destruction of the environment is slow in the Appalachian Mountains makes the nonetheless very real violence escape public attention. The invisibility and inherent nature of slow violence make it difficult for the communities to act and make necessary changes. Also, the fact that people are too busy trying to make a living under harsh living conditions is another important factor contributing to the invisibility of slow violence, which gets buried in the hustle of individuals' daily lives and concerns. As is true in many of the cases about which Nixon writes in his book—Shell in Kenya, mega-dam construction companies in India, and others—multinational companies employ the local people in their regions, and this makes it difficult for the local people to fight for their rights, as it may come at the cost of losing their jobs. Apart from the natural invisibility of slow violence, which is gradual, an intentional denial is apparent in areas under the threat of slow violence. The intentional denial, which is the unwillingness to accept or tendency to deny slow violence, is apparent in both *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and *Gray Mountain*.

2.2. THE LANGUAGE AND NARRATIVE IN *STRANGE AS THIS WEATHER HAS BEEN*

Ann Pancake's debut novel *Strange as This Weather Has Been* tells the story of a family who lives in Appalachia where mountaintop removal is rampaging the environment. Pancake grew up in Appalachia, and her political consciousness and personal interviews with various people from the region are the primary inspiration of the novel, which was written from the testimonies of people who suffered or experienced the effects of coal mining related mountaintop removal in West Virginia. Pancake's writer-activism goes hand in hand with the dramatic story of a family struggling with poverty, home disputes, and negative effects of coal mining and mountaintop removal. The novel is an in-depth exploration of the effects brought about by coal mining (Miller 257). Pancake uses the novel to raise awareness of mountaintop

removal and the health problems that it causes. She shows both how the land is brutally mistreated and attacked by coal mining companies and the awakening of some of the characters (as a response to brutal coal mining practices), such as Lace and Bant.

Set in present-day West Virginia, the novel draws a line between the identity of the characters and the place where they live. Pancake opens the novel with a young teenage girl, Lace, who is simultaneously stuck between the feelings of belonging and displacement. She is torn between loyalty and freedom even as she leaves her home. As the characters have family histories interlaced with coal mining, the entire community on the mountaintop suffers from the devastating effects of coal mining and mountaintop removal.

To give a brief summary of the novel, the characters are local people of the region who are either coal miners or are related to coal mining in one way or another. Lace and Bant are the main characters of the novel. Lace is a local woman of the region who has tried hard to escape it. She eventually decides to leave her home to study, determined not to return (4). Later though, she is forced to go back home because of her unexpected pregnancy by Jimmy Make. Jimmy, a fifteen-year-old boy when they first meet, is too young to be a husband, inexperienced, and, in contrast to Lace, not in pursuit of self-development. The book then flashforwards to the present, where Lace lives in an unhappy relationship with Jimmy and her four children Bant, Dane, Corey, and Tommy (17).

Mountaintop removal is represented as a catastrophe throughout the novel. The families hear explosions and the aftermath effects of the explosions cause damages to the houses. As Ruedo-Ramos states, “mountaintop removal mining leaves mountain ecosystems destroyed, water supplies polluted, people sickened, and communities exposed to toxic floods because of deforestation” (220). The environmental degradation Ruedo-Ramos refers to is evident in *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. The pollution and ecodegradation in the land is the main issue in the novel. Bant’s parents argue over environmental problems, which makes them the local voices representing the two sides, one of which is against and the other for the mining company. In addition, Jimmy decides to remain silent because, unlike Lace who is a self-educated intellectual, he

does not seem to attach importance to the environment. The four children live in fear of rumbling floods that could wash down the mountain at any moment. Bant has strong ties to the land and learns a lot from her grandmother about how to protect the land and live off it (34, 38). The novel traces the ambivalent connections to the land from generations by presenting a family deeply connected to the mountain. In the testimonies of characters like Lace and Brant, Pancake narrates a once splendid nature which is eventually destroyed by mountaintop mining activities (217, 268). As Ruedo-Ramos mentions, *Strange as This Weather Has Been* is a work “that digs into the dire life of mountain families whose landscape, health and heritage are permanently at risk” (220).

Pancake’s choice of words represents nature and the struggle of the people who love the land to protect it. Some of the characters, like Lace and Bant, are deeply connected with nature. Some characters, like Moge, use nature as a source of internal remedy, which he relies on as a mental gateway. Moge finds peace of mind in the woods and is more faithful than in church (168). Pancake describes the forest as the source of food for the mountaintop people. Bant and her grandmother went to the woods together to collect leaves, hickory nuts, pumpkins, and other edible plants (16). Before the destruction of their nature, food was abundant. Furthermore, her grandmother often reminded Bant that she could live off the woods, meaning the forest was rich in all kinds of edible substances.

Strange as This Weather Has Been praises the environmental consciousness of women in Appalachia. All the female characters, Lace, Bant, Loretta and Bant’s grandmother, are connected to the land and are willing to fight for it. The male characters, on the other hand, seem to be indifferent to environmental degradation. Jimmy Make, for instance, remains silent when his wife speaks as the loudest voice against coal mining on the mountaintop. Throughout the novel, Pancake praises the environmentalism of the poor and points out that the environmentalism in Appalachia is mainly carried out by women.

As to how nature is represented in the novel, it is evident that the land was spectacular before it faced destruction. The land was a generous supplier of what is needed for life: Bant’s grandmother keeps reminding her that she could live off the mountains (38). It was rich in soil that supported numerous plants, animals, trees, streams, and households.

Everyone depended on the land for food and income. The land had clean streams and pools with fresh water. Lace and his dad used to go fishing in these waters, and the pools had extremely clean water to drink. Loretta narrates how beautiful the land used to be when three houses could be tucked in clear hollows of the mountain creeks (272). Pastured hills mounded behind the houses and they glowed more especially during May when the ground was softer, brighter, and greener. Families lived on opposite sides of the hills, with all the places surrounded and prettily kept by glowing green shrubs. For instance, Loretta's house stood beautifully on the hill, where her family had stayed for more than hundred and fifty years (272). The past and present state of the land reveal the dramatic changes that have taken place over a long time, which is an example of slow violence.

However, the land has gone through a dramatic change, and the once beautiful land has turned into a land of catastrophes. Lace laments that the land has turned into a place of “Slant falling, leafless black trees, no color anywhere” (306). She adds that the land, animals, and trees are threatened by deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and extinction. The land is now filled with dead trees, some of which have been bulldozed and therefore still hold their branches, root balls, and their crowns. Some have brown leaves clinging to them. The leaves and plants the inhabitants used to collect in the woods for food and medicines are now all gone due to mountaintop removal (352). Pancake refers to the deforestation as “a tree slaughter” (352). This expression speaks to the high esteem in which Pancake holds non-human beings as well as humans. It seems that Pancake sees trees as victims of human-made environmental disasters.

The novel employs irony—just as the novel *Gain* does—to reveal the misinformation surrounding environmental degradation. The problems arise initially from the flawed anthropocentric view of nature. Nature is believed to have an unlimited ability to restore itself, which is not the case. Thanks to the field investigation of Bant, many manifestations of slow violence are unveiled. In one of her field investigations, she comes across a guard. The encounter unveils two different levels of slow violence. Firstly, the guard claims that his company will carry out a reclamation activity after they have unearthed all the coal, and that the area will look even better than its original state (106). This is an ironic assertion since reclamation activities are known to fail in

Appalachia, a truth which is revealed both in *Strange as this Weather Has Been* and *Gray Mountain*. Another important part of this encounter is that it reveals how slow violence is hidden from the public eye. Companies employ armed guards to protect the land. It is not a customary act to enter a mining site, which Bant courageously does. The guard whom Bant comes across in the mine represents the mistaken idea of cleaning. The guard believes that cleaning activities will be sufficient; however, they are a failure. The fact that reclamation activities have failed in Appalachia is echoed in *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. The reclamation activities carried out in Yellowroot are presented as a failure. As Avery narrates, “The only growing thing left up here in the head of the hollow is the grass covering the pond banks, no doubt the same stuff they’ve genetically engineered for reclamation. Grass that can grow on asphalt. Besides the grass, everything is dead” (213). Toxic pollution cannot be cleaned by reclamation. In order to clean the toxic land, a large-scale Superfund site must be established.

Ann Pancake’s narrative is very powerful at revealing misconceptions about nature. Through the character Dane, Pancake draws attention to human-induced environmental catastrophes. The fact that human-made disasters are not natural in the way the word natural suggests is also echoed in the novel. Human-made disasters are continually confused with natural disasters. The misconception that disasters are an act of God is criticized by Mrs. Taylor (110). Mrs. Taylor says, “*an act of God, they call it. Tried to blame it on him. [...] I say God must be awful tired of being blamed for what man does*” (110). Mrs. Taylor is an experienced woman who has learned a lot from environmental disasters, and as such can compare the past and the present of Appalachia. The comparison enables her to fully grasp the level of environmental degradation. The author overcomes the representative challenges of slow violence through nuanced presentation of the past and the present state of Appalachia.

Pancake refers to the apocalypse in *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. Through the character Mrs. Taylor, Pancake conveys the message that the end of the world will be brought about by human-induced catastrophes. Mrs. Taylor recites verses from the Bible which portray the apocalypse (115). She recites the verse that says, “*mountains shall be thrown down*” (113). This apocalyptic vision speaks to the significance of mountains in the ecosystem. The loss of mountains can lead to the end of the world in

the long run. Nonetheless, the end of the world which is revealed in *Strange as This Weather Has Been* is a human-made catastrophe, namely, the Anthropocene. It becomes very clear that the end of the world that *Strange as This Weather Has Been* addresses is anthropocentric when Mrs. Taylor says “*cut the mountains all to pieces. [...] Nothing left to hold the water back. Just listen for a rumble, now, that’s all we can do*” (115). This scene reveals the function of the mountains in the ecosystem and also reveals the fact that ecosystems are vulnerable. Since ecosystems are vulnerable, causing dramatic changes in ecosystems will bear fatal results. Corey comes across an article in a magazine which reads “*face of God in the clouds over T— Oklahama*” (116). Although the common Appalachian people perceive the clouds which they see as an act of God (116), it is revealed that human-induced catastrophes are bringing the world to its end. Dane critically analyzes whether it is an act of God or an ecological degradation. Through the character Dane, Pancake criticizes both the law and the misconception that God causes environmental disasters. Dane states that “*there are two laws, one for the rich and one for the poor*” (117). The infringement on the environmental rights of local Appalachian people and the fact that the disempowered are discriminated against by law are both revealed through Dane’s narration in this scene. Pancake uses her sharp irony once again to criticize the misconception of environmental disasters. The third-person narrator conveys that Dane “*wasn’t at all surprised. Because, truth be told, Dane had known for over a month that God wasn’t working around here anymore*” (117). Pancake reveals throughout her novel that environmental catastrophes are human-induced, costly, and lethal.

The clean pools where people used to drink from no longer exist. Pools and streams are filled with sludge and sediments contain poison which is washed into them. The hollows in the mountain have been filled with treetop towers, logs, and brushes, all spiked with tires and metals. The waters are not clear anymore, nor are they safe to drink; they are coffee colored, a disturbing detail which reveals the dimensions of the pollution (16). The pools are filled with toxic sludge, and some of the pool walls are washed off by the floods. There aren’t any fish remaining in the waters, and if there do happen to be any, they are no longer safe for consumption (176), because the ponds have been contaminated from the explosions, blasts, and mining activities. Lace notices this kind of contamination and gets worried when she sees her son, Tommy, holding a

dead fish with his bare hands. She quickly asks Tommy to drop it and asks his sister Bant to bring soap, so he could wash the contamination off his hands. Neither child understands why their mother is worried, after all it was only a fish (266).

The waters are no longer safe for drinking. All kinds of poison from the mines leak into the streams and pools. “Mercury [...] lead, arsenic, copper, and selenium” are found in the slurries and these poisonous materials contained in the fills enter the pools (266). These chemicals and heavy metals are very harmful to human health, causing complicated conditions like lung disease, heart diseases, and even cancer. Apart from the streams and ponds, the rest of the places in the land never held water on the ground. This is the extent to which the mountaintop removal has destroyed the landscape of the land, turning it into an ugly place. The most devastating change on the land resulting from coal mining on the mountaintop is the deforestation. The land that was once covered with trees has become flattened and bare. As Bant walks out of their house to find out what was kept behind the landfills, she describes how empty the land has become. Anyone watching could see all her moves because there are no more trees to cover her. The land remains bare, and the original landscape has been deformed. All these changes are as a result of mountaintop coal mining because the companies have to scrape away the surface earth and remove the rocks in order to mine the coal that is buried on the underground surfaces. As a result, deep suffering has befallen the land in general, and thus, the suffering of the land has come to be associated with coal mining. The destruction of the land is vividly conveyed by Pancake. She communicates the dramatic consequences by likening the altered topography to an alien landscape. Lace expresses her surprise as follows:

This monster gray plateau, not a landscape ever had or ever would belong in our mountains, it was like it had been dropped out of the sky from some other place on earth, and running down off it, these lord-god-huge gullies cut vertically all across the face of it, and I understood, the force of the water to have carved such canyons in it. (273)

The altered state of the land is expressed here, revealing the extent to which slow violence is willingly hidden from the public. Despite the grandeur of the damage, which turns the land into an alien landscape, Appalachia does not receive sufficient media coverage.

The apparent link between mountaintop coal mining and the suffering of the land deserves further discussion. It takes months for huge bulldozers and massive trucks to bring down what nature built over a million years. The negative impacts of mountaintop removal are numerous. The residents are forced to consume contaminated water. Flood incidences, slurry fills, and the high rate of chronic diseases like cancer caused by the heavy metals are all directly related to mountaintop removal. Besides these, there are other impacts of mountaintop coal mining on the land, residents, and the entire ecosystem. The people living on the mountaintop have faced many challenges that are brought about by coal mining.

Corey's fascination with heavy machinery, which leads to his death, is a significant theme in *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. Through the character Corey, Pancake reveals that heavy machinery is fatally dangerous both for human and non-human life. Corey is obsessed with heavy machinery, and he collects photographs of heavy equipment.

They were mining twenty-four hours a day, so it was all lit up along its neck, and instead of seeing it in metal, Corey saw it in lights, a cluster of stars, Corey saw a swinging constellation came down. When Corey'd seen it in the paper, Dad had told him its real name was dragline, but its nickname was Big John. *Like something out of Star Wars, Dad said, maybe the biggest piece of machinery ever built.* (163)

Pancake uses sharp irony to reveal slow violence. The above quotation displays how fascinated Corey is with heavy equipment. His amazement is palpable in his likening heavy machinery to vehicles in Star Wars. However, after showing Corey's fascination, Pancake reveals how destructive heavy machinery is. In fact, the heavy equipment is powerful enough to throw twenty trucks "over the ridge" (163). The fact that the destructive structure of heavy machinery is revealed right after Corey's fascination with it is depicted discloses the fact that fascination with an anthropocentric development is deadly and futile. Also, the irony is revealed when Jimmy Make says "they call [Appalachia] backwards" although they have this heavy equipment (163). It is revealed that destructive, unsustainable, eco-hostile economies do not bring development.

Corey's fascination with the giant machine reflects industries' urge to (re)shape the world. The fascination gains a post-human structure to some extent as he contemplates "that giant, his body in that gigantic body, his body running that body, and the size, the

power of that machine: inside Big John, Corey can change the shape of the world” (164). Corey desires a post-human entanglement with the non-human machine. Just as Powers does in *Gain*, Pancake uncovers slow violence by revealing contradictions in successive scenes. Corey’s fascination, which seems to represent technophilia, is criticized by the revelation of its consequences. After Corey’s praise for the machinery, he discovers the extent to which the machinery destroys the land. Bant’s illuminating investigations of the land enable her to see how industry is killing it. Bant narrates:

WHAT I SAW punched my chest. Knocked me back on my heels. [...] Monster shovel clawed the dirt and you felt it in your arm., your leg, your belly, [...] And past where Yellowroot had been, miles of mountain stumps, limping all the way over to what used to be horizon, and what would you call it now? The ass-end of the world. *Moonscape*, that’s what many said after they’d seen it, but I saw right away this was something different. [...] A moonscape was still something made by God and this was not. (165)

It is interesting that the depiction of Corey’s fascination is followed by Bant’s disillusionment in the successive scene. As seen in Bant’s investigation, the heavy machinery has turned Yellowroot into an alien place. The alienation of the land from its original state is expressed in the local people’s name for it, moonscape. However, even a moonscape is less alien since it is natural. However, the damage given to the land turns the place into an unnatural, grotesque, and alien space.

Another irony which reveals the degree of environmental degradation is found in the name of the place itself, Yellowroot. In fact, yellowroot is a plant which is “shaped like a rabbit with its ears laid back” and it is the best remedy for a sore throat (166). The irony is that the name which used to symbolize respiratory health has become the epitome of throat cancer. The irony reveals slow violence and displays the extent to which slow violence can ruin human health. Human health is vulnerable, and the degradation of the non-human world inflicts direct and indirect damage on human life.

Ann Pancake criticizes the attitude of the church toward nature. Through the character Mogeey, the author shows the attitude of the church. Mogeey is presented as a character who has always been a Christian in his life (168). He shares his environmental concerns with Pastor Dick and the answer he receives does not satisfy him (168). Pastor Dick says that “God gave man the earth and its natural sources for our own use” (168). The

pastor's attitude is one that defends the "dominion" of humankind over the non-human world (168). However, Moge's ideas represent the idea of the entanglement of human and non-human worlds. He believes that human beings are not different from or superior to the non-human world (168). However, the church does not engage in an active participation against environmental degradation. Moge complains that his "church never spoke out against the destruction" (177).

The land suffers from contaminated drinking water, which caused the death of fish and other creatures living in the water. These waters contain heavy metals like mercury, which is associated with coal mining (266). In any coal mining site, the surrounding waters contain high contents of iron and manganese. These heavy metals find their way into the pools and streams through the slurry obtained from washing the coal: coal is washed by more than 60 chemicals, and afterwards, the sludge is washed down to underground, abandoned mines (Doerr & Guernsey 1956). The slurry is very toxic and can easily seep into the underground water, causing contamination. Another option for storing this coal sludge is to create landfills, and numerous examples of the practice are found in the novel (84, 177, 327, 328, 352). These fills turned the land into a dumping site which brought many effects, including the death of plants and trees. In the novel, such fills are scattered all over the mountaintop, which has now been flattened. In most cases, the fills collapse, leading to major losses and catastrophes.

Families on the mountaintop occasionally experience floods which are a result of coal sludges breaking and flowing down into houses. Initially, they can hear the heavy equipment only from a distance, but later, families experience it happening just above their heads. The impoundment fractures, and before they notice it, the flood fills the houses with water (75). The entire community on the mountaintop suffers the torment caused by the sludge floods. Without trees or vegetation on the mountain slopes, there is nothing to stop the flow of this water, and the nearby communities suffer from powerful floods.

The environmental consciousness which Pancake addresses includes field investigations and scientific research that blend theory and practice. Field investigation reveals environmental degradation in *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. Avery is, just like Bant, a character who is involved in field investigations. Through the character Avery, it

is repeated once again that one of the obstacles to the visibility of slow violence is that companies conceal slow violence from view. Avery has to watch out for guards during his investigation (214). Avery's investigation is, just as Bant's, very informative and reveals various levels of slow violence. Pancake reveals the reality of environmental degradation through Avery's eyes as follows:

As the hollow narrows and draws in on itself, the ponds seem to widen, taking up more of the hollow floor, and all the debris in the rock channels is stained the same flat gray so he can't tell what is live and what is garbage. The dull gray is not a real color, not a color water around here would ever run. It is a fake color, everything up here is fake—fake color, fake grass, fake ponds, fake stream. (214)

The above scene discloses various levels of slow violence. Slow violence is arguably kept out of sight. The damage given to the topography, the environment and human and non-human life is immeasurable. Companies open huge unnatural impoundments which contain toxicity. The human-induced change in the topography and flora induces environmental degradation on an unprecedented scale. The degradation is so grand that it has turned every component of nature, e.g. the streams, grass and ponds, into wreck. Pancake exposes slow violence by revealing a world that is really dying. The world Pancake describes is a "dead world" (216). Avery describes the valley fill as "the biggest valley fill he's ever seen, as sterile as a recently erupted volcano" (216-217).

Another problem associated with coal mining that the land suffers from is flying rocks and blasts. Forceful blasts usually occur near homes, and at any time of the day or night. Other structures like wells, pools, and streams may crack from the sheer force of the blasting explosions (Fabricant 11). Mountaintop coal mining is also associated with dust, which covers the surrounding areas. The characters in the novel often experience blasts and explosions, which make flying rocks a common occurrence. These rocks cause injuries to the inhabitants and also block roads. The "flood damage" and "blast damage" (16) together wreak havoc on Appalachia. "The road buckles up into flyrock and shale," which causes pollution and hinders transportation (212). That is to say, the havoc slow violence wreaks on Appalachia is multifaceted.

Coal mining also leads to the displacement of communities residing in the vicinity of the mines. These displacements come as a result of the negative impacts of the mining process such as contamination of water, fly rocks, and floods. Some are forcefully

driven out, especially if they have settled in places which have underground coal reserve. In the novel, Charlie explains to Lace how they were forced out of their land by mining companies. The entire community was forced out in order to give room for coal mining. Furthermore, they started fires around the area, burning down houses in order to scare people who tried to resist (309). Thus, coal mining companies operating in Appalachia do not hesitate to apply direct violence on the local people, which is seen in both *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and *Gray Mountain*. By forcing people out of their homes, coal companies encompass displacement directly. Because of the impacts of coal mining, local people have to leave their homes, which is an indirect outcome of environmental degradation. That is to say, displacement is imposed on local Appalachians either directly or indirectly.

The people living on the mountaintop realize that their freedom of movement is restricted either by the mines, huge trucks, or the landfills. Signs of “no trespassing” prohibiting the entrance to coal mining properties restrict people from entering places where they used to visit freely (15, 176, 246). Guards are placed everywhere to prevent people from entering into the mine areas as well as the no trespassing signs. Guards and signs are external restrictions; however, internal restrictions which hinder people from free movement are also evident in the region. Even without the guards and “no trespassing” signs, free movement is impeded by large fills, so huge that one cannot see what is behind them (301). That is to say, the changes caused by mountaintop removal have altered the topography and the daily lives of the local people simultaneously.

Inhabitants of the land suffer from unemployment. People depend on the mountain to earn a living; however, since the land has been destroyed by coal mining industries, the dramatic changes in the topography make it impossible to earn a living from the mountains. The loss of habitat and biodiversity render it simply impossible. The houses where the inhabitants live demonstrate the poverty of the land. They are too small to accommodate all the family members. Along with unemployment, coal mining on the mountaintop also leads to family breakups. Lace and Jimmy always quarrel because of their different perspectives concerning coal mining. Fear and tension increase in the family because Jimmy Make is anxious for his family; he is afraid of what the mining companies could possibly do to their children or his wife if Lace continues to oppose

them. In the end, Lace's family ends up breaking. Jimmy goes away to live on his own, in a place far away from the mountaintop. He even later comes back to take his children along with him. Dane and Tommy decide to leave the mountaintop; Bant and Lace decide to stay and fight for their land, which reflects the environmentalism of the poor among women.

Jimmy Make arguably represents the typical passive Appalachian local man who is afraid to fight for the environment. Lace arguably represents the strong, determined and environmentally conscious woman. Bant represents the next generation of environmentally conscious women who will actively participate in the environmentalism of the poor in Appalachia. The conflicts between Lace and Jimmy reveal the difference between the two characters in terms of their attitude toward environmentalism. Jimmy explicitly says that they “will get killed” if Lace continues to meet her environmentalist friends, whom he calls “shit-stirrers” (131). The expression Jimmy uses to define environmentalists reflects his fear of the powerful coal miners. Jimmy is a denialist in the Nixonian sense. Instead of accepting the problem and fighting against it, he chooses to be a conformist. He has valid reasons to fear the powerful coal mining companies; he says that “there is a reason why people don’t speak out” (131). He has “worked for these outfits” and he knows “what they’re capable of” (131). It is understandable why Jimmy is afraid of the companies. However, Pancake conveys a message which addresses unity and struggle throughout the novel, which translates to what Nixon calls the environmentalism of the poor.

Jimmy’s unemployment forces the family to move to Raleigh, North Carolina. The forced migration reveals two different aspects of Appalachia. The first is the fact that coal mining does not provide people with employment opportunities. The second is that Appalachians have deep ties to their land. The fact that Lace and her family belong to Appalachia comes to light after the forced migration. Although Lace always wanted to get out of Appalachia as a teenager (195), she realizes that she actually belongs there. Harsh living conditions accompanied by stress force her to restart smoking (195). The family members realize that the living conditions are not more favorable than what they had in Appalachia. Their journey to Raleigh makes the family appreciate that they must

stay and fight for their land, an awareness reflective of the environmentalism of the poor. Lace mentions that their journey to Raleigh was a frustration.

A lot of that first year was just a floating, it makes it hard for me to even tell about it, nothing to touch. Bant was nearly as unhappy as me, quietly surly about it she was, and Dane just lived in a daze. Jimmy Make was earning less working construction than he had with the union job back home, and in Raleigh, everything except food cost more. But it wasn't just the lack of money that made us poorer in North Carolina. It was what you saw around you, what you had to compare yourself to, and I'd never understood about that before. And if that didn't keep us in our place, then there was the way people looked at us, regardless of how much money they had. Somehow people knew we were different from them, even before we opened our mouths, although I couldn't for the life of me see how we looked much different from anybody else. (194)

Lace describes the family suffering from displacement, poor living conditions, and social exclusion. Their forced migration to Raleigh is not a solution to their financial problems; on the contrary, social exclusion is added on to their list of problems. Lace feels a state of “nothingness” in North Carolina (198). She feels that she and her family members as Appalachian people are othered by people in North Carolina. She feels that people have judgements about them although “they had not the slightest idea” (198).

Although there is nothing left in Appalachia that connects Lace to the area, she still feels a strong sense of belonging. Although her parents are dead and all her other relatives have left Appalachia to find work, she still feels an urge to return (199). Despite the fact that the family has financial problems, which makes Appalachia unfavorable for them, Lace insists that they should return to the land where they belong.

But I'd already figured out it wasn't just me. How could only me and my thirty-three years on that land make me feel for it what I did? No, I had to be drawing it down out of blood and from memories that belonged to more than me. I had to. It must have come from those that bore me, and from those that bore them. From those who looked on it, ate off it, gathered, hunted, dug, planted, loved, and bled on it, who finally died on it and are now buried in it. Somehow a body knows. (199)

Lace feels a longing for her past, her heritage, her family history, and the land itself. Since her parents are dead and her relatives have left Appalachia, her sense of belonging stems from the love of the land and her memories. Lace's sense of belonging is a significant theme in the novel, which makes her stay and fight for the land, and engage in the environmentalism of the poor.

Pancake points out the effect of coal mining on health. People on the mountaintop develop health complications due to coal. For instance, Mrs. Taylor has difficulty breathing and has to rest on her walker after moving only a very short distance (44). She suffers from respiratory problems and is quickly out of breath. In one scene, “Mrs. Taylor begins walking towards the kitchen, and although the distance between recliner and kitchen table is maybe twelve feet, about halfway there she rests on her walker to catch her breath” (44). It is possible that Mrs. Taylor and other people on the land have developed problems in their lungs due to the coal smoke, which is harmful to the lungs.

Another character who contracts disease due to coal toxicity is Lace’s father. Lace’s father, who used to be a miner, suffers from black lung disease. He is seen most times clearing his throat (89) and out of breath (145). Lace hears her father breathing and thinks “it couldn’t have gotten so bad so fast, had I just been used to it before? His three fingered hand lay spread on his knee. He’d lost the other two in a mine before I was born” (5). He later has to use a respiratory tract (88). He has difficulty speaking because of respiratory problems and speaks one sentence with three pauses (145). His difficulty in breathing is visualized in Pancake’s narrative. Lace asks her father how he is, and her father says ““Oh, I’m’ breath ‘just fine’ breath ‘honey.’ Breath. ‘I thank ye so much’” (145). Lace’s father’s suffering is made explicit by Lace’s narrative.

Pancake draws attention to the significance of the non-human world to the human world. Akin to what Alaimo calls trans-corporeality, Pancake explains how the non-human material enters the body of Lace’s father and causes illness.

His lungs are being buried by it, by coal, which is earth, which is this place, and, still, he wants nothing but to be out in it. On the land, like me, like us, despite the burying it does, and what the hell, what the hell is it? Why do we have to love it like we do? The Bible says we are made of dust, but after that making, everybody else leaves the dirt and lives in air, except us, oh no. We eat off it, dig in it, doctor from it, work under it. Us, we grow up swaddled in it, ground around our shoulders, over top our heads, we work both the top and the underside the earth, we are surrounded. And still, Daddy wanting nothing at the end but to sit and look at land. Even though inside it drowns him. (151)

The use of language displays the suffering of the land in *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. Ann Pancake describes West Virginia with a well-thought choice of words. By her careful use of words, she describes the actual image of mountaintop removal in

detail. Pancake combines scholarly language with a rural Appalachian dialect; however, these two distinctly different styles are in such harmony that they do not contradict each other. In order to reflect the authenticity of the rural characters, Pancake employs a rural dialect; she also employs a scholarly terminology simultaneously. That is why *Strange as This Weather Has Been* is so successful in revealing the reality of mountaintop removal in Appalachia. Pancake's choice of words is timely and demonstrates the suffering of the land. Pancake uses the word "amputate" to describe how tragic the conditions surrounding mountaintop removal are. Bant says that the "whole top of Yellowroot was amputated by blast, and that dragline hacking into the flat part left" (165). Yellowroot has been amputated by the unending blasts and the drag lines that hack into the remaining flat part (165). The word amputate alone is enough to explain how much of the mountaintop had been lost. In addition, the expression ascribes to non-human entities the same value as humans. As amputation is associated with humans and animals, using the word amputate to express mountaintop removal reflects the value Pancake attaches to the non-human world. As Ruedo-Ramos mentions, Pancake "examines the relationship between the Earth's body and the human body" (224). The Earth's body and the human body are interrelated in *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. Damages which affect the Earth's body directly affect the human body. Lace seeks to find the answer to the question "*What is it? What makes us feel for our hills like we do?*" (99). She expresses that her deep attachment to the land and the mountains stems from having grown up "shouldered in them" (99). Lace calls the human and non-human communication between herself and the mountains "the sense of being held" and believes that someone would "have to come up in these hills to understand what [she] meant" (99). Thus, Lace talks about a very special communication between herself and the land which blurs the boundaries between human and non-human worlds. Her attachment to the land is deep and represents the human and non-human inextricability.

Still, in the voice of Bant, Pancake uses the word "killed" in describing how the land suffers under coal mining for the sake of cheap energy. Bant says "I hardened my face again and scanned the killed ground until I got to where I thought the Yellowroot creek valley fill should be" (165). Bant describes the land as a killed ground to such an extent that one cannot tell anything about the size of the land, the distance, or anything else (165). Killing simply means to put an end to life and here it is not only a figurative

expression which means to devastate or to ruin; it is also a literal killing of animals, vegetation, the mountains themselves and, arguably, to slowly kill the people in the form of slow violence. Killing also implies a willing deed, which is true in this situation. These words show that the ground has been converted to a useless space that can no longer support or inhabit life. This statement is very literal rather than figurative because Bant still describes how the grass on the killed ground has become brittle (165). It is sarcastic because not even a deer would be willing to eat the grass remaining on the ground. This is so because it is scorched, and smells of coal. Furthermore, the grass is dirty because it is often washed with coal slurry and floods. Therefore, the word kill is very timely as mountaintop removal literally kills the human and non-human beings in the surrounding region.



Fig. 2. A Dragline. Courtesy of the photographer, Vivian Stockman from the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition.

Pancake defines the post-disasterous mountains as dead (20). Again, this expression indicates the value Pancake attaches to the non-human world. As material ecocriticism accepts all living and non-living things as bodies (Iovino and Oppermann, 79-80), the blasting of a mountaintop can be associated with murder. The portrayal of the destruction of Yellowroot Mountain discloses the tragedy.

There was just no way to gauge how tall the thing was because there was nothing natural about it, nothing you could compare it to, and then it dawned on me exactly what I was standing under—Yellowroot Mountain, dead. I knew from Lace and Uncle Mogeey that after they blasted the top off the mountain to get the coal, they had no place to put the mountain's body except dump it in the head of the hollow. So there it loomed. Pure mountain guts. Hundreds of feet high, hundreds of feet wide. Yellowroot Mountain blasted into bits, turned inside out, then dumped into Yellowroot Creek. (20)

The fact that Bant reveals it is an unnatural process which is not comparable to anything else speaks to the dimensions of the catastrophe. At this point, just as Rachel Carson did, Pancake talks about a world that is dying.

Another aspect which reveals the human-induced pollution is that the hills are used as a junk yard. The narrative of Corey follows the narrative of Bant, which reveals the destruction of the land on different levels. Through the Bant narrative, it is possible to see how the mountains are destroyed. Through the Corey narrative, who is a curious young boy interested in four-wheelers and who loves playing in the foothills, it becomes apparent that the environment is polluted through its use as a junk yard.

Water heaters and kerosene stoves and tires of all dimensions, lawnmowers and roofing, bike frames and car axles. Barrels and plastic toys, washing machine parts and oven racks, and on top of all that good stuff is the great stuff, the mysterious could-be-anything stuff dumped off the mine—rusted metal contraptions and cogs and wheels and iron bars and yellow steelsheets. (25)

All kinds of metal and plastic garbage are found in the area. This garbage arguably threatens the health of the local people and the environment. Instead of establishing a garbage treatment plant, local authorities let the garbage pile up in the hills. This scene shows the value, or lack thereof, that local authorities attach to human and environmental health.

Pancake also draws attention to the risk of drought caused by the loss of underground water due to mountaintop removal. She reveals that the water level of the creek used to be higher and has now become shallow (26). As of the moment, "creek water [...] comes to right below Corey's knees, right above Tommy's;" however, the water "used to be too deep to wade." (26). "Every year it gets more shallow" and there used to be "fish and crawdads" in the creek two years previous, all of which died (26). In this scene, Pancake is talking about a world that is really dying.

Another timely word that the author uses to describe the suffering of the land is “wrecked” (211). The word wrecked is used to mean that the mountaintop has been reduced to a state of ruin. Avery witnesses the wrecked situation of the hollows:

[Avery] came down this trip to find the hollow freshly wrecked, a wreck that begins with the plugged-up creek and the flood-trashed yards before you even get near the devastation on company land, and then there is the damage that you can't see from outside: the ruined wells and dropped foundations and cracks in walls and ceilings falling. (211)

The scenery Avery witnesses is thoroughly a wreck. The walls which cannot be seen from outside have been damaged, and the foundations are dropping. There are numerous cracks in the walls, and the ceilings are also falling apart. The author's use of the word wrecked is very timely in describing the state of the land after the blasts and explosions. In coal mines, blasts and explosions from the heavy machinery are common phenomena which cause the demolition of structures. Machinery used for mountaintop removal, the coal particles spreading after coal extraction, the flattening of the mountain peaks, valley fills, and flood together are the consequences of slow violence which threaten human and non-human life.

Most houses in the novel have been wrecked, causing the people to live in sorrow, and the pain of losing a house is represented in the novel by the character Mogeey. All the families live in fear that one day they will not have a place to call home. Some houses can be seen to be in a very compromising situation after having been walloped by the floods. Junk has gathered in people's yards, and the piles look like neatly curated monuments. Fly rocks are also among the significant by-products of the wreckage underway on the mountaintop. The careful choice and timely use of the words in the novel vividly explains the effects of mountaintop coal mining and the ensuing suffering of the people and the land.

Along with wreckage, Pancake uses the word “slaughtered” to show how Avery views the state of their land. The character describes the cutting down of mountaintop trees as slaughter. Slaughter is a term used to refer to a large number of individuals dying vicious deaths. The trees were cut, and the entire forest was cleared to give way to mine drilling. The novel presents the effects of the tree slaughter as a matter of evident fact, and the land suffers from floods, dust, and flying rocks. The mountaintop has been

exposed to the strong sun rays because no trees remain standing. Avery, for instance, walks in places where the trees have been slaughtered and suffers sun burns because of the deforestation in the land. While Avery is walking in the forest, “the liquid July sun splashes down unstoppable from every direction, and it dizzies him” (158). The weight of the word slaughter evokes the sheer depth of the grief and destruction that mountaintop removal and coal mining bring to the land.

Pancake’s expressive language describing the state of the land couples with her characters’ similarly evocative language when talking about the water. Pancake, for example, states that the water in the land is covered like the “inside of a sick baby’s diapers,” and described it as looking like “creamed coffee” (16). The toxicity inherent in coal mining turns streams and pools into undrinkable, unsafe, dirty water. People have become afraid of drinking river water, something that was safe to do in the past. Even the fish cannot survive the coal slurry contamination. The particles in the air enter people’s bodies, and cause lung diseases. This is all to say that the coal mines have contaminated the water people drink and the air they breathe, a state of affairs that must be understood not only as suffering, but a direct infringement on human rights. To repeat, every person has the right to breathe healthy air. The coal mining companies, then, violate the most essential and inarguable of human rights.

The novel mentions various people who were killed or injured or have suffered in some way from the disasters. All these people’s sufferings are attributed to coal mining in the mountaintop. Some characters have died, and others sustained injuries, while others lost their houses and their health. Coal mining on the mountaintop has led to flying rocks, dirt, and floods that occur almost everywhere in the land. Water ponds have been created from the abandoned mines and, because of them, Corey lost his life.⁴ His death was a trauma for his family, but it also gave way to the awakening of his mother Lace.

⁴ Accidents leading to the death of young people are not rare phenomena in Appalachia. Pancake draws attention to the vulnerability of human health in this scene. Mining-related fatal accidents happen in Appalachia, and the reality of the fatality of coal mining accidents is echoed both in *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and *Gray Mountain*. Just to give an example to the fatal accidents in Appalachia, *The Washington Post* reports that “A bulldozer operator widening a road at a strip mining operation atop Black Mountain had unknowingly dislodged the half-ton boulder [an] August night,” causing the death of the three-year-old boy Jeremy (“Mining Town Rises in Anger” January 6, 2005).

Her boy enjoyed walking in the floods and playing in the mines together with his brother Tommy, and he died while playing down the steep with his brother Dane. As Dane slid down into the water, the machine flipped backward with him, throwing Corey into the water and crushing against him (343). He lost his life because of the ponds created as a result coal mining. In this scene, Pancake underlines the worthlessness of human life in the eyes of the coal mining company. Lace has experienced this suffering, among many others, and the loss of Corey becomes a turning point for her.

Mogey is another character who undergoes suffering because of the disasters caused by coal mining. First of all, Mogey lost his house because of the explosions and blasts in the mines, which cracked the foundation of his house and cut his porch into two. He also suffers from sleeplessness and stress produced by the loud blasts and explosions (174). The stress, lack of rest, and continual disturbance seem to have caused psychosomatic illnesses such as headaches – the manifestation of slow violence particular to Mogey. Post-traumatic stress is a type of slow violence and while the post-traumatic stress the character undergoes does not kill him, it reduces his quality of life dramatically and worsens his psychological health.



Fig. 3. Deforestation and flattened mountain peaks as a source of floods. Courtesy of the photographer, Vivian Stockman from the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition.

Some of the characters sustain injuries on their bodies because of the devastated state of the land on the mountaintop. Bant gets injured while trying to climb up the fill to see what is behind them. While climbing up the hill, she sweats and has difficulty to breathing. Once on top of the fill, she rips the knee off of her jeans (351). She also scraps the underneath of her arms, and because they are bare, the pain becomes unbearable. Despite the pain, Bant is determined to establish that coal mining sites cause environmental hazards. She does not even notice when her thumbnail is torn in an extremely harsh way. In addition to physical injury, Bant suffers from spiritual and emotional pain. As Bant has spent her whole life on the land, and feels a deep attachment to it, she is forced to emotionally endure the mourning of its loss.

Rabbit is a minor character and not much information is given about him. Rabbit ends up living a lonely life and does not seem to care about the environmental catastrophes in the region. It is possible to define the portrayal of Rabbit as a latent message by the author. Strong-willed, determined, and intellectual characters like Lace and Bant are courageous enough to fight against coal mines while the passive, submissive, and desperate characters like Rabbit and Jimmy Make seem not to care about the land. Inside, though, they are not courageous enough to struggle. The indifference of the local people, especially men, to reality and their overall submissive states remind us of the question Nixon poses:

How much control will, say, a poor hardwood forest community have over the mix of subsistence and market strategies it deploys in attempts at adaptive survival? How will that community negotiate competing definitions of its own poverty and long-term wealth when the guns, the bulldozers, and the moneymen arrive? (4)

This reality is that local people are obligated to choose between submission or resistance to an opponent equipped with power, money, and most importantly, guns. Those who choose to resist must deal with a fiend which is far stronger than themselves. This struggle is an extremely difficult one; however, there is no alternative. Throughout the novel Pancake addresses unity and resistance as the only key to salvation. It is seen in *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and in real-life Appalachia that women have

chosen to resist and been thus revealed as far more courageous than men.⁵ However, more participation among men in the struggle is essential for its success.

The awakening of the characters conveys the message of the novel, which, ultimately, is unity. At the outset of the novel, Lace feels restricted, experiencing the pull to be free from the mountain top's life and daily routines. At one point, she even runs away from home. She is unable to realize how much she is attached to the land until she leaves it. She goes to study at university away from home, and after a month comes to grasp the depth of her attachment to her homeland. She feels bored, spending most of her evenings in the dorm, opening the windows so she can look at the ridges from afar (4). The land around her university also had hills, but they were nothing compared to those in her home. Lace thinks that the hills in Morgantown are "not back home hills" (4). She does not get the same feeling there as she does from the hills in her homeland. The mornings were cool, the afternoons were warm, and the hills had sharp colors. This vividness of language conveys Lace's attachment to her land. When she cannot even concentrate in the library, she recognizes how much she misses her home and her land.

Lace becomes more and more attached to the land, despite the destruction taking place because of the coal mining. She mobilizes people at her workplace against coal mining companies. Despite discouragements from her husband, Lace refuses to give up fighting for the land. All at once, she and her family leave the mountaintop and settle somewhere else. She could not stay away though, and the whole family has to come back to the mountains. Her struggle for the land was unstoppable, even getting no replies to the letters she writes to various agencies. Lace was ready to compromise the life of her family to fight for the land; she says the only option they have is to stay and become a hindrance to the coal mining industries rather than leaving the land for them to destroy it all. When Corey dies in the pond, her family members especially believe Bant will stop advocating for the land, but she becomes even more empowered and determined. It

⁵ Appalachian men do have a history of environmentalism, though not as strong as that of women (Rome 434). The environment was an issue whose responsibilities were undertaken mostly by women. As seen in *Strange as this Weather Has Been*, women are more conscious environmentalists as men hesitate to take part in such activism.

is possible to say that Lace's awakening is a message which Pancake conveys in her novel. Lace wanted to flee from Appalachia but returned to the region because she experienced events which obliged her to return but most importantly, she had a strong bond with the land. As a self-educated intellectual, Lace became more enlightened after the loss of her son, finally developing into the character ideally fitted to Appalachia's needs. Her experiences made clear that escaping is futile and the best thing to do is to stay and fight. Thus, Pancake conveys the message that people should stay and fight for their land, which is nothing if not Nixon's environmentalism of the poor.

Bant is Lace and Jimmy's first daughter. Her parents were still very young when she came into the world, and she grew up together with her mother. They became so close that Lace even came to see her as a sister (333). Bant, because Lace was too young to bear the responsibility of being a mother, was raised by her grandmother, and this made the two women like sisters rather than mother and daughter. Of all the characters, Lace and Bant are the ones with the strongest connection to the land. It took quite some time for Bant to realize that coal industries were slowly destroying the land. Bant becomes environmentally-conscious after having explored the mines herself to see the environmental hazards, scenes which reflect Pancake's call for curiosity and interest toward the land. Bant is finally awakened after she decides to climb the fills, to see what is behind them (352). As she walks around, she suddenly starts to climb the fill; the fill goes loose, but she picks herself up. She climbs even further to see a huge bowl, "big enough to hold three houses" (352). She sees dead trees in the bowl, sediment ponds, and the slurry impoundment. She is shocked when she realizes that the Yellowroot she once knew no longer exists. She remembers how she used to run in the woods and wishes everything could return to its original state (352). Thus, Ann Pancake brings Bant's childhood memories to light and makes a comparison between the recent past and the present, which is a narrative strategy to unearth the reality of slow violence. Without making such a comparison, it is literally impossible to understand the process of slow violence, which progresses too slowly to be realized suddenly.



Fig. 4. Slurry impoundment in Appalachia. Courtesy of the photographer, Vivian Stockman from the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition.

Mogey is another character who gradually becomes environmentally-conscious. He comes to understand the significance of the environment after experiencing first-hand the trauma of environmental catastrophes. Mogey says, “what scared me was the trees that are slowly dying, you don’t really notice that is why it is scariest, until one day it just dawns on you” (176). Although Mogey grew up in the land, he does not come to realize the catastrophes until he personally experiences them. He develops a strong spiritual connection to the woods, which he realizes after seeing his house destroyed. It is possible to infer that, through this character, Pancake simultaneously criticizes indifference in people and also warns them with the reminder that the same catastrophe could happen to them too. Mogey is criticized because despite being a local Appalachian, he is unable to actually see the reality of the environmental hazards “until one day it just dawns on” him (176). His house is destroyed by the continuous blasting in the mines. The blasts crack the foundation of his house and cut his porch into two. The runoff built up in the middle of the roads scares him to the extent that he does not dare go near them (168). Mogey initially hesitates to talk about the environmental destruction. He starts calling the Department of Environmental Protection in the hope of receiving aid for the region, profusely explaining the ongoing destruction. To his

dismay, however, no action is taken. His attachment to the land grows bigger and he sees it being destroyed in his nightmares (177).

Charlie is a companion of Lace at work and together, they fight against the destruction of the land. Charlie and Loretta enlighten Lace about the environment. Charlie understands the impacts of coal mining on the land because he is also a victim of it. Earlier on, Charlie had been unconcerned with the environment. His viewpoint changed, however, when he witnessed a fire. His entire village was wiped out by coal mining companies, and although he was not an environmentalist at that time, he protested against the companies. Charlie experienced how the mining industries set neighbors at each other's throats (309). This is their strategy to make those who were protesting against them to quit and leave the land. As mentioned before, those who commit slow violence in a region purposefully set people at odds to prevent them from uniting. The companies even set fire on the land to force people out. Some people get killed and some are arrested, especially those who protest. Setting people at odds is a slow violence strategy. However, setting fire to the area is direct violence. This scene shows how vulgar the companies can be if their profit comes into question.

The title *Strange as This Weather Has Been* points to the ongoing change in the weather--one outcome of climate change. The strangeness is not limited to the weather, though. Generally, the everyday lives of people have changed dramatically. It can even be concluded that the slow but dramatic changes Appalachia has gone through are exactly what Nixon calls slow violence. As Thomashow has clearly stated, environmental catastrophes do not remain local; they have impacts on the global scale (*Bringing the Biosphere Home* 7). Through Bant's narration, the reality of climate change is revealed.

This year it seemed the seasons were running backwards. The summer strangely cool and wet following a warm snowless winter, that winter following the worst drought summer in sixty years. Anymore, seemed there was either too much water or too little, the temperature too high or too low. "Strange as this weather has been," people would say, or, "With this crazy weather we've been having." And I knew Lace believed the weather was linked to the rest of this mess, but I wasn't sure how. (101)

It is also interesting that Lace knows how climate change takes place and draws attention to its connection with the environment. Lace's being an auto-didactic environmentalist reveals the impact of environmental health on human health.

The novel can be read as a lament for the land. However, despite its pessimistic atmosphere, as in all the three novels studied in this dissertation, it summons hope. It is understood that the narrative encourages the preservation of hope despite the catastrophic events. Pancake praises unity and struggle while denouncing indifference. Some of the characters, especially Jimmy Make, suffer from a constant learned helplessness. They think that the companies are very strong and local people are too weak to fight against them. Although this is true to some extent, Pancake develops her two strong female characters, Lace and Bant, as brave environmentalists. These characters exemplify in fact what Nixon calls the environmentalism of the poor. Through Bant, Pancake gives a warning by questioning whether it is "worse to lose the mountain or the feelings that you had for it" (356). Pancake constantly gives the message that Appalachian people should not lose their attachment to the land. Indifference to the calamities does not mean "to save yourself" (356).

2.3. SLOW VIOLENCE, ENVIRONMENTALISM OF THE POOR AND WRITER-ACTIVISM IN *STRANGE AS THIS WEATHER HAS BEEN*

Ann Pancake's debut novel was written as a reaction to slow violence in Appalachia. The book's publication is interesting, in fact, as Pancake did not initially intend to write a book. She was a well-known short story writer who had not written a novel before, and more interesting than that, she was in the mountains of Appalachia because she wanted to help her sister Catherine Pancake while Catherine was making the documentary film *Black Diamonds* (2006), also based on the issue of mountaintop removal in Appalachia. While assisting her sister, Pancake had the opportunity to interview people in West Virginia. Pancake herself is a native of West Virginia, and as her family has lived there for generations, she is attached to the culture and the land. There she met people who had seen their neighbors drown in floods caused by mountaintop removal. She also met people whose houses were damaged because of the continual blasting in the nearby mountains. The demolitions caused cracks in the walls of the houses and sometimes the ceilings and the walls separated. She learned that the

toxic wastes leaking into the water poisoned some in the region. Pancake states that she had not intended to write a novel but the things she saw in the region forced her to do so (“Ann Pancake,” May 13th, 2008). Her novel, then, started as a reaction to the environmentally destructive implementation called mountaintop removal.

As this dissertation has so far pointed out, those who practice slow violence on poorer local communities have particular strategies. They claim that they have a valid excuse for the implementations of slow violence. It is widely accepted in Post-colonial Studies that the ruling powers try to justify their invasions by convincing people that the invasion was necessary and good for the local people. Also, as mentioned in the Introduction, ruling powers claim that lower cultures must compromise for the greater common good. In each situation, the othering of some communities becomes necessary. The system identifies them as the inferior other because “the division of human society in this way is inextricable from the need of colonialist powers to establish a dominance over subject peoples and hence justify the imperial enterprise” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 180-181). As Nixon has proven in his book, environmental abuse is not separate from colonialism and neoliberalism. In fact, the animating idea behind colonialist powers’ establishment of dominance is one and the same with that of land abuse. There is a certain proof that such kind of othering is valid in *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. The Appalachian land and people are isolated and marginalized; therefore, the system manages to make people see the land as remote and detached and the people as the vulgar other in need of enlightened intervention.⁶ The marginalization and isolation⁷

⁶ The Appalachian Region is either underrepresented or incorrectly represented in the media. There is a common prejudice against Appalachians that sees them as uneducated, rude, and quarrelsome *hillbillies* and the othering of the Appalachians takes part in mainstream culture. “The Beverly Hillbillies” is an example of the misrepresentation of Appalachian culture in the media. CBS later intended to produce a re-make of “The Beverly Hillbillies” with the title “The Real Beverly Hillbillies” but a campaign was started by the people of the region to stop the broadcasting of the TV series (Cooke-Jackson & Hansen 183). The aim of the TV show was to find a poor Appalachian family and settle them in California where they would live in luxury and wealth. Mainstream culture and media present Appalachians as backward people. The region is associated with poverty, rural landscapes, and coal mining (Eldridge 281). This misrepresentation is echoed in *Strange as This Weather Has Been*.

⁷ The Appalachian people are generally associated with introversion. The characteristics of the people are linked to the conditions they have had to endure while living in the mountains for a long time. The fact that the mountainous region was inaccessible from the external world for a long time is the reason why the Appalachians are less interactive to the outer world and different cultures. In fact, their isolation is not

of the land and people are apparent when Lace says, “nothing on TV, nothing in books, nothing in magazines looked much like our place or much like us, and it's interesting, how you can believe what's on TV is realer than what you feel” (3). The backward situation is internalized by the West Virginian locals. However, the internalization is based on a specific reason. Appalachian people are made to believe that their region is a backward place. As Lace criticizes, people are made to believe what they see on TV rather than what they experience in their everyday lives. The character Lace criticizes the constant message given to Appalachians that someone who is skillful enough will leave the region as soon as possible (3).

Growing up here, you get the message very early on that your place is more backwards than anywhere in America and anybody worth much will get out soon as they can, and that doesn't come only from outside. Still, despite all those shows and pictures and stories and voices, I never was able to see what lay ahead for me as something solid. (3)

The interesting thing about Lace's statement is that the pressure to leave Appalachia comes from both inside and outside of Appalachia. The people living outside of the region see it as a place one should leave as soon as they find an opportunity. On the other hand, the Appalachian people seem to have internalized the othering. This description of Appalachia by Pancake fits perfectly with the notion of slow violence because, according to Nixon, the people living under the threat of environmental disasters are purposefully othered “marginalized rural communities” (23). This purposeful marginalization strengthens the companies because the people living in the region are uneducated people and the bright ones will leave the region as soon as possible. However, Pancake enhances the visibility of the region, in Nixon's terms, by “pushing back against the forces of temporal inattention that compound injustices of class, gender, race, and region” (30). Pancake raises awareness of the environmental hazards in Appalachia by inviting people to recognize the environmental catastrophes instead of denying them. In doing so, Pancake overcomes the obstacles Rob Nixon calls

a chosen but rather obligatory isolation from the outside world. Their exposure to the outside world has for a long time been minimal, which has made them introverted (Rehder 45).

“the representational...challenges posed by the relative invisibility of slow violence” (2).

The sense of belonging is a significant theme in *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. Through the character Lace, Pancake reflects the Appalachian people’s sense of belonging to the region. The constant message given by the media that Appalachia is a place that one should leave as soon as possible is proven wrong in the case of Lace. Before her arrival at West Virginia University, Lace always thought that she would leave her town and would “never look back” (4). However, Lace suffers from an intense longing for her home. Lace’s recognition of the fact that she has an attachment to her home is interesting. In fact, the longing is not something that she anticipates before her arrival.

Truth was, though, after a month away, I was feeling a kind of lonesomeness I’d never known there was. I’d start drinking in my dorm room most evenings, [...] if anybody asked, I’d say I was just warming up for that night’s party, but real I’d be watching the ridges in the distance. It was like I was all the time feeling like I wasn’t touching nothing, and wasn’t nothing touching me back, and yeah, they had hills in Morgantown, but not backhome hills, and not the same feel back home hills wrap you in. I’d never understood that before, had never even known the feel was there. Until I left out and knew it by its absence. (4)

The departure from her home enables her to understand its value. Although people are taught to dislike the Appalachian Region, Lace comes to understand that it is a fallacy that Appalachia is not a place worthy of living in. At college, she has the opportunity to make a comparison between Morgantown and her hometown and through this comes to understand that she belongs to her hometown. This sense of belonging will play a crucial role in her environmental activism.

Invisibility is a very important aspect of slow violence. According to Nixon, slow violence is not entirely invisible. Rather, the invisibility is relative (2), and can be both willing and mandatory. It is clearly seen in *Strange as This Weather Has Been* that the invisibility of slow violence is a willing invisibility. The mining area is purposefully hidden from people so that the large-scale destruction of the land cannot be seen. For instance, Bant investigates the coal mining sites to see the destruction of the land. She fears that the coal company “must have a few [guards] nosing around even when the

mine [i]sn't working" (19). The fact that companies intentionally hide their act of slow violence from public view is an external cause of the invisibility.

The invisibility may also have internal reasons, however. People, because of financial worries, may deny slow violence, and this causes a willing invisibility. People may also be forced not to see slow violence through the maneuvers of the big companies. In the beginning of the novel, there is a scene of such mandatory slow violence. Lace sends Bant with Jimmy Make to the mountains to see what is going on in the hills. They travel there with Jimmy's truck and approach a gate with iron bars reading "no trespassing in blue letters" (15). The area is safeguarded like a chateau. Bant is allowed to go in and see the inside of the coal mine as Jimmy was a worker there. She sees the traces of environmental destruction and residues of floods. She recognizes that there is a great hollow part in the surface, which is the result of mountaintop removal. Floods happen very often in the mountains because of loss of trees and earth, which makes the water easily flow. Bant sees "flood mess in the creek" (1). This fact demonstrates a two-folded environmental hazard. Firstly, the water running in the creek is poisoned because of the messes of the flood. Secondly, floods happen in the region because the coal companies cut down the trees and throw them into the valleys. The geographical structure changes, mountains become shorter, and water cannot hold on to trees and so flows causing floods. "Towers of treetops," which Bant sees in the mountains, symbolize the destruction of nature (15). The toxic residues in the creek water make the color of the creek "like creamed coffee left for weeks on a counter" (16). To her surprise, Bant finds out that the toxic residues consist of "treetops and logs and brush, spiked all through with tires and metal" and "pop bottles, sticks and plastic" (15-16). In this scene, it is apparent that the company is purposefully hiding their toxic area from the public eye. By revealing the environmental destruction, Pancake overcomes what Nixon calls the narrative challenges of slow violence. Pancake reveals the facts which would have gone unnoticed if this book did not exist. Therefore, this work is very essential in raising awareness of slow violence in Appalachia.

Bant firstly appears as an enlightened girl who can see the truth behind coal companies. She develops into an even more intellectual and conscious girl throughout the novel. During her visit in the mountains, she understands that the cause of the environmental disasters is mountaintop removal. She is so conscious and sensible that she instantly

recognizes that the hollow ponds in the area, which are called sediment pods, cause floods. Bant states that these ponds were opened by the company (16). She also declares that the energy company Lyon Energy does not look after these ponds and has left them abandoned. The ponds are filled with dirt. The ponds are filled with rainwater and the water brims over the ponds and through the cracks in the ponds causing a flood. Bant can spot where the water flows. The earthy layer on the sides of the pond were thinner and there were hollow parts. The sides were filled with tree logs, which made it easier for the water to fall down as if sliding from a skid row. The ground was affected by erosion. Thus, the strange landscape could not stop the floods as rainwater is absorbed and blockades by trees. While describing the strange landscape, Bant remarks “how the land has forgot where the water should go” (16). The strange landscape is a human-induced environmental hazard, and the ensuing catastrophes are also human-induced.

Cloudbursts, which occur frequently in the region, are hot spots which collect and discharge toxicity. They regularly hit the region, and because of the toxic ingredients they carry, they are detrimental to human health. Because of the evaporation in the ponds, water particles rise, and as soon as they hit a cold wave, the rain pours down heavily. As cloudbursts are made of water from the toxic ponds, the rain they pour is also toxic. What is very important about cloudbursts is that they are mobile toxins, which means one cannot escape from their toxicity. Thus, the toxicity chain is multifaceted. There is a high amount of toxicity in the ponds, floods carry away toxic water, cloudbursts can catch people anywhere, and toxic water can leak into tap water. Therefore, one cannot say that the coal mines pollute only their own spots; they also pollute the whole region. Although the rain does not last long, it is muddy and heavy (17).

The flooding of the creeks is another extraordinary issue in Appalachia, one that Bant also witnesses. She observes the footbridge collapse. Because of the sudden heavy rain, creeks overflow. Bant sees that “the creek was blasting through [their] yard” towards their house carrying “trash and metal logs” (17), which makes the scene horrifying because they were literally being attacked by toxic water. This scene is solid proof that intervening in nature bears unpredictable results. This scene is also another point where Pancake makes slow violence in the region visible. She enhances the visibility of slow violence by revealing the environmental disasters which would not have otherwise been

known. Hence, entering the coal mine opens a path to knowledge about the dirty side of coal mining. Pancake literally penetrates the issue and unveils it.

The author also reveals the literal disappearance of the top of a mountain. While Bant watches the mining area, she realizes that the top of the mountain was chopped off. This act is not different from murder. As beheading a person is called a murder, cutting off the head of a mountain must also be considered murder. Such a dramatic change would have taken thousands of years to naturally happen. However, when Bant looks up to top of the mountain, she sees that “the top of Yellowroot was just plain gone” (19). This event translates to what Nixon calls “territorial theft” (132). If the coal company had waged war against the land and had occupied the same area as the earth it destroys, it would have been a territorial occupation. However, the consequences are not different from a territorial occupation. Therefore, one should not be deluded with the relative invisibility of slow violence just because it does not happen instantaneously.

The toxicity carried away by the flood is enormous, and Corey talks of the volume of the stuff that has accumulated in the creek. Corey plays with the things he finds in the creek, having drifted in the flood. Corey’s excitement at finding new items to play with is expressed as a watering mouth (25). Before the flood, it was possible to find a couple of things if you were careful enough; however, you could find numerous items after the flood. The abundance is expressed in an ironic way through the statement that “wading the creek is like walking in the aisle of Wal-Mart made for Corey, with all the price tags saying free” (25). One can easily understand from this scene that the impact of the flood was enormous. As argued in the previous paragraph, the pond the company opened caused the flood and the flood subsequently caused the spilling of toxic material in the area. Therefore, the impacts of slow violence are related to one another. It is not possible to think of toxicity as an individual thing. On this level, Pancake overcomes once more the narrative challenges of slow violence and reveals its effects, a phenomenon which would have gone unnoticed without this book.

The novel is informing rather than fictional and gives thought to the environmental catastrophes which have taken place in the region. One of the disasters the novel mentions is the Buffalo Creek flood that occurred on February 26, 1972. Mrs. Taylor appears as a character traumatized by the May flood, which has recently happened. The

flood evokes fear in her and makes her remember the Buffalo Creek disaster, which she associates with the recent flood. Since the May flood, Mrs. Taylor has become obsessed with the idea of the flood and continually talks about the Buffalo Creek flood and “the upcoming End of the World” (44). The trauma Mrs. Taylor has revisited is so deep that she is in a state of what one might call post-traumatic stress. It can be understood from this example that slow violence does not only affect people’s physical health, but also their psychological health. Her fear of an upcoming catastrophe is so intense that she feels that the world is falling apart. Nixon states that “slow violence affects the way we perceive and respond to a variety of social afflictions—from domestic abuse to post-traumatic stress and, in particular, environmental calamities;” therefore, it is appropriate to state that Mrs. Taylor is affected by slow violence, especially psychologically. She tells of the horrors of the incident, and it is very meaningful that “she tells them as a prophecy, as threat” (48). The fact that the novel highlights that as a disaster which has taken place in history is a warning regarding the catastrophes at hand and makes the novel an informing and illuminating story. It is also very meaningful that Mrs. Taylor’s prophecy comes true. After she tells of the disasters at hand, other disasters take place in the region.

Through the narrative of Mrs. Taylor, the boundaries between gradual and spectacular are blurred. The general ecological degradation in Appalachia is arguably an example of slow violence. However, spectacular events are also involved in the environmental history of Appalachia. As Mrs. Taylor states in her conversation with Dane, the Buffalo Creek flood was as gigantic as the “pictures of the clouds in Japan when they dropped the bomb” (75). The disaster was a spectacular one and after the dam broke, “it exploded up in the air like a volcano” (76). It can be concluded from this sentence that although slow violence takes its invisible nature from its graduality, another of its aspects is purposeful invisibility. Buffalo Creek disaster is a gigantic catastrophe; however, its representative challenge stems from the media’s indifference. Thus, Pancake as a writer-activist overcomes the representative challenges of slow violence.

The language of *Strange as This Weather Has Been* is effective in disclosing slow violence. Pancake portrays the denialists in a way similar to Nixon’s own portrayal. It is a strategy of those who apply slow violence to use a specific terminology which tends to

diminish the visibility of the inhabitants (Nixon 163). As to the Buffalo Creek disaster, a conversation between the characters Lucy and Avery reveals the fact that the disaster was caused by human-induced changes in the topography (203). The conversation also reveals that a reductionist terminology is used to diminish the visibility of slow violence.

“Well, Buffalo Creek was a different situation than it sounds like this here is.”
 “Big ole dam, wasn’t it?” Lucy asks.
 “Well,” Avery says. “Dam was what they called it. But it wasn’t nothing but three big slag piles dozed up into walls. Dumped the wastewater from the coal-cleaning plant behind them. You could see they weren’t nothing but slag piles.” (203)

Just as the authorities call the people who suffer due to megadam construction *project-affected people*, authorities call the toxic impoundment a *dam*. With similar tactics, companies diminish the visibility of slow violence.

The tragedy Appalachian people witnessed in the Buffalo Creek disaster is defined vividly in the book. The significance of the Buffalo Creek disaster is that it is an incident which took place in real life. By recalling a tragedy of the past, Pancake enhances the visibility of slow violence. In this way, Pancake again overcomes the representational and imaginative challenges of slow violence by creating a story “dramatic enough to rouse public sentiment” (3).

“Oh, Lucy.” Mrs. Taylor shakes her head. “After that flood. I can’t begin to tell you. There never was a time like it. The world just went inside-out. People climbing out of that black mud near naked, your friends and neighbors climbing naked out of mud. People just squatting and going to the bathroom right there in the open. Wasn’t nothing else they could do, you know. And you just stood there and watched like it happened every day.” Again, she lowers her voice. “Truth was, you didn’t have nothing left to feel with. It was kind of like the water washed out your insides.” (205)

This scene reveals that the consequences of slow violence in fact may not be slow. Although slow violence is gradual by nature, it can cause great damage. In addition, the significance of this scene is that Pancake enhances the visibility of slow violence by drawing a tragic portrayal of its catastrophe. The gigantic event, which likely did not receive the media coverage it deserved, is recalled by Pancake.

Nixon states that post-traumatic stress is also an attribute related to slow violence (3). However, post-traumatic stress is generally not viewed as violence, and the reason why

the phenomenon receives little attention is its representational challenges (3). According to Nixon, in order to overcome the representational challenges of slow violence, writers need to “devise arresting stories, images, and symbols adequate to the pervasive but elusive violence of delayed effects” (3). Pancake achieves the goal Nixon addresses by depicting the delayed effects of slow violence. The post-disaster state of Appalachia is associated with post-traumatic stress. Mrs. Taylor narrates the post-traumatic psychologies of the people there as follows:

‘Buffalo Creek was never the same afterwards. I don’t just mean how it looked, but how people acted. I was glad when Dooley found something else and we moved. That was about eight months after. And we were fortunate we hadn’t lived up there longer than we did. We’d only been there about four years. Now the ones who’d lived there their whole lives, that flood kilt em, in a way. Even the ones not kilt in their bodies.’ (206-207)

The disaster affected both people’s psychological state and their economies simultaneously. It took Mrs. Taylor eight months to find new accommodation. It is devastating that people lost their possessions, houses, and their memories. Those who had lived their all their lives lost their memories with the flood. That is to say, people died either bodily or emotionally. The Buffalo Creek disaster is a murder of the land and the people.

Strange as This Weather Has Been covers a wide variety of issues, one of which is the unhealthy working condition of the miners. Pancake describes them working at least twelve hours a day, a work shift that could even be extended a couple more hours on demand (79). Twelve hours is too long a time to work in a mine, as mines harbor toxic coal dust which is detrimental to health. Extending the work hours makes the work even more detrimental to health, as the more exposure to coal dust the workers receive, the more prone they are to black lung disease. The unwritten maxim that shines through here is that the company that exploits nature will not abstain from exploiting people. The laborers “couldn’t do much but eat, shower, and sleep,” a depiction not far afield from a kind of modern slavery (79). From Bant’s point of view, it is mentioned that the miners who had to suffer from long working hours were not members of the Union; therefore, they could not do anything but accept the demands of the company (79). By mentioning this, the author draws attention to the importance of forming labor unions.

Lace is a self-educated environmental activist. She not only educates herself, though, but also her daughter. This attribute of the character, her commitment and dedication, is praised throughout the novel and her environmentalism itself can be considered a role-model. She does not create an illusion for her daughter; on the contrary, she tells the reality as it is. Lace tells about environmental catastrophes and the people who died from disasters. Although Bant seems to dislike the bitter truth, she appreciates her mother giving her environmental education. Lace's environmental consciousness prevents her from idle talks. Even if she tries to engage in small talk, she ends up talking about how "the coal processing plant at Deer Lick had filled the old impoundments where it stored its liquid waste and [how it] was pumping [...] slurry into a new impoundment behind the Yellowroot valley fill" (84). Lace's environmental consciousness occupies a lot of space in her daily life, and this is echoed in her everyday conversations. She intends to raise her daughter as an environmentally conscious woman like herself. Such a self-education and awakening fits Nixon's definition of the environmentalism of the poor. Lace educates her daughter about the unpleasant truth of "fly-rock crashing into people's houses, [and] chemical leaks in sediment ponds" (83). The catastrophic visions are difficult for Bant to comprehend, a rendering of what Nixon calls "imaginative challenges" (45). The imaginative challenges of environmental catastrophes are overcome by Pancake through the character Lace, whose success at raising Bant's consciousness reveals how these challenges can be overcome. Bant initially listens to her mother with suspicion. However, she starts to understand Lace and begins to criticize all authorities who fail to protect Appalachia.

Drownings in flash floods, people breathing cancer-causing dust. But it was still hard to believe her, even if I had to listen, how hard it was to believe things could get that bad. The government or the companies or God or whoever was in charge, it seemed to me they just wouldn't let it get like that. Seemed to me like they couldn't. (83)

The environmental education Lace provides for Bant enables her to become an environmentally conscious person. Nonetheless, Bant's awakening was painful. She generally thinks that she is a child and cannot handle it (83). However, she becomes an awakened character in the end. She wonders why her mother tells her the bitter truth and she thinks to herself "*why do you tell me everything? This is not how moms do on TV?*"

(83). Lacey chooses to educate her daughter instead of deluding her, a tenet of her environmental consciousness.

The conflict between characters creates an ideal backdrop for the discussions on environmental issues. It is interesting that Bant criticizes Jimmy Make on the issue of the corporation as having a “lack of spine” (82). After the perceived insult, Tommy and Jimmy engage in a quarrel. The individual conflict symbolizes a larger conflict in the region. It is the conflict of whether to resist or to yield. The narrator of the event (Bant) openly supports resistance. The questions posed by Jimmy and the answers given by Tommy give information about the issues of resistance and submission. Jimmy asks Tommy why he does not leave the town if he is sure that a new disaster is at hand, and Tommy’s answer, which is very sensible, addresses resistance. He says that if he leaves his land, it is the company who wins the fight (84). According to Tommy, escape is not salvation. The most honorable thing to do is to stay and fight. This is exactly what Nixon calls the environmentalism of the poor, and there are numerous places in the book that address such resistance. Tommy says “because a coal company’s not going to run me out of my house. If you had any spine, you’d fight em with me” (84). The call for resistance is significant. Tommy reveals that the only solution is resistance. However, as mentioned before, Jimmy Make is a submissive character who has already internalized the superiority of the corporation, and he believes that he cannot succeed even if he struggles.

Jimmy’s situation represents the learned helplessness of Appalachian men. They fear that they will not be able to find jobs, and so they abstain from fighting against the company. This is very evident when Jimmy says “I’m talking about starving to death. I’m talking about how there ain’t any work around here” (85). It is clear that the company threatens people with unemployment. However, as Nixon mentions, this tactic is a very common scheme used by corporations to subdue local people. They constantly give local people the feeling that they are inferior, and the projects are necessary for development, and that they need the corporation to survive (163). While referring to the submissive personality of her character Jimmy, Pancake does not entirely blame him. Through the character, Pancake discloses the reason behind this learned helplessness. In fact, Appalachian men are afraid to oppose coal companies because they overtly

threaten them with hunger and poverty. The conversation between Tommy and Jimmy reveals how Appalachian men are made to believe that they should either work for coal companies with good enough wages or work for other places with starvation wages. This indirect threat is arguably a tactic of those who apply slow violence. Tommy suggests that Jimmy should consider finding another job, which he believes will liberate his friend. The quarrel between the two men intensifies:

*Oh, you could get a job around here. You're just too good for em.
Well, I will starve to death before I make pizzas. Not when there's jobs going
begging in North Carolina.
You're just like the rest of em. Too chickenshit to fight anything but their wives.
And what the hell are you doing to fight? Making phone calls nobody answers?
Running your mouth down at the Dairy Queen? Why don't you go on up there and
lie down in front of one of them dozers, you're so keen? (85)*

The resistance of the corporation to environmentalism, which is also an important theme in Nixon's work, is found in the plot of the novel. Jimmy's fear is made evident when the narrator states that "Jimmy Make got laid off at Witcher Run," and they had to move to North Carolina to earn a living (85). Then the same company closed and reopened with a new name, not hiring any workers from the union. There is an institutional resistance to environmentalism, and the only solution is to struggle against the company within the limits of the law.

Although the novel addresses struggle continually, the kind of struggle *Strange as This Weather Has Been* addresses is not an individual one. An organized struggle is supported in the writing and an individual one is represented as futile. Mogeey struggles individually, which does not bear any results. Through the narration of Mogeey, it is revealed that his efforts have not yielded any results:

I hadn't yet heard any rumors about them dumping what they call hazardous waste, not yet. But I can't say I was surprised. Once I got home, I called the Department of Environmental Protection about it. I'd called them quite a few times over the years, and they were always polite on the phone, then, near as I could tell, didn't do a darned thing. But what else could I do? There ain't nothing else but throw a lawsuit at them, and lord knows I don't have the money for that. (177)

There are two aspects in Mogeey's narration, which explain why his efforts cannot yield results. First of all, authorities do not actively participate in the struggle. The fact that authorities are indifferent to environmental calamities is an aspect of Nixon's idea of slow violence. Secondly, Mogeey cannot afford lawyer fees. The fact that disempowered

people cannot afford the expenses of a lawsuit and that companies are encouraged by the poverty of the opponents is a very significant aspect of Nixon's *Slow Violence*.

The environmentalism of the poor is embodied in Dairy Queen, the restaurant where the environmentalists of Appalachia gather. The environmental organization is dedicated to combatting slow violence and its members are self-educated intellectuals. The two aspects which the members have in common are that they have somehow been affected by environmental disasters, and they live in Appalachia. Since they have personally experienced environmental disasters, they realize that they must speak out for the rights of the Appalachian people and their land. The term the environmentalism of the poor is apt to describe the members of the Dairy Queen group because the circle consists of Loretta, who is a high school graduate, and Charlie, who does not even have a high school diploma (268). Lace, who dropped out of college, joins the circle later. More than apt, the environmental group is a nearly exact embodiment of the environmentalism of the poor. The organization consists of people "lacking resources who are the principal casualties of slow violence" and "their unseen poverty is compounded by the invisibility of the slow violence that permeates so many of their lives" (4). The other members of the circle, namely Patty McComas, Jim Corbin and his wife Mavis, and Jeannie Thrust, exemplify the environmentalism of the poor since "their places [a]re [...] being destroyed" (Pancake 268). They have witnessed how mountaintop removal affected the land. Mountaintop removal is represented as an aspect which is "on the verge of killing" people (268). It is through the character Lace that Pancake expresses slow violence in this scene. Lace is surprised to learn,

How nearly a thousand miles of streams had been filled with the rock and dirt that used to be mountaintops, and how the fill had killed everything there. How what soil was left on the flattened tops was compacted so hard that if anything ever came back besides the grasses and shrubs the company sprayed on, it wouldn't be for at least several hundred more years. How over fifty percent of the electricity in the United States came from coal. (268)

In the above scene, the writer-activist Pancake addresses the environmentalism of the poor as an effective way of combatting slow violence. Lace learns valuable information she is not supposed to learn out of the environmental circle. The above scene reveals multiple aspects of Nixon's ideas. Although the damage is unprecedented—such as one thousand miles of mountaintop wreck—the damage is hidden from the public eye and

goes unnoticed. The damage is so huge that it will take centuries for the soil to restore itself. However, the damage is hidden from the public. The writer-activist Pancake reveals slow violence, and while revealing it, uses the environmentalism of the poor in the plot. The Nixonian aspects of slow violence, writer-activism, and the environmentalism of the poor are combined in this scene.

The intentional invisibility of slow violence is evident in Jimmy's character. Through the narration of the environmentally conscious Bant, it is revealed that Lace intends to become a member of an environmental group. Jimmy asks whether it is the union she intends to work for, and Lace says that it is a new environmental organization (131). Jimmy is so intensely afraid that he cannot help warning her to "stay clear of the shit-stirrers" because they can get killed (131). He states that "there is a reason people do not speak up," and the reason behind his fear is evident (131). He is afraid of the company because he witnessed "an eighty-year-old man who is also a politician" get hit in the head, and a "woman had her house burned down" (131). This event shows the violent lengths to which the corporation will go when it comes to their profit. And struggles against slow violence sometimes remain futile. Moge, who is also an environmentally conscious character who criticizes the indifference of his church to environmental calamities, contacts the Department of Environmental Protection (177). Although they listened to him kindly, the conversation did not give way to a produce a result. Moge thinks that the only thing he can do is sue the corporation, which he cannot afford (177). Therefore, it will be right to say that individual action is often futile as one cannot fight alone with the giant corporations.

Another tactic used by companies involved in slow violence is terminology. The companies, because they are aware that their addressees are not educated people, use a specific terminology—highly technical language—to make it more difficult to understand what they say (275). They try to hinder the environmentalism of the poor. Lace starts writing letters to politicians including "Jay Rockefeller and Robert Byrd" (275). Lace also carries out the mission of telephoning agencies in Dairy Queen (275). Her task is to comb "the Beckley classifieds for permit applications" (275). The companies reply her "in such a way that you [cannot] understand them unless you [a]re trained" (275). This situation shows that coal companies try to make their sentences less

perceivable to the general public, which is a strategy of slow violence. Therefore, educating one's self is very significant for this task.

Slow violence is not easy to detect. It is not only because it is gradual but also because companies purposefully hide their illegalities. Corporations do this by keeping people away from their sites, purposefully dislocating them, and making them escape by mobbing them so much that they finally run away. As Mogeey would say, the company will "hoove up dirt... so you can't get over, and... deliberately cut trees across the hollow to keep you out" (185). They apply mobbing to rural people to make them escape. They leave those who resist unemployed and blacklist them. Thus, as Nixon mentions, corporations use several strategies to carry on their act of slow violence (163). Authorities may be unwilling to accept slow violence. Another example to the reluctance of the authorities is the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), West Virginia. While reporting a catastrophe known as the '96 summer flood, Loretta's friend Loretta says that her family has lived in this place since the 1800s and no one has ever witnessed such a huge catastrophe (272). As a conscious environmentalist, Loretta makes a complaint about the damage, reporting it to the DEP. The answer she receives is shocking. The DEP claims that the catastrophe is "an act of God. Normal weather event. Mining didn't contribute at all" (273). The DEP's attitude toward the environmental catastrophe is an underestimation of the event and an outright denial of the facts. As Nixon states, denial is one of the tactics of those who apply slow violence, which he calls "psychology of denial" (20). According to Nixon,

Neoliberalism's proliferating walls concretize a short-term psychology of denial: the delusion that we can survive long term in a world whose resources are increasingly unshared. The wall, read in terms of neoliberalism and environmental slow violence, materializes temporal as well as spatial denial through a literal concretizing of out of sight out of mind. (20)

The psychology of denial is evident in *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. Both religious and secular institutions tend to deny the fact that slow violence exists and that it stems from coal mining. In one scene, Loretta and Charlie Blizzard discuss their ideas about the church (347). Charlie asks Loretta how she can stand hearing the preachers saying, "God gave dominion over the earth" and "the good Lord put this coal under the ground for us to use" (347). This flawed mentality sees nature as humankind's

commodity. Loretta's answer reveals that clergymen speak in support of the coal companies. Loretta says,

‘Them preachers are the ones have always spoke for the companies, you know that, you were raised in a coal camp. Anybody with a grain of sense can see we’re destroying what God made. ‘The Earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it,’ Psalm 24. He wants us to fight for it, and I pray every day for God’s help in this fight.’ (347)

Since politicians and clergymen stand for coal companies, it is very difficult for poor local people to fight for the environment. Local people also feel impoverished because of the economic power and political strength of the companies. Jimmy Make, for instance, warns Lace to resign from the environmental organization (279). He believes that coal companies are invincible because of their wealth. The mobbing and intimidation the environmentalists experience cause exhaustion. The intimidation is also a type of slow violence because it produces results gradually. The weariness of the environmentally conscious people and their reluctance to speak up are in favor of the companies. Therefore, it can be considered that companies purposefully intimidate people to discourage them.

So people were just plain worn out. Most of the ones who had suffered enough to start fighting were already tired when they began, and after a year or so, they’d get dragout beatdown exhausted, if they weren’t outright sick from the stress. And many people were sick from the stress, and not just the people fighting it, many people just living in it were sick from it. And what the hell? I’d ask myself again. What the hell is it? (311)

Environmentalism of the poor requires great pains. It is very difficult to stand against powerful companies. However, Pancake as a writer-activist addresses the environmentalism of the poor irrespective of the difficulties in combatting slow violence. Pancake’s support for environmentally conscious characters (especially Lace and Bant) and the environmentalism of the poor (Dairy Queen) is evident. Pancake conveys the message that Appalachians must stay in Appalachia and fight for the rights of future generations. Pancake’s praise for the environmentalism of the poor is evident when Lace decides to stay in Appalachia even after the gigantic May Flood (314). This act of Lace’s is a courageous decision. Lace says;

What I do know, after almost two years of not even getting anybody to listen, much less take action, is this: the best way to fight them is to refuse to leave. Stay in their

way—that's the only language they can hear. We are from here, it says. This is our place, it says. Listen here, it says. We exist. (314)

Pancake calls for an organized and determined struggle. Therefore, Lace is a Nixonian character who obeys the call to join the environmentalism of the poor. Lace's consciousness also accords with Hiese's notion of "sense of place" (28). According to Heise, "individuals need to develop a 'sense of place' by getting to know the details of the ecosystems that immediately surround them" (*Sense of Place* 28). Lace develops a thorough sense of place and devotes herself to its protection. Wendell Berry has argued that "without a complex knowledge of one's place, and without the faithfulness to one's place on which such knowledge depends, it is inevitable that the place will be used carelessly, and eventually destroyed" ("Regional Motive" 68–69). Lace and Bant—thanks to the illuminating ideas of Lace's—are informed about their land. The information strengthens their loyalty to the land, and they become connected to it, a connection for which they fight.

To conclude, it has been seen throughout the novel that mountaintop removal is hazardous and has harsh consequences. Nature and people are devastated simultaneously by mountaintop removal. However, Pancake addresses an organized struggle as the only way to save the land and the people. There is praise for the characters who are enlightened throughout the novel while there is criticism toward people who are indifferent to environmental problems. The learned helplessness is represented as an obstacle which needs to be overcome. The state of hopelessness encourages the companies who inflict slow violence on people. However futile struggle may seem, it is the only remedy. Therefore, Pancake does not accept any excuses in terms of fighting for the land and the people. Pancake's own struggle as a lecturer, activist, and writer makes the situation of Pancake's exactly what Nixon calls writer-activism and what Pancake addresses throughout the novel is exactly what Nixon calls the environmentalism of the poor. Pancake purposefully praises and awards the enlightened characters such as Lace and Bant and presents them as role models for Appalachia. Pancake harshly criticizes jurists who support the coal companies. As Chapter III will also examine in its analysis of *Gray Mountain*, jurists support coal companies for their individual benefits. Pancake openly states that "coal ran most judges" (311). The learned helplessness stems from the bad experiences of the people.

However, despite the gloomy atmosphere of the novel, its message is nonetheless insistence that Appalachian people never yield and give up the fight. Individual attempts may indeed have fallen short. However, there is a constant message that organized struggle will win. As seen in the example of Dairy Queen, Pancake supports environmental organizations. Becoming a member of environmental organizations is supported in the novel, and it is clearly seen that knowledge means power. By becoming a member of the Dairy Queen, Lace attains knowledge on environmental hazards and the ways to combat them. Teaching what she learns in the Dairy Queen to her daughter Bant, Lace disseminates knowledge and broadens the struggle. Therefore, Pancake as a writer-activist encourages an organized struggle. The organized struggle and the solidarity in environmental organizations are empowering. Since the environmentalism of the poor which *Strange as This Weather Has Been* exemplifies belongs to the disempowered, the power of the disempowered people lies in their knowledge, solidarity and struggle.

CHAPTER 3

GRAY MOUNTAIN: A BOOK ON SLOW VIOLENCE IN THE AFTERMATH OF NIXON'S SLOW VIOLENCE

The violence was slow, methodological, and efficient.

—John Grisham



Fig. 5. Layers of rock remaining after mountaintop removal in Appalachia. Courtesy of the photographer, Vivian Stockman from Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition.

Gray Mountain by the author and lawyer John Grisham is significant as it was published in the aftermath of Nixon's *Slow Violence* and reveals the issues of slow violence in Appalachia. As Grisham is a lawyer by training and a writer of legal thrillers, he focuses more on the legal issues in Appalachia in *Gray Mountain*. The current chapter will thus deal with the issue of slow violence in Appalachia and its reflections in the novel, the everyday impacts of slow violence, and the long-term wreckage which goes unnoticed because of lack of attention to the region. The chapter will cover the issue of black lung disease, which is arguably an occupational disease and how medical and political authorities tend to deny its relevance to coal mining. The

chapter will also highlight that violence hits mainly the poor people and will discuss the underlying reasons.

In *Gray Mountain*, the main character is Samantha Kofer, who from the beginning is caught up in a rather desperate, confusing, and precarious economic situation amidst the downturn in America's economy in 2008. Companies begin to cut off their staff, and the main casualties are young professionals like Samantha. She is "furloughed" and is promised to be reinstated if the Wall Street legal firm she was working for regains its economic prosperity. This unfortunate circumstance leads her to do voluntary work for over one year without pay. An opportunity soon presents itself at the Mountain Legal Aid Clinic in Brady, rural Virginia, in the heart of Appalachia—an unexpected and unpleasant cultural shift for the city girl. Mattie Wyatt is the head of the legal aid clinic that offers free legal advice to low-income clients. Grisham exposes his character Samantha to a world twisted by poverty and injustice perpetrated by corrupt mining companies and politicians. Samantha finds herself in an unfamiliar and dangerous territory where greedy capitalist mining companies intervene in the course of justice and ravage the ecosystem. If people stand against them—a situation Samantha eventually finds herself involved in—their lives are threatened. In Appalachia, she meets Mattie's nephew Donovan Gray, a lawyer and passionate environmentalist, who has been suing Brady coal companies, especially Big Coal. The firms are involved in strip mining, a practice also known as mountaintop removal, which gives irreversible damage to the environment and the people (see Chapter 2 above). Forests are clear-cut, and then the land is bulldozed by blasting away the rock. Heavy machinery breaks up the coal stratum and dumps a black sludge of coal residue into slurry ponds. The ponds later break away and the dark floods destroy homes and kill the people in its path. After extracting the coal, the mountain is left bare, and procurement for a new mining site immediately sought. Mysteriously, Donovan dies in a plane crash, after obtaining stolen evidence from the Big Coal Company which proved that the company knew it used toxic mountaintop removal chemicals for a decade which polluted a nearby town's well: but the company decided that fighting lawsuits was more economically viable than rectifying its hazardous pollution. The fact that the contamination continued secretly over a decade makes the situation exactly what Nixon calls slow violence.

Grisham's narrator explains the procedure of mountaintop removal coal mining. In doing so, Grisham assumes the role of writer-activist, which Nixon sees as a method to combat slow violence.⁸ As Grisham is a prolific writer of legal thrillers, he attracts the attention of readers from different walks of life. One needs to make a comparison to Ann Pancake readership on *Strange as This Weather Has Been* about mountaintop removal in the Appalachia.⁹ Grisham, however, seeks to develop familiarity among the wider population with the subject of mountaintop removal and takes on the task of raising awareness of environmental hazards and environmental injustice in Appalachia. In this way, Grisham's work is an example of what Nixon calls writer-activism.

The representation of slow violence in literary works intensified after the publication of Nixon's *Slow Violence*. Choosing one of the most recent works on slow violence, the chapter reveals that the concept of slow violence has become an identifying concept in environmental literature, and that the term slow violence has opened a new path for writers concerned with environmental issues. The events in the book exemplify what Nixon has called slow violence; one can conclude that the publication of *Slow Violence* has become an identifying concept in environmental literature.

3.1. BIG BUSINESS AND THE WAY COAL IS MINED

Grisham makes a historical reference to mountaintop removal in *Gray Mountain*. The author's narration of coal mining in Appalachia reveals the real experiences of Appalachians. During a conversation between the lawyers Samantha and Donovan, Samantha asks why Donovan solicits coal companies and receives the answer that "coal companies create a lot of problems... There are a couple of decent ones, but most care nothing about the environment or their employees" (54). The coal companies both in the

⁸ While gathering information about mountaintop removal in Appalachia, I signed up to "The Inner Circle: A John Grisham Group" on facebook, a group for John Grisham readers where people exchange ideas about Grisham's works. I have found that some people first heard about mountaintop removal in Appalachia in *Gray Mountain*.

⁹ Because Grisham is a legal thriller writer, although *Gray Mountain* perfectly fits the definition of environmental fiction and deserves to be called so, the acquaintance with his readers in "The Inner Circle: A John Grisham Group" has given me the impression that Grisham has loyal readers who are ready to read whatever Grisham writes. Therefore, the task Grisham carries out is significant.

fictional (but true-to-life) plot of Grisham's *Gray Mountain* and in real life ignore the health of people and the environment. Donovan also states that "mining coal is a dirty business [...] but it is far worse now" because of mountaintop removal (54). In doing so, Grisham refers to the historical evolution of coal mining. Donovan remarks that coal mining started in the 1800s, which is historically true. It is also understood that coal mining was performed using traditional methods until the 1970s when the coal industry developed the mountaintop removal method. Deep mining, which is the classical method, is done by opening tunnels in the mountains. While "there were 800,000 coal miners in the coal fields" by 1920, the number of coal miners collapsed to 80,000 today (54, 55). If coal companies cared about the employment of the local people as they claim to, they would not embark on strip mining projects, a method which reduces the number of workers up to 90 percent. The fact that the number of coal miners has decreased dramatically proves that the claim of the companies—that they work for the welfare of people—is simply not true. It is possible to hear the companies claim that they are environmentally friendly; however, if companies had sincerely cared about the environment, they would not have chosen strip mining. It is apparent that the companies care neither about the people nor about the land; their one and only priority is their own profit.

While describing how strip-mining is carried out, Grisham reveals the violence of the coal mining companies toward the environment with his carefully chosen words that liken strip-mining to a war against nature.

Mountaintop removal is nothing but strip-mining on steroids. Appalachian coal is found on seams, sort of like layers of a cake. At the top of the mountain there is the forest, then a layer of topsoil, then a layer of rock, and finally a seam of coal. Could be four feet thick, could be twenty. When a coal company gets a permit to strip-mine, it attacks the mountain with all manner of heavy equipment. First, it clear-cuts the trees, total deforestation with no effort at serving the hardwoods. They are bulldozed away as the earth is scalped ... The layer of rock...is blasted.
(55)

Grisham explains the procedure of strip-mining like a war on nature. As soon as the mining company receives permission to strip-mine, it wages war against the mountain. The company uses explosives, ammunition, and all kinds of military equipment to blast the rocks and clear cut the mountaintop. In that sense, the war is not only a figurative

war, but it is also literally a war against nature. It is also striking that Grisham expresses mountaintop removal as “strip-mining on steroids” because it is a frequently used terminology by experts.¹⁰ Clear-cutting the trees and bulldozing them, scalping the earth, and blasting the rocks are all signs of the fight against nature and are no different from war. In that sense, the slow violence here is somewhat instantaneous, which is not very typical of slow violence; however, what makes the suffering of the Appalachian land and people slow violence is the state of being out of sight. Because, as one can see both in *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and *Gray Mountain*, coal companies will not let people see the mining areas, they purposefully hide their mining areas so that their wrongdoings remain invisible.



Fig. 6. Machinery destruction. Courtesy of the photographer, Vivian Stockman from the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition.

Grisham adds a figurative meaning to living downstream in Appalachia. Usually, people live downstream in the foothills or plain areas. Donovan tells Samantha that the companies cut all the trees, blast the rocks, clear-cut mountaintops, and shovel all the

¹⁰ It is meaningful that Grisham calls mountaintop removal “strip-mining on steroids.” The expression reveals the density of the environmental hazard. For instance, the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition calls the event “strip-mining on steroids” (“Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining”).

residues and debris into the valleys, and this causes a dramatic change in the geographical structure. Therefore, living downstream means being vulnerable to the dangers created by the coal companies. Considering that poor people live downstream, it can be inferred that the word “down” also indicates being economically and socially disadvantaged in a figurative way. The plain areas and hollow areas change with the artificial intervention of the mining companies, which is a direct attack on nature. The new artificial formation that is known as the valley fills “wipe out vegetation, wildlife, and natural streams,” which Grisham calls “just another environmental disaster” (55). The expression “just another” implies multiple unwanted repetitions and implies that environmental disasters happen continually on a regular basis. Donovan makes a very ironic statement about living downstream. He says “if you're downstream, you're just screwed. As you'll learn around here, we're all downstream” (55). Being downstream is used both as a geographical term and one that means being lower in status.

The power relationships in Appalachia are highlighted critically by Grisham. He criticizes and questions the limits of being legal and the dirty relationship between authorities and mining companies. As Donovan narrates, “strip-mining is legal because of federal law;” however, coal mining companies do several things that are illegal (55). The preoccupation of authorities and the lack of inspection paves the way for coal mining companies to act freely. The coal companies’ hostility toward nature and the people is apparent. Donovan says that they “have a long, ugly history of regulators and watchdogs being too cozy with the coal companies” (55). The word regulator implies regulating procedures for the benefit of the company and the word watchdog implies protecting and standing guard while the company grafts. As Nixon puts it, “the ties between rulers and ruled are typically weak: the despots or oligarchs prefer to depend...on controlling the central resource than on strengthening civic expectations,” which explains the situation in Appalachia (70). The ugly connection between rulers and multinational companies is evident in Appalachia. The rulers prefer to support the big multinational corporations rather than defend the rights of the weak local citizens because they benefit from the corporations and they depend on them for the continuation of the system.

The eponymous setting of Gray Mountain¹¹ becomes a symbol of resistance and submission. The character Webster Gray, a selfish castaway, represents the people who sacrifice the land for their benefit. Webster's heirs represent the conscious generation who struggle to preserve the land. Webster has inherited Gray Mountain, which "was in the Gray family forever, way back in the 1800s" (70). As mentioned in the second chapter, coal mining activities have been actively carried out in Appalachia since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Therefore, one can easily conclude that the Gray family has saved Gray Mountain from the pillage of coal companies for generations. Gray Mountain also symbolizes the longing for the lost beauty of Appalachia before mountaintop removal. The mountain represents the bond between human and environment. "Donavan and his brother, Jeff, were born and raised" there and their father and grandfather took the children to the hills for walking, fishing and exploring (70). Many Appalachian children, just like Donavan and his brother, "grew up on the land" (70), and there is indeed a great connection between the human beings and the land in Appalachia. After Curtis's death, Webster inherits the land. Webster is purposefully portrayed as an outcast and a thief. He was sentenced to imprisonment for six months after having stolen some goods. As Grisham assumes an attitude against mining companies throughout the novel, one can infer that he purposefully portrays Webster as a thief and an outcast as Webster sides with the companies. In fact, it is a kind of betrayal that Webster sells Gray Mountain, which his family had preserved for generations. After an economic crisis, Webster decides to sell Gray Mountain to the mining company. Mattie narrates the tragic story of Webster's selling the land to the coal mining company:

The highest point on their property was called Gray Mountain, three thousand feet up and covered with hardwoods. The coal companies know where every pound of coal is buried throughout Appalachia; they did their geological surveys decades ago. And it was no secret that Gray Mountain had some of the thickest seams around here. Over the years, Webster had dropped hints about leasing some of his land for mining, but we just didn't believe him. Strip-mining had been around and was causing concern. (71)

¹¹ In the whole paragraph, Gray Mountain is used to refer to the setting from which the book takes its title. The book *Gray Mountain* is not meant in this paragraph. Therefore, Gray Mountain is not italicized.

The company deceives Webster, too. Webster signs a contract with the coal company to sell his land without giving any information to his family (71). The mining company promises to give two dollars for each ton but never keeps its promise. Therefore, after siding with the company, which is a kind of betrayal, he is also deceived by it. Grisham explicitly shows that the company is an enemy to the land and the people and people who have expectations from the company are bound to be frustrated. The land must be preserved and should not be submitted to the enemy. This state of hostility demonstrates what Nixon calls slow violence. According to Nixon, “neoliberal policies impose displacement without moving,” and the displacement makes itself manifest in Appalachia (19). Local people are detached from the lands on which they grew up, their childhood memories, and, most importantly, their ties with the earth. That is to say, they are displaced without moving, just as Nixon explains. Coal mining companies “target ... an immobile resource such as forests, a mobile resource such as water, or a fugitive resource such as wildlife” (20). In this case, it is clearly seen that the mountain is not only a source of profit but also a target neoliberalism attacks in hostility. Gray Mountain, a symbol of the preservation of nature, receives its share of the hostility. Chester rightly calls the devastation as “the rape of the land” (72). Chester expresses the blasting of the mountain as follows:

They clear-cut the forest shaved it clean and shoved thousands of hardwoods into the valleys below. Next, they scraped off the topsoil and pushed it down on top of the trees. When the blasting started, all hell broke loose...They had this wonderful old house down in a valley, next to Crooked Creek. It had been in the family for decades...Curtis's father built it around the turn of the century. The foundation was made of stone, and before long the stones began to crack. (72)

One can see in the lines above that the company attacks the mountain in a hostile way, making dramatic changes in the topography such as filling the valleys with trees, mud, and rocks. The topography that had been the same for ages changes in a short time and this causes damage to the land. In both *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and *Gray Mountain*, the local people suffer significantly in real-life Appalachia from the unexpected topographical changes. Mud floods, water poisoning and damage in houses take place in Appalachia. This scene proves Nixon’s argument because although slow violence is gradual, the damage it causes is not less than common violence.

Webster's encounter with the company brings him nothing but frustration. His marriage ends because of family disputes. He does not receive the amount of money he expects either.

The house began to tilt, and the doors wouldn't close. Needless to say, this was a nightmare for the family, and for the marriage. After Vayden knocked off the top of the mountain, about three hundred feet, they hit the first seam, and when they finally started hauling coal off the mountain, Webster began demanding his checks. The company stalled and stalled, then finally sent a payment or two. Not nearly what Webster was expecting. (72-73)

Webster's situation should be taken as a warning. He sells his land in hopes of earning a lot of money, but he has been deceived. Chester says that "Webster started raising hell with the coal company, but it was a waste of time" (72). The coal companies are powerful, and the law supports the companies. That is why they can do anything for their profit. They do not hesitate to deceive people because they will probably receive no punishment as they are supported by law and authorities. The dirty ties between the coal companies and the authorities make it difficult for the people to defend their own rights.

The damage mountaintop removal does to the land results in the drying of creeks, the poisoning of the waters, and even human-induced earthquakes. A layer of coal dust fills the air like fog. As coal dust is toxic, it causes lung diseases when inhaled. The narrator reveals that "the ground would shake several times a day," human-induced earthquakes the strip-mining causes (72). The narrator also mentions that the house shook because of the blasting. The seemingly slow violence penetrates the daily lives of Appalachians, even into their homes. Therefore, they have "lost over a thousand miles of headwaters in Appalachia" (73). What Nixon calls "resource theft" is evident in this case (165). The coal mining company makes Appalachia lose thousands of miles of headwaters. It is also "territorial theft," as Nixon calls it because Appalachia loses a huge amount of land by shoveling the earth into valley fills (132). Water becomes poisonous due to strip-mining, "their well was contaminated with sulfur" and "the air was always thick with dust from the blasting and coal trucks," and the scenery demonstrates how mountaintop removal coal mining damages the land. Thus, human induced environmental disasters and the ensuing health problems are the consequences of coal mining and the way coal is mined in Appalachia.

Webster regrets selling his land to the company. The regret Webster feels reflects not only a personal remorse but also a collective lament for the loss of land. Through his character, it is understood how unreliable the companies are and how unreasonable it is to side with them. Webster does not receive the amount of money the company promises him. He retains a lawyer, and the company takes it as an insult because the company sees itself as superior to the local Appalachians. Plus, being sued irritates them. As Mattie comments, “the war was on and everybody knew who would win” (73). It is challenging to beat the coal company in the court because of their deep ties with politicians. Webster’s regret can be considered a warning; taking the side of the companies brings nothing but catastrophe.

Through a conversation between Mattie and Samantha, Grisham reveals the unlawfulness of the coal companies. According to Nixon, “the Western powers typically supported oligarchs, dictators, and military regimes that cooperated with the skewed terms of resource extraction” (719). Although Nixon refers to the western policies on the global South, his analysis also applies to the poorer areas of the United States of America. It can be inferred that multinational companies choose remote countries for resource extraction because of the damages that occur, and when it is not possible to find a remote country, they are left to select a poor area of the United States of America to pollute. In doing so, multinational companies believe that they will receive less criticism while the areas are inhabited by poor people who are both financially and politically too weak to have their voices heard. Resource extraction is supported by politicians as it is seen as an emblem of development and the companies who carry out resource extraction are either overtly or openly supported by the law. Donovan takes an oath to become a lawyer and fight against the company which devastated his family. After becoming a lawyer, Donovan “has filed hundreds of lawsuits and taken on every coal company that ever thought about operating a strip mine” (Grisham 75). However, although Donovan is a determined and successful lawyer, some cases resulted surprisingly in the favor of the defendant. Big business, in fact, is encouraged by the law, which ignores the rights of the poor local people. The dirty success of the coal companies in the court is, as Mattie reveals, that they always “play hardball” and “lie and cheat and cover up,” and they also hire huge, reputable, and successful law companies to defend them in court (75). Despite the strength of the coal companies,

Donavan does sometimes manage to win his cases. No matter what the result of the case is, “he is always on the attack” because coal companies take it as an insult when someone sues them (75). Therefore, big business and the way coal is mined are associated with a vulgar and greedy attack on both nature and people. The only thing the companies care about is their benefit and are determined to exploit nature and people’s labor for their benefit. Coal companies deceive people by promising them high profits, they do not abstain from devastating nature and damaging the health of the rural people.

3.2. THE ISSUE OF SLOW VIOLENCE IN *GRAY MOUNTAIN*

3.2.1. Slow Violence in Everyday Life in *Gray Mountain*

Slow violence is an everyday occurrence in Appalachia. It threatens Appalachia in multiple ways, and this fact receives extensive coverage in *Gray Mountain*. Traffic caused by coal companies transporting coal from the mines to other cities is a significant problem in the novel. Combined with the lack of education of Appalachians, traffic becomes a big problem. Both the potential risk of accidents and the coal dust dispersing from trucks become a threat. Samantha Kofer's journey to Appalachia opens a path to see the environmental and health issues in the region. As soon as Samantha sets foot in Appalachia, she finds herself in a traffic jam – an event to which she is not accustomed. As the narrator tells, Kofer “fell in with a stampede of eighteen-wheelers, all seemingly oblivious to the speed limit” (44). In fact, the number of trucks transporting to and from the region is in the thousands, causing traffic density and related problems in the region.

Numerous researchers argue that the socioeconomic conditions which enslave people in Appalachia cause mental disorders in the people there. As an investigation carried out with the cooperation of ARC and NORC claimed, “there appears to be a higher prevalence of mental health disorders in the Appalachian region as compared to the rest of the nation, with proportionately more Appalachian adults reporting serious psychological distress and major depressive disorder” (Zhang 2). Grisham recognizes the fact that mental disorders are common in Appalachia and creates the character

Romey to symbolize the mentally disordered Appalachian. It is also very significant that “mental health problems are not equally distributed across the region, with higher rates of serious psychological stress and major depressive episodes in central, as compared to northern and southern, Appalachia” (Zhang 2). That is to say, mental disorders are more common in Appalachia than the rest of the United States of America. It is also certain that psychological disorders appear as a result of the accumulation of problems over the years, which makes the situation in Appalachia a type of slow violence. The psychologies of the inhabitants have been slowly damaged by the incredibly challenging conditions that coal mining has wrought. The violence has been very indirect, dispersed in time and slow; however, the consequences have been harsh. For this reason, it is a solid example of slow violence.

The plot in Grisham’s *Gray Mountain* reveals the magnitude slow violence has reached in Appalachia. Written in 2014, the year when environmental catastrophies were rising, *Gray Mountain* brings to the fore the environmental injustice in Appalachia. As a lawyer by training, Grisham reveals the corruption of law, the subjugation of workers’ rights, and the threats environmental activists receive in Appalachia. Initially, Grisham introduces Samantha, the main female character, as a young and successful lawyer for the Scully & Pershing law firm, which is one of the biggest law firms in the world and has made a fortune on its lawyers. Although the firm has accumulated wealth by its lawyers, it is dismissing its workers due to the economic crisis. The language used in the opening part portrays the subjugation of workers' rights. The tension Samantha and other workers experience are defined as a “horror” which is embedded in the ambiguity of “waiting [for the] unknown” that resulted in “insomnia” and “the ulcers” (1). At this point, Grisham speaks to the hierarchy between young and experienced lawyers. The experienced lawyers who Grisham calls “big boys” avoided eye contact with the other workers because “they might soon be ordered to slaughter them” (1). The purposeful choice of the word *slaughter* reveals how cruel business life is. Grisham defines the uneasy feeling prevalent throughout the office as “toxic” (1). Samantha finds the atmosphere so toxic that she escapes to the nearby cafes and parks whenever possible. There are two different types of lawyers in the novel; namely, the honest and the dishonest ones. Young lawyers belong to the working class of law, while the experienced lawyers are on the side of the companies. This conflict between the devoted

and honest lawyers and the unethical ones is evident throughout the novel, and on the following pages, the conflict will multiply. It is evident that the honest lawyers will fight for the rights of the Appalachian land.¹² Moreover, the people and the dishonest ones will defend the benefits of the firms which cause slow violence in the region.

The choice of words indicates the extent to which the firm confiscates the rights of its lawyers. The company lawyers learn that they will be working for NGO's during the crisis and after the crisis ends, they might return to their positions. They also learn that there is no guarantee to return to their jobs. Andy, who is also a lawyer in the company and has been given the role as a spokesperson, expresses the ugliness of the situation saying: "you- all three have Ivy League law degrees and you are being escorted out of the building like thieves" (5). Scully & Pershing, one of the biggest law firms in the world, fires its workers and sends them away in an insulting way although it has made a fortune on their backs. The company insults its workers by treating them like thieves and taking them out with security guards. The narrator expresses the company's behavior as "tossing out associates in droves" (12). The careful choice of words such as "toss out" and "drove" (12) displays the disrespect for labor and laborer rights.

As a lawyer, John Grisham criticizes the corruption in law. He creates three different lawyers in the Kofer Family to symbolize three different perspectives. Marshall Kofer, the father of Samantha, embodies the greedy lawyer. He "had once been a high-octane plaintiffs' lawyer whose expertise had been suing airlines after crashes" (13). He used to have a law office in Washington D.C., and was always busy with lawsuits, traveling around the world for his business. While negotiating a settlement in a lawsuit in Sri Lanka, after forty Americans had died in a plane crash, he came up with the idea of setting up some shell companies to take his money offshore. After his plan was revealed, "he got caught, humiliated, embarrassed on the front page...and sent to prison

¹² According to Aldo Leopold, the land has rights just like people do. Leopold defines the ethical behavior human beings must have toward the land as "Land Ethic." He states in the "Foreword" to *A Sand County Almanac* that "We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us." We can only develop "Land Ethic" if we start seeing ourselves as a member of the biotic community instead of its owner. Leopoldian "land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community," and it includes the land, plants, and animals and sees the biota as a whole (203).

for three years” (14). Therefore, it can be conferred that Grisham creates the Marshall Kofer character to embody the greedy lawyer and punishes him for his deeds. Karen Kofer, Samantha’s mother, represents the bureaucrat. She is an honest lawyer, earns well and is portrayed as a good persona. However, her flaw is to always be on the side of the politicians. She discourages her daughter when she announces her plans to work voluntarily for an NGO. For Karen, it is pointless to work for such an organization. Therefore, out of the three characters who are lawyers, Samantha Kofer is the portrayal of the ideal lawyer for Grisham. Marshall is dishonest. Karen is honest; however, as she works for the government, she defends the status quo. Samantha Kofer is the idealistic lawyer figure in Grisham's work who fights against slow violence and struggles for the environmentalism of the poor communities.

Marshall Kofer's disrespect for Samantha’s idealism is evident when he offers to find her a real job. He continually tries to convince her to step into real law business. For Marshall, the actual law meant dishonest work because, in his view, every successful person “must have committed egregious sins to succeed” and lawyers must “uncover the wrongdoings” (16). To reveal the wrongdoings might sound acceptable, however, the fact that he does it to take money from the companies makes him a dishonest lawyer. He does not do it to establish justice. His attitude towards law is flawed and resembles that of the lawyers who defend the multinational companies in Appalachia. They prefer money to justice.

Samantha’s refusal of the job Marshall offers her becomes a turning point. If she had accepted the offer, she would have become one of the lawyers Grisham criticizes. After questioning one of Marshall’s schemes—about which he hesitates to give details-- Samantha understands that Marshall’s business is fundamentally dishonest. He does not work as a lawyer. He cannot take part in lawsuits because he has been disbarred because of malpractice. Samantha refuses the job because she cannot work for a firm owned by three disbarred lawyers. The company Marshall establishes with two friends embodies the dark side of the law. Because they no longer have licenses from the bar, they cannot work as lawyers, so they open a consulting company. Marshall says that they work with litigation funders, who support lawsuits against big firms. They do it by raising money from investors. When a small company cannot afford to sue a big one, it applies to

investors to support its lawyer fees and agrees to give a commission from the compensation. Although Grisham criticizes lawyers such as Marshall, and endorses the idealistic lawyer figure Samantha openly, one instance deserves special attention. Marshall states that by their method, “the fight becomes a fair one” (28). U.S. Law supports the powerful instead of the right, and the weaker plaintiffs need extra financial support to defend themselves firmly in court. Although Marshall is on the corrupted side of the law, it is certain that Samantha has learned how to defend the rights of the poor against giant firms. The difference is that she does it to support the environmentalism of the poor, not money.

The offer Samantha receives from The Mountain Legal Aid Clinic changes her life, and she becomes familiar with Appalachia, a place she had not known before. The clinic uses an “abandoned hardware shop” as its headquarters situated in the town of Bradey, whose population drops “with each census” (32). The preliminary information Grisham gives on The Mountain Legal Aid Clinic reveals how poor the working conditions in the clinic are and the extent of the emigration from Brady. It is revealed that there is a huge discrepancy between Appalachia and other regions. The distance between Washington D.C. and Brady was “about three hundred miles away in distance and a century in time” (32).

What Mattie Wyatt, the founder of The Mountain Legal Aid Clinic, says reveals the poverty and helplessness of Appalachian people. Wyatt says that “there is no shortage of poor folks and their problems” (32, 33). This statement reveals the poverty of not only the people but also the region. Another indicator which displays the desperate need for legal aid in Appalachia is that during Samantha’s unpaid layoff, nine NGO’s refused her application because they had no positions; but Wyatt states that there is always a demand for lawyers in Appalachia to protect the rights of the poor people. The situation of Appalachian people portrayed in *Gray Mountain* embodies Nixon’s expression about people living in poor living conditions. The people in Brady are represented as people surrounded by slow violence. “The poor,” according to Nixon, “is a compendious category subject to almost infinite local variation as well as to fracture along fault lines of ethnicity, gender, race, class, region, religion, and generation,” and, it is seen in the case of actual and fictional Appalachia that the discrimination toward Appalachian

people stems mainly from class (4). In this case, Appalachian people are forsaken for the greater common good¹³ of the so-called civilized people.

Everyday life in Appalachia is associated with harsh living conditions and the psychological problems they cause. One character who exhibits such an affliction is Romey. On her trip to Brady, Samantha's encounter with him is awkward. A police car starts following her and warns her to stop with its siren. The (fake) policeman asks for her driver's license by uttering a couple of words which Samantha does not understand. Grisham sarcastically draws the portrayal of Romey. The Romey figure is a mismatch; he is a patched and awkward character. He is clothed in such a strange way that "his uniform was a mismatched ensemble of frayed and stained khaki pants," and he wore "unpolished black combat boots," and his "hat (was) at least two sizes too big" (42). The collage of clothes he wears makes him strange; however, Samantha still cannot understand that he is a fake cop. The fact that she is unable to comprehend that Romey is mentally sick, believing instead that he is a real policeman, demonstrates her ignorance of Appalachia. It seems that Kofler's image of Appalachia is so low that she expects such a policeman figure in Appalachia. Romey threatens her with arrest. He claims that Samantha was traveling too fast on a road with a 20-mph speed limit, which does not sound logical. Romey then takes her to a derelict building, where Samantha hears him argue with a man. The man turns out to be Donovan Gray, who has come to rescue Samantha. Through the Romey character, Grisham makes Samantha's journey to Appalachia a mirror of lawlessness, mental disorders, and oddities.

It can be easily inferred that Grisham presents the character Romey purposefully at the beginning of Samantha's journey to Appalachia to create a shock effect. Mental disorders are widespread in the region as a result of harsh economic and living conditions. Everyday life in Appalachia is associated with disorder, lack of safety, mental problems, and poor living conditions, problems which are mirrored in *Gray*

¹³ "The Greater Common Good" is an essay by Arundhati Roy in which she resists the megadam construction in India. Roy states that the authorities wrongly claim that people from a so-called inferior culture should be sacrificed for the alleged superior class. The same is valid in the actual and fictional Appalachian landscape.

Mountain. Such problems are indirect outcomes of coal mining related issues, which identifies them as slow violence.

3.2.2. The Long-term Wreckage That Goes Unnoticed: The Invisibility of Slow Violence in *Gray Mountain*

Appalachia is the desired location for the companies to apply slow violence on the people and the land. The region has two disadvantages: firstly, it is a remote region which escapes public attention; secondly, it is inhabited by poor people who are not able to defend themselves. These two facts encourage multinational companies to branch out. Because Appalachia is not in the center of attention of the media and the press, the companies have the freedom to act despotically. The representational challenges of Appalachia make it an ideal place for the giant firms. Appalachia is not only physically remote, but also culturally remote and isolated. In fact, Appalachia's isolation is a fundamental defining factor of the region. The isolation can be willing, unwilling, or internalized. In any case, the isolation is a fact. The fact that the physical isolation of Appalachia was part of the urban planning of the United States of America makes it a forsaken land. Patricia Beaver states that "following the Civil War, the region experienced relative isolation from communication centers and trade" and also that there was "limited availability of revenues for education, roads, and other communication systems" ("Appalachian Cultural Systems, Past, and Present" 16). Thus, the isolation of Appalachia is rooted in the past. In Nixon's terms, slow violence has been gradual in Appalachia. Slow violence has led to social, cultural, and health-related issues without manifesting itself as violence at all.

The Romey character embodies the mentally disordered, poor Appalachian people. The fact that the number of mentally unhealthy people in Appalachia is high is related to economic status: "one of the factors commonly linked to depression is low socioeconomic status (SES)" (Post et al., "Depression and SES in Women from Appalachia." 1). As economic circumstances gradually damage people's psychological health, the region becomes an epitome of slow violence. However, as it cannot be reported that the cause of illnesses is economic problems, it is likely that the underlying reasons behind the illness will go unnoticed. It is widely accepted that depression is a

common condition that affects a significant portion of the U.S. population (Hasin et al. 2005). However, the situation in Appalachia is unique. The Appalachian region has a very high percentage of depression. Numerous researchers of the subject demonstrate that the number of people suffering from mental illnesses is higher than the nation's average. The reason why mental disorders are common in Appalachia is the harsh living conditions there, the isolation of the region, the lack of security, etc. Although many factors lead to depression, it is commonly accepted that one of the most significant factors of depression is economic problems (Lorant et al. 2003). According to a 2017 report titled "*Health Disparities in Appalachia*," "the prevalence of depression...in the Appalachian Region is 16.7 percent" (Marshall et al. 117). It can be estimated that the people suffering from depression must be higher than 16.7 percent because it is widely accepted that not every person who suffers from depression accepts the fact and seeks medical help. There is sufficient evidence that many adults do not receive medical treatment for depression, although they in fact need it (Olfson et al. 2016). Therefore, one can easily infer that the percentage of the Appalachians who suffer from depression and other mental disorders is higher than known numbers. The fact that mental disorders are common in Appalachia brings slow violence to the fore. It is a type of violence that affects the locals slowly but deeply.

The conversation between Donovan Gray and Samantha reveals slow violence in Bradey. The life of Romey is revealed through the conversation between the two colleagues. The question of why Romey can act so freely finds an answer in their conversation. According to Stewart, "violence in Appalachia is best understood as a response to the larger economic, social, and political forces that shaped the history of the region" (1). As Stewart mentions, the act of violent behavior has its roots in the past. The economic situations have devastated people's psychological well-being. The fact that the harsh living conditions affect people's psychological health is also another example of slow violence. Appalachia is represented by Grisham as a place where lawlessness has become law. Samantha Kofler questions the decision to not give Romey the necessary surveillance, as he may be dangerous to the public. Donovan claims that they do their best to keep him under control, but it is impossible to keep him under surveillance all day long. However, Kofler is not convinced by Donovan. The details about Romey provide answers about Appalachia. As the sheriff is Romey's cousin, it is

not easy to get him arrested (50). Although he disturbs the social order, Romey can act freely because he is the cousin of the sheriff. Although it is apparent that Romey and the sheriff don't get along, the fact that the sheriff is his cousin protects the outcast.

The conversation unveils further questions. It turns out that Romey has a chronic mental disorder and when he stopped taking his medicines, his health deteriorated, and he started kidnapping people under the disguise of a policeman or the sheriff. That is to say, his mental problems are severe. As he confuses his personality, one can infer that he has schizophrenia. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), "schizophrenia is a chronic and severe mental disorder that affects how a person thinks, feels, and behaves. People with schizophrenia may seem like they have lost touch with reality" ("Schizophrenia"). It is understood that the Appalachian authorities are not able to control the crisis. There is a lack of health care, and Romey does not receive sufficient long-term follow-up, a reality which results in poor mental health for Romey and potential risk for the society. The amount of people who exhibit mental disorders is high in Appalachia (Keefe 1988), revealing the complicated, multi-layered effect of slow violence there. People live under harsh living conditions and this leads to poor mental and physical health and as the region is (left) impoverished, there is lack of health care and security, so the people have to suffer again on another level. The suffering caused by slow violence is a vicious circle.

Gray touches on another social problem during his conversation with Kofer. He says that "some of the cops around [t]here are more dangerous" (51). It is certainly a shocking fact that there are policemen who are worse than the psychotic Romey, who arrests and imprisons people for no reason. However, Gray's words reveal the police brutality in Appalachia. According to The Alliance for Appalachia, police brutality toward people of color is common in the region, and they state that people should unite against police brutality ("Statement of Solidarity"). In Appalachia, "human rights abuses [are] linked to inequality, police violence, and militarization" (Taylor 2012, 221). One can infer that brutality must be a typical feature of policing in Appalachia. Gordon B. McKinney's study titled "Industrialization and Violence in Appalachia in the 1890s," which was written in the year 1977, deals with the issues of aggression seen in Appalachian people and their causes. McKinney argued that violence was not a

common act before industrialization (131). After the advent of coal mining and industry, people lost their independent state and this dependency and economic depression are at the root of aggressive behavior and violence (136). This argument of McKinney's fits Nixon's term slow violence because the advent of industrialization has caused psychological problems in people and has threatened human health. It is a long-term change which took place over many years and is an example of slow violence.

The story of the lawyer, Donovan, sheds light on the tragedies the local people suffer from in Appalachia. Strip-mining has not only made them suffer from health disruptions but has also led to their economic and psychological devastation. Donovan's story proves how deadly slow violence in the region can be. While talking to Mattie, Samantha learns the details of Donovan's tragic past. Mattie states that Donovan's father is still alive; however, nobody knows where he lives. Webster inherited a vast land in Curry. The Gray family had owned the land since the 1800s. The portrayal of the land in the past demonstrates how slow violence slowly corrupted the landscape. The land of the past is portrayed as a "beautiful land" with "hills and mountains, creeks and valleys, just gorgeous and pristine" (70). However, the land has become toxic since the advent of strip-mining. The waters were so clean that people could swim in the Crooked Creek. After Webster sold Gray Mountain to the company, the devastation of the family began. The company sent bulldozers to Gray Mountain the very next day and launched its attack on the land (72). Dust covered the valleys around the mountain like fog (72). With the strength of the explosions, "the ground would shake several times a day" (72). Because he had not received the amount the company had promised him, he started drinking excessively and would sit all day with his shotgun in order not to let anyone from the company approach the land (73). His behaviors started to become strange and his psychological health deteriorated. He sued, but as the company was financially very strong, he lost. Webster tried to defend his rights in court and his lawyer successfully imposed a fine of 40,000 dollars, but the company declared bankruptcy and fled without making any payment (74). Chester explains the fraud tactic coal companies often use as "a favorite trick in the coal fields" (74). He states that "a coal company mines the coal, then goes bankrupt to avoid payments and the reclamation requirements" (74). Coal companies act unethically toward the land and the people. One such company made the lives of the Gray family miserable.

There are recurrent scenes in the novel in which the disproportional relationship between the beauty of the natural land and the ugliness of the structures is depicted. The land is the setting of “breathtaking views of dense ridges” and a beautiful hill; however, the beauty of nature is under assault from the ugly cottages and mobile homes (127). As mentioned before, strip mining began in the 1970s and the novel is set in 2008, which means the environmental catastrophes have occurred over a period of four decades. The fact that the environmental disasters took a long time makes a rapid recognition of their impact impossible. Another important factor is that Appalachia is a remote land, outside the center of media attention. These two facts—that the environmental disasters are dispersed in time and the fact that Appalachia is a remote land which lacks public attention—make the environmental violence in Appalachia slow violence.

Nixon himself states in an interview with Ashley Dawson that he aims to open paths for environmental writers to overcome the representational challenges which a writer faces while writing on climate change and environmental degradation, genuine catastrophes which unfold over decades and are often seen as being of second importance compared to instantaneous, momentous events which draw instant attention and help. Nixon states:

We are accustomed to conceiving of violence as immediate and explosive, as erupting into instant, concentrated visibility. But I wanted to revisit this assumption and consider the relative invisibility of slow violence. By that I mean a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but instead incremental, whose calamitous repercussions are postponed for years or decades or centuries. Emphasizing the temporal dispersion of slow violence can change the way we perceive and respond to a variety of social crises, like domestic abuse or post-traumatic stress, but it is particularly pertinent to the strategic challenges posed by environmental calamities. Environmentalists face a fundamental challenge: How can we devise arresting stories, images, and symbols that capture the pervasive but elusive effects of slow violence? (“Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor: An Interview with Rob Nixon”)

Nixon’s ideas in the above lines apply to the situation in Appalachia. It is difficult but necessary to draw public attention to Appalachia. While the public insists on ignoring the region because of its both culturally and geographically remote condition, environmental writers create stories which make the public comprehend how slow violence gradually but dramatically devastates nature and human health. In that sense, it is very meaningful that Grisham covered a period of 38 years while expressing the

environmental catastrophes in the region; the book overcame the representational challenges posed by the improbability of revealing slow violence.

It is through conversations between Mattie and Samantha that Grisham reveals a number of past issues between Donavan and the company. This technique of Grisham's—making the curious idealist outsider directly question Donavan, *the black box of the region*—gives information about past events. After a dam broke five years ago in Madison County, West Virginia, “a wall of coal sludge slid down a valley and covered the small town of Prentiss” (76). Although the progress of slow violence is gradual, it exacts a massive toll in the long run. In this “outburst” of slow violence, “four people were killed, virtually all the homes were destroyed” (76). The enmity between Donavan and the company dates to the law case. Donavan issued a case against the company after this incident and gathered some successful lawyers to support him. The case attracted the attention of the press and the media. After the media coverage of the event, the company started to bear animosity toward Donavan. The reason for the animosity was, according to Mattie, that “he probably said too much” and “called the coal company ‘the dirtiest corporation in America’” (76). After this comment, the company started to threaten him. It appears that the company is offended by the expression “the dirtiest corporation in America,” and they take it as an insult, which results in a series of outrages toward Donavan.

The economic isolation of Appalachia, as well as its cultural isolation, makes Appalachia a far away land which is hidden in a remote part of America. The isolated situation of Appalachia is made evident by the third person narrator through Samantha's thoughts while she is waiting for her father in Bistro Venezia, Washington. While waiting to meet her father, Samantha has plenty of time to think about Appalachia and compare it to other, developed parts of America. She overhears a conversation going on between two men drinking whiskey and discussing how the mortgage company Fannie Mae could be saved from the economic crisis (78). Another group of three men, who are apparently from the Treasury, talk about economic issues too. Samantha Kofer thinks that the Treasury is “the epicenter of the collapse” and that the three men are drinking expensive drinks probably at the “courtesy of the taxpayers” (78). Officials in charge of the economy are responsible for the collapse and do not abstain from accepting bribery

from taxpayers. On the other hand, Samantha also thinks that the Appalachian Region, from where she has just returned, is totally unaware of the economic turmoil. She does not think so in a positive manner; on the contrary, she believes that economic problems are daily events in Appalachia. Therefore, people do not even realize the economic turmoil. It occurred to Samantha that “no one in Brady had seemed even remotely aware that the world was teetering on the brink of a catastrophic depression” (78, 79). It is, according to her, perhaps because of the cultural isolation of the region; however, it was most probably because the people are accustomed to economic crises and so do not even feel it.

After her father arrives at the restaurant, Samantha has an important conversation with him about his experiences as a lawyer, which indicates that the coal companies are strong in the eye of law. Samantha wonders if her father has ever sued a coal company. Her father states that one of his “partners was once involved in some type of coal case” (82). He also adds that it was a case about “an environmental mess involving this gunk they keep in lakes” (82). The naive answer of his is significant because even Marshall Kofer, who lacks environmental consciousness, has heard of the toxic sludge which coal companies produce as a by-product. Samantha reveals that the toxic material “is called sludge, or slurry...It’s toxic waste that’s a by-product of washing coal. The companies store it behind earthen dams where it rots for years as it seeps into the ground and contaminates the drinking water” (82). As toxicity contaminates the drinking water, it is inevitable that it causes health issues. It is an example of slow violence because drinking water does not poison someone instantly; on the contrary, health problems arise gradually. It is also revealed that the people living around the coal mining sites have the highest cancer rates (82). Marshall’s reaction as an experienced lawyer is significant. He states that the companies must be sued. However, he learns from Samantha that it is not very easy to cope with coal companies because they rely on their financial and political power and are strongly supported by the law. As Grisham is also a lawyer himself by training, the statements gain more significance. Samantha explicitly states that “lawsuits are hard to win...because coal is king” and she reveals how strong the companies are both politically and financially (82).

By creating lifelike characters, Grisham successfully portrays the suffering of the rural people in Appalachia. Upon returning to Appalachia, Samantha handles her first suit in the region. The life of Lady Purvis, who is the first client of Samantha's, reflects the stereotypical images associated with Appalachia. The lifelike characters enhance the authenticity and provide in-depth knowledge. In that sense, Grisham makes slow violence in Appalachia visible. The Lady character fits the Appalachian villager cliché. Having met Lady for the first time, Mattie thinks to himself that her original name cannot be Lady because "given her rustic appearance and salty language, it was difficult to imagine her parents officially naming her Lady" (87). Lady's looks and accent are typically Appalachian, which Grisham probably portrays to give a sense of authenticity. Lady gets irritated when Mattie tells her that she cannot smoke in the office. This scene speaks to the problem of smoking addiction in the region. The more the book introduces Lady, the more her tragedy is revealed. "The family was living in a trailer, one with a mortgage, and they were behind on the payments; they were behind on everything" (87). That is to say, the family did not have proper housing as they lived in a trailer, and they faced difficulties while trying to pay the installments for the trailer. The economic depression of the region is so deep that people cannot even afford proper housing.

The economic restrictions of the region are suitable to the definition of slow violence. The economic restrictions affect the lives of people gradually as well as instantly. The instant effects, momentarily visible, include the lack of proper housing and insufficient income to make a living. As is seen in the case of Lady, economic restrictions may result in dropping out of school, which makes people even poorer in the long run. Lady's two teenage children have "dropped out of school to look for jobs that did not exist" (88). The economic stalemate forces people to drop out of school and the lack of education makes it impossible for the local youth to find better jobs in the future. This situation is a vicious circle which people cannot do away with, and the poor become poorer. The economic stalemate is probably purposeful rather than a coincidence because "racism, poverty, industrialization and modernization, economic exploitation, environmental degradation, and labor unrest led to divisions along class, religious, gender, racial, and political lines" in Appalachia (Stewart 6). That is to say, the division between the poor and the rich is purposefully established by the system. If people stay poor, they are unable to defend themselves, and thus become easy targets for the

capitalist system. This purposeful impoverishment is also another act of slow violence, which happens gradually but influences people deeply.

The situation Lady's husband Stocky ends up in is also another purposeful impoverishment. Stocky was stopped by a policeman one day because of speeding, and it turned out that his driver's license had expired only two days before the control. The fines he had to pay for speeding and the additional court fees totaled 175 dollars altogether. He was unable to pay these fees. Hopper County, where Stocky committed the offense of driving at a speed exceeding the legal limit, had an agreement with a private firm for the collection of fees. As Stocky was in financially unfavorable conditions, he was unable to pay the fee and had to pay them in installments. Lady and Stocky agreed to pay an amount no less than 50 dollars a month; however, it turned out that 35 dollars of each payment counted as a "Monthly Service Fee" (88). The firm did not accept the restructuring of the loan. After having failed to pay the installments following the second one, Stocky got in trouble again. The police came to the family's trailer, arrested Stocky, and threatened the family (88, 89). New fees were added on the loan, skyrocketing it to 550 dollars in total. Although Stocky tried to explain he was unable to pay the fees because of financial problems and unemployment, the authorities turned a deaf ear. While in prison, the monthly payment rose to 45 dollars without a valid reason (89). When all these events are considered, it is clearly understood that the system does not want the poor people to be disentangled from their purposeful impoverishment.

The vicious circle of smoking addiction related to economic stress and economic problems related to spending too much on cigarettes is vividly represented in *Gray Mountain*. Smoking is a common habit and a health problem in Appalachia. After the stalemate Lady ends in, she finds herself smoking two packets of cigarettes a day. After the loans run up, the psychological turmoil leads Lady and Stocky to smoking addiction. After the legal advice meeting, Lady asks for permission to smoke with "her hands...trembling" (89). She also states that she must give up smoking. She says that she has tried to give up but was not successful because smoking is the only thing that soothes her (89). This situation alone is enough to call it slow violence. Lady's economic situation collapses and, as a result of that, Lady's addiction increases. She

pays 8 dollars a day for two packets of cigarettes. In the long run, her economic situation, her psychology, and her health deteriorate. Samantha rightly comments that they could save Stocky from prison instead of spending so much money on cigarettes. However, Mattie knows Samantha's culture and lifestyle and states that "they don't think that way. Smoking is an addiction. Something they can't simply walk away from" (90).

Preventing people from paying their debts and entrapping them in a cycle of poverty is a method of slow violence which authorities in Appalachia frequently use. The system is based on not enabling people to clear their debts rather than giving them the opportunity to pay them. The fact that Stocky exceeded the speed limit to some extent initially caused a loan, then imprisonment, and finally an increase in the loan. In fact, as Mattie mentions, imprisoning a citizen due to nonpayment infringes "the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment" (90). It is also obligatory to prove that the debtors willfully refuse to pay the loan although they in fact do have enough money. Mattie explains:

It is happening everywhere. JRA hustles the misdemeanor courts in a dozen southern states. On the average, local governments collect about 30 percent of their fine monies. JRA rolls in and promises 70 percent, at no taxpayers' expense. They claim it's all funded by the folks like Stocky who get sucked into the scam. Every city and county needs money, so they sign up with JRA and the courts hand over the cases. The victims are placed on probation and when they can't pay, they get thrown in jail. (90)

Once again, Grisham as a lawyer by training, reveals the corrupt sides of the law. It is clearly seen in the quotation above that the law drives poor people to despair. The aim is apparently not to establish a fair system. On the contrary, the legal and economic systems purposefully aim to widen the gap between the rich and the poor.

Samantha, a foreigner in the region, is surprised to see that the law entraps people in Appalachia. As Samantha represents the outsider looking in the region, her thoughts are valuable in order to understand the differences between Appalachia and other regions. She is shocked by what she has heard and believes that it "can't be legal" (91). Furthermore, she learns that Stocky can lose his "food stamps, housing assistance" and his "driver's license" (91). When compared to the offense he has committed, the fine Stocky receives is simply too harsh. This makes one think that the system is trying to find an excuse to make local Appalachians poorer. In fact, it has been widely accepted

that the poverty prevalent in Appalachia is an outcome of its environmental and cultural remoteness. The general view is that “Appalachia’s traditional values, insulated by geographic and cultural isolation, were barriers that explained the “backward” economy found in the mountains and sustained by a “culture of poverty” (Lewis 38). It is not correct to believe that Appalachia’s poverty is inevitable for, as Lewis mentions, “when viewed from the perspective of the preindustrial era, Appalachia was not much different from other regions of nineteenth-century rural America” (38). The poverty of Appalachia started after the industrial era. Coal mining is the most significant economic activity; however, it impoverished the region instead of enriching it. Therefore, poverty in Appalachia is not the fate of the region; on the contrary, as can be seen in Stocky’s case, it is a systematic and purposeful strategy the authorities apply in order to incapacitate the rural people so that they will not be able to defend their rights.

The control mechanism of the coal mines is also questionable, and this fact is also revealed by Samantha’s sensible questions. While Mattie and Samantha were travelling in their car, a huge, dirty truck passes by them creating clouds of dust. Samantha asks Mattie whether there are no controls at all. The answer is enlightening: Mattie says that there are regular controls, but the coal companies know when the controls are operated and they act “by the book”; however, when the inspectors leave, everything relapses; they continue contaminating the land at full speed (128). They do not blast the mountains when the safety inspectors are on the scene. At this point, it is not difficult to understand that the inspectors do not perform a meticulous investigation. Although the companies do not normally perform blasting activities when the inspectors arrive, they are supposed to investigate the entire area to determine whether a blasting has been done beforehand. The inspectors carry out their investigations rather perfunctorily.

The characters’ exploration of mountaintop removal in situ is, just as it was in *Strange as this Weather Has Been*, a method the writer uses to reveal the havoc. In doing so, Grisham creates a visual image—which he successfully does throughout the novel—and reveals with what vulgar barbarism the land is destroyed. Grisham voices the suffering of the land, like every environmental writer does. From where Mattie and Samantha were standing, it was possible to see three different strip-mining coal mines. It is a horrendous decimation of the land because, with the unaided eye, one could see three

strip mining sites close to one another. Cat Mountain Mine is close to Brady and the Loose Creek Mine and the Little Utah Mine are both in Kentucky (128, 129). The mountains which were originally three thousand feet high have shrunk, just as the mountains in *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. The expressions the narrator uses reflect the very real war against nature that is being waged. The mountains “were scalped of all greenery and reduced to rock and dirt” (129). The narrator likens the mountains to a body and the mutilation to amputation, revealing that the mountains’ “tops were gone, and they stood like missing fingers, the nubs on a mangled hand” (129). The discrepancy between the spoiled and unspoiled land is wide. The natural, unspoiled land is splendid, while the blasted ridges are an “eyesore” for the viewer (129). The company is like a barbaric looter vandalizing the land. They have only one target, which is coal, and they demolish whatever is in their way to this ashen end. They may target “landowners, local residents, regulators, politicians, and especially activists and environmentalists” (145).

The legality of mountaintop removal is questioned in *Gray Mountain*. Once again, Samantha’s insightful questions lead to revelatory discussions. After all the dramatic scenes the character experiences on the mountains, she states that this implementation cannot be legal (129). Mattie reveals that the implementation is “technically legal” but the companies exceed the legal limits. The corruption of the law is once again revealed when Mattie adds that they are still fighting for the prohibition of strip-mining and they keep suing the company; however, although they win cases in the local court, the appeal reverses the decision. The structure of the Fourth Circuit, which is the upper court in charge of the cases coming from the region, “is loaded with Republican appointees” (129). This issue gains more importance these days because when the book was published, Barack Obama was the U.S. president, but on 9 November 2016, Donald Trump was elected president. The election of Trump inevitably empowered Republican local authorities in need of weak environmental policies.¹⁴

¹⁴ Donald Trump supports coal companies and shapes his environmental policies according to the benefit of the coal companies. President Trump announced that he withdraws the United States from the Paris Agreement. (see <https://climateanalytics.org/briefings/fact-check-trumps-paris-agreement-withdrawal-announcement/>). France’s President Emanuel Macron reacted to President Trump’s decision saying, “Don’t

Eco-terrorism, which is a way of resistance against giant companies creating havoc on the environment, finds echo in *Gray Mountain*. Eco-terrorism, however controversial it may be, is a very significant action against those who pollute the environment. The act was inspired by Edward Abbey's book *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975), which tells the story of a group of friends who target heavy equipment used to damage the environment. They cause the breakdown of the machines in order to save the environment. The book has become so popular among environmentalists that it pioneered the founding of the Earth First! group, whose symbol became the monkey wrench. The FBI defines eco-terrorism as "the use or threatened use of violence of a criminal nature against innocent victims or property by an environmentally-oriented, subnational group for environmental-political reasons, or aimed at an audience beyond the target, often of a symbolic nature" (FBI "The threat of Eco-terrorism"). Ecoterrorism is frequently used by such famous activist organizations as the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), and Earth First!, the eco-terrorist group which *Gray Mountain* refers to uses "monkey-wrenching" techniques which make it impossible for the heavy equipment to operate. In doing so, the group prevents the companies from giving further damage to the environment; secondly, the group seeks revenge on the companies by inflicting on them pecuniary damage. The eco-terrorist group waits until the scene is deserted, and they fire from the hills. They damaged the huge wheels of the Caterpillar coal-mining truck, each of which cost \$18,000 (138). The eco-terrorists gave the company a message by breaking into the company warehouse, stealing ammunition from the warehouse and using the company's own explosives in the sabotage. At the end of the eco-terrorist attack, the group also exploded the warehouse building. The total damage "exceeded \$5 million" (139, 140).

It is very meaningful that Grisham directly uses the expression "the violence was slow" (148), pairing the words slow and violence in the same sentence. While describing the slow operation which has been carried out in the Enid Mountain for two years, and

be mistaken on climate; there is no plan B because there is no planet B," and Hillary Clinton stated that the decision is "a historic mistake," and that "the world is moving forward together on climate change." (see <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/paris-climate-agreement-trump-us/>)

which has caused a reduction of 800 feet in the mountain's height, Grisham says that the violence was slow. It is also very meaningful that Grisham refers to the violence as the "ongoing rape of the land" (148). The association of the non-human body with the human body and calling the violation of environmental justice rape, mutilation, and an amputation is a timely method used by both Pancake and Grisham. While the word rape suggests an unwanted violation of the human body, it can also stand for an unwanted violation of the non-human body, as it does here in this context. Also, the word assault is very significant because it expresses the violation which happens regularly.

The exploration of the mountaintop removal area by Samantha and Donavan reveals the extent to which the coal companies violate environmental regulations. As was also mentioned in *Strange as This Weather Has Been* as well, mountaintop removal areas are restricted zones and are safeguarded so that people cannot enter. This is a purposeful act on the part of the coal companies because they want to hide their violations of law. The coal companies dissemble their wrongdoings and camouflage them during the intervals when the inspectors are supposed to arrive. On that level, it is crucial that Donavan tells Samantha that "since the inspectors are not watching, it's safe to assume Strayhorn will break a few rules when they start blasting" before they videotape the coal mine, because it reveals the mentality of the coal mining companies (152, 153). The coal companies arguably violate the rules, which are already very loose, they pretend to ostensibly obey the rules, and the companies "put their engineers on the stand and [...] lie about how closely they follow all regulations" (152, 153). The aim of the exploration is to gather evidence to be prove in court that the company is lying. The biggest violation they found was that the company continually uses an illegal method by filling "each hole with a concoction known as ANFO—an acronym for a combination of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil" (153). They fill the holes with fuel oil and explode them with ammonium nitrate.

Since Samantha and Donavan investigate the area, they relize how much coal companies violate rules. The fact that coal companies use forbidden explosives is a violation of the rule; however, the violation escapes public attention because it is hidden from the public. Just as Jimmy Make and Bant investigate the land and realize the

reason behind environmental catastrophes, John Grisham carries out the same narrative strategy and reveals the environmental hazards through field investigations.

Samantha watched through binoculars as men with shovels began backfilling the blast holes. A wire ran from the top of each one and two men were busy gathering them into a bundle. Sacks of ammonium nitrate were dropped into the blast holes, which were topped off with gallons of diesel fuel. The work was slow; 4:00 p.m. came and went...The grid was cleared as the crews and trucks disappeared. (153)

The coal companies stay people away from their sites because they do not want people to see the devastation they cause. Also, they try to hide the devastation they cause by filling the blast holes they create.

Gray Mountain criticizes the reclamation areas built on the strip-mining sites after all the coal is extracted. They build apartments, shopping malls, golf courses and even prisons on the reclamation areas. Grisham reveals the shortcomings of reclamation activities in Appalachia, displaying them as insufficient and unplanned. Although the reclamation efforts exist, the efforts to reclaim the soil are far from enough. "Surface coal mining in Appalachia has caused extensive replacement of forest with non-forested land cover, much of which is unmanaged and unproductive" (Zipper et al., "Restoring Forests" 751). As presented in the golf area scene, the reclamation process has "created conditions poorly suited for reforestation" (751). However, what Appalachian Mountains urgently need is Superfund areas. Reclamation is not only useless, but also dangerous because it means covering the toxic land without cleaning up the contaminated area.¹⁵

¹⁵ According to Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC), the biodiversity of Appalachia is so rich that it cannot be reclaimed. Ovec raises the crucial question about reclamation: "How can you reclaim the Central Appalachian's incredibly biodiverse mixed mesophytic forests?" to point out the impossibility of reclamation ("So Called 'Reclamation' Galleries"). For further information, please see <https://ohvec.org/gallery/mountaintop-removal/reclamation/>



Fig. 7. A reclamation area in Appalachia. This photograph reveals how useless reclamation activities are. Courtesy of the photographer, Vivian Stockman from the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition.

As the dissertation has been arguing, the fact that slow violence is slow does not mean that its consequences are not massive. It is very important to spot the massive impact, which is dispersed across time, which *Gray Mountain* showcases. At one point, Donovan says that Appalachia has “lost about six hundred mountains in thirty years to strip-mining” (163). Since the violence was dispersed across time, the destruction has not taken place instantaneously. However, the impact has been more devastating than that of an atom bomb. It is arguably impossible that an atom bomb can destroy six hundred mountains. Therefore, the notion of violence needs questioning.

Samantha and Donovan’s investigation is very informative and reveals the coal companies’ secrets. Donovan points out the mining spots during the investigation. Once they reach the town of Rockville, Donovan makes a drastic statement. He states that the area is known as “the cancer cluster” as it has the highest cancer rate in North America, “almost twenty times the national average” (164). The dramatic increase in cancer morbidity did not take place overnight; that is why the situation is called a slow violence. The reason why the cancer rate is so high is explained clearly by him. The

history of slow violence in that place dates to thirty years ago. Thirty years ago, a company named Starke Energy came to the region and unearthed all the coal with strip mining. They created a slurry pond near the mountain in order to fill it with sludge. They dumped all their wastes in the lake and even built dams to enlarge the lake (165). The toxic sludge contaminated the soil and the water, and that is the reason for the increase in cancer rates.

Another very important factor is that the coal companies are multinational companies. Many of them are owned by super rich businessmen from all over the world. The multinational companies are owned by “Russians, Ukrainians, Chinese, Indians, Canadians” (165). The fact that the companies are owned by tycoons who have no connection to the land, or the people makes Appalachia more vulnerable. It would not be an overstatement to liken Appalachia to the prey of the multinational companies’ predator. Since the owners of the coal companies are not from the region, they pollute the land and afterwards, usually just leave it. Appalachia is continually under attack; the companies are a threat to both the land and the people.

There is another potential client named Mr. McKeever, whose story is a summary of slow violence in Appalachia. Mr. McKeever has lost six of his family members to cancer. The rate is clearly excessive, and all the family members he has lost share a very close kinship with him, which means he has lost almost his whole family. Mr. McKeever has “lost his wife, one son, one daughter, one brother, and two cousins to cancer” (166). McKeever “was a rugged old cuss who looked much older than sixty, with few teeth and thick wrinkles made permanent by a hard life and a harsh scowl that never left his face” (167). The fact that he looked much older than sixty is indicative of his suffering. Vic, who supports Donovan in his cases, has had the water from McKeever’s well analyzed. The results were shocking and reveal the extent to which the companies put people’s lives in danger. The test results show that “the water was polluted with VOCs- volatile organic compounds- poisons such as vinyl chloride, trichloroethylene, mercury, lead and a dozen others” (167). Let alone to drink, the water was even unsafe to even touch. McKeever states that they had already stopped drinking from the well some fifteen years ago but they “continued to use the water for bathing

and household cleaning” (167). The exposure to toxic material slowly killed the people in his family, which is nothing but slow violence.

It is seen that the cancer mortality rate has risen recently. Donovan tries to convince the people who have lost some of their family members to cancer in the last ten years to sue Krull Mining (168). As strip mining started in the region thirty years ago, slow violence, which is the accumulation of toxicity in the human body and its fatal consequences in this case, has taken twenty years to surface. As Nixon recurrently does in his book, if a comparison between a war and slow violence is made, it can be easily inferred that McKeever would probably not have lost six members of his family in an actual war. Therefore, that slow violence is gradual and out of sight does not mean that its consequences are not massive.

Grisham reveals the fact that local people are afraid to sue Krull Mining and other powerful companies. Although McKeever, for example, has lost six of his family members, he is still reluctant to sue Krull Mining. Local people seem very hopeless because they have lost faith in justice. The people affected by slow violence in Appalachia are also anxious about their security because Krull Mining is a very powerful company and a “vicious litigator” (170). Throughout the book, Grisham deals with the hopelessness of the locals and their acceptance of their own weakness. However, Grisham encourages the environmentalism of the poor by creating strong-willed characters like Samantha and Donovan.

Dolly Swaney is another local person affected by slow violence. Donovan tries to convince her to file a lawsuit against the coal mining company. When Samantha asks whether Swaney is a new client, it is understood that she is not a client yet, but Donovan tries to convince her (169). On this level, people’s hesitation is apparent when it comes to suing Krull Mining and this can be read as a foreshadowing of what is soon to happen. The reluctance of the local is understandable; however, it is inarguable that a victory is out of question without fighting. Therefore, it can be inferred that Grisham continually encourages the environmentalism of the poor and simultaneously warns people that the struggle is a hard but honorable one.

Donavan is trying to gather plaintiffs to sue Krull Mining because he and his team want to carry the issue to the federal court. The issue is of such significance, and their mistrust of the local court so unshakeable, that they want the lawsuit to take place in federal court. Donovan and his team “think they can prove that they dumped a lot of wastewater in their pond up there, and that they’ve known for years that it was leaking into the groundwater” (168). That is to say, the contamination of the soil and the drinking water must have been a purposeful act, which shows that the company thinks about its own profit at the cost of people’s lives. Donovan has not yet opened the case although he has been working on it for three years and already has thirty clients (170). It might sound strange at first glance that thirty attestors are not enough to justify the prosecutors; however, “this is a huge case” as Donovan says and there have been “dozens of deaths” caused by “a defendant with enormously deep pockets,” who does not abstain from using its power and money to win the case (170). It has been a challenge for Donovan even just “to get it before a jury” for which he had to spend “a hundred thousand” dollars (170). Therefore, it is very understandable why local people are reluctant to sue the company because they are extremely powerful, and it cost Donovan a hundred thousand dollars just to be taken seriously. The power of the company is too grand for the local people to struggle against and they lack the financial power to defend themselves in the court. All these realities prove that powerful companies purposefully choose the poorest regions of a country, areas populated by poor people who are unable to defend themselves, and it is no coincidence that these places are far away backward lands which do not attract the attention of the media and are inhabited by poor (in both meanings of the word) people. The reason why Donovan needed three years is that he needed “time to put together a legal team that can fight the army of lawyers and experts Krull Mining will throw at its defense.” Some of the lawyers indeed quit because they were afraid of the trouble Krull Mining would cause (170). The company spreads terror in the region – a part of their slow violence policies – because, as Nixon mentions in his book, companies suppress people for the continuation of their activities (145, 161, 165).

Grisham draws a vivid verbal picture throughout the novel. He portrays the topography of Appalachia through the terrain study carried out by Samantha, Vic, and Donovan. They carry out the research travelling on a plane named The Skyhawk. The aircraft

travel functions as a verbal visualization of the mountains. Donovan shows Samantha Gray Mountain, a place which is very special for him. The dramatic change of Gray Mountain symbolizes the environmental degradation which has taken place over the course of time. The state of Gray Mountain before and after strip mining reveals the extent of environmental catastrophes. The Gray Mountain before the advent of the coal miners is referred to as “gorgeous” and “pristine” (70) while the landscape after strip mining is a waste land. The land is expressed as “a desolate landscape” full of big holes from where the coal was extracted (176). Donovan states that “the only thing worse than a reclaimed strip mine is one that’s been abandoned (177). As mentioned before, reclamation is not only useless but also dangerous because the contaminated soil must be cleaned. Building reclamation areas causes people to be exposed to toxicity. In addition, abandoning a mine is even more dangerous because toxicity can easily contaminate the soil, the air, and the water. Therefore, there is only one solution to remove the traces of toxicity, which is to establish Superfund areas on the land.

Strip mining has devastated both human and non-human life in Appalachia. Donovan states that “the land is ruined” and “the streams disappeared under the valley fill; all the fish are gone. The water is poison. The wildlife ran off to a safer place” (177). That is to say, the landscape has changed because of mountaintop removal, rivers were filled with debris, the fish population was set to zero after the water lost its property of being habitable, and water has *literally* turned into poison. Thus, slow violence has wreaked havoc simultaneously on every member of the biotic community, inorganic materials, and human beings.

Apart from the general devastation of the land suffering under slow violence, people have suffered from individual losses. Donovan lost his mother in a flood arguably caused by mountaintop removal. After the flood took place, Donovan’s mother’s dead body was found somewhere near the rocks (177). Because the trauma is too tragic for Donovan to face, he does not give the details of the death scene for a while. He is content saying his mother was found dead and they put a cross in the place where she died. However, it is later revealed that it was a suicide (213). The slow violence Donovan’s mother faces causes her to commit suicide. The socioeconomic and cultural alterations, which have taken place not instantaneously but gradually, led his mother to

take her own life. Although these changes, which are in fact “alterations,” are dramatic, they have progressed so slowly that they escaped attention in the first place. However, as Nixon argues throughout his book, slow violence can be as fatal as, or even more fatal than structural violence. The ambiguity of slow violence, which encourages the enemies of the environment, stems from its indirect relation to death. That is why the “representational challenges” of slow violence must be overcome, which Grisham successfully does throughout the novel. It is very clear that Donovan’s mother was unable to cope with the losses caused by slow violence, which are seen in this case as poverty and loss of housing. She apparently felt too weak to struggle and decided to put an end to her life. Therefore, the term violence must be questioned: is slow violence a type of violence which vicariously kills people or is it a direct murder?

The corruption of the legal system in Appalachia is responsible for the infringements of human rights. The system apparently protects the rich. Every time Grisham introduces another client, another scandal comes to light. Pamela Booker is just another client who consults Mountain Legal Aid Clinic. She hopes to get legal aid because she has lost her job and money due to debt (193). She and her children live in terrible conditions. After she received a bill for a credit card debt, she had not been informed for years, and the creditor firm issued a garnishment. Her boss disliked dealing with garnishments and after Pamela argued with her boss, he fired her (193). She also lost her home because her landlord showed her no mercy. Consequently, she lost her job and her home. After having tried to live with her cousin and then her friend, she understood that she was not wanted and decided to live in her old car. In order to feed her children, she had to shoplift sometimes (193, 194). It is very meaningful that the case of Pamela Booker is given right after Thomas Wilcox, who also had lost his job and home. It can be inferred that the system purposefully deprives people of their jobs and home in order to turn them into easy prey.

Samantha decides to gather information about Booker’s former job and convinces the owner of the firm to have a meeting. Samantha’s investigations and Booker’s preliminary information reveal the terrible working conditions of the firm. It can be inferred from multiple examples that the system in Appalachia is based on exploitation of both human labor and exploitation of sources. The firm offered no “additional

benefits” to its workers, the workers were given only “one week of unpaid vacation and three sick days, also without pay” and health insurance was out of the question (215, 216). Thanks to Samantha’s efforts, Mr. Simmons agrees to hire Booker again (217). Mr. Simmons demands that Samantha get the “garnishment order revoked” and Samantha agrees to do it because the garnishment order Top Solutions ordered was illegal (217). Mr. Simmons is touched when he hears that Booker and her children have become homeless after she was fired from her job and adds that he did not have any information about it (216). This scene shows that dishonest firms can cause a devastation in the lives of poor people to the extent of remaining unemployed and homeless; therefore, the system must protect the rights of the poor and make regulations in the judicial system regarding the rights of the disadvantaged citizens. Booker could not have regained her job without a lawyer and could not have defended herself against the collecting agent Top Solutions. This case also proves that poor people can benefit highly from legal aid, and that such opportunities must be made more widely available.

Grisham touches the sore spot of Appalachia, which is black lung disease, by introducing Buddy Ryzer. Buddy is a forty-year-old young man working for Lonerock Mining, the third biggest mining company in the United States of America, who contracted black lung disease because of inhaling coal dust during his twelve-hour shifts (219). Buddy Ryzer states that he contracted the disease in 1996 and was not able to sue the company until 1999, when the “federal black lung law” passed (220). Although the black lung law gave workers the opportunity in theory to sue the coal companies, the infringement of workers’ rights continued in practice. Although “the government ordered Lonerock to begin paying him monthly benefits of \$939,” the company filed and appeal and “refused to begin payments” (220). Mattie, as an experienced lawyer, states that the companies appeal and start embarrassing the complainants with the lawyers of Casper Slate, whom she calls “a gang of thugs who wear expensive suits and hide behind the facade of a law firm” (221). The expressions Mattie uses to describe Casper Slate are striking. She goes on to reveal the corruption of law in Appalachia, which this dissertation renders as a tactic of those who apply slow violence, and the dirty business of the law firms as follows:

Wherever you find a coal company, you'll find Casper Slate doing its dirty work. They defend companies who dump chemicals in rivers, pollute the oceans, hide toxic waste, violate clean air standards, discriminate against employees, rig government bids, you name the sleazy or illegal behavior and Casper Slate is there to defend it. Their specialty, though, is mining law. The firm was built here in the coal fields a hundred years ago, and almost every major operator has it on retainer. Their methods are ruthless and unethical. (221)

Mattie's statements reveal how coal companies ruin the environment in Appalachia and threaten human and environmental health. The system of slow violence is multi-layered, slow violence continues in the form of toxic waste, air pollution, and water pollution, all of which require specific attention and measurements to ascertain; simultaneously, dishonest firms cunningly hide slow violence. Therefore, the firms support and strengthen the invisibility of slow violence. The companies also break the resistance of their opponents by applying systematical mobbing on them by defending their firms with an army of very experienced, dishonest lawyers and minimizing the chances of the opponents to win the case. As Nixon mentions in his book, some research is supported by companies whose results bear favorable results for the companies (Nixon 39). The same is valid in the case of Buddy Ryzer. The entrapment of the Ryzer family in the legal system stems from the dishonest ties of the company with the legal and medical authorities. The lawyers of Casper Slate are experts who know "how to manipulate the federal black lung system" and Buddy was examined by the doctors "whose research was being funded by the coal industry" (221). Since the research is sponsored by the coal industry, it is inevitable that the research findings will be manipulated to be in favour of the industry. It is also revealed that the percentage of coal miners who can obtain black lung disease benefits is only five percent, a result of manipulation by the lawyers and the dishonest reports of the doctors who benefit from coal companies (221). These facts translate to poor health and a low percentage of health benefits. Coal companies pay no attention to public health, and when it comes to compensate for their losses, the government does not provide people with health benefits. Given these facts, it is apparent that environmental justice is out of the question in Appalachia and new regulations in law are urgently required to stop slow violence.

3.2.3. The Major Environmental Illness: Black Lung Disease in *Gray Mountain*

The major environmental illness is black lung disease in *Gray Mountain*. Black lung disease is an environmental and occupational disease and is arguably caused by coal toxicity. Black lung disease is associated with slow violence since “the lung itself can appear black due to the slow buildup of coal dust particles over the years” (Arnold 15). Carrie Arnold’s expression “slow buildup” explains black lung disease’s relation to slow violence. Contraction of black lung disease is dispersed in time and does not occur instantly. As Davies states, “time is an important factor that determines the level of bodily damage that a toxic substance can enact” (1538). Therefore, toxicity levels are determined by time, which makes black lung disease an issue of slow violence. Davies interprets slow violence as a type of environmental justice which affects the disempowered communities much more than the wealthy societies (1540-1541). Davies states that “although slow violence entails a postponement of harm, it is often also predicated by an entrenchment of long-standing social inequalities, rendering some groups more vulnerable to pollution than others” (1540-1541). Davis’s interpretation of slow violence shows that social inequalities are as significant as the gradual nature of slow violence. This idea, with which this dissertation agrees, is where environmental justice and slow violence meet. Slow violence is gradual and includes inequality. Black lung disease fits Davis’s interpretation of slow violence, as it requires long-term exposure to coal particles and predominantly disempowered coal workers contract it.

As in many other examples, it is Samantha’s curiosity which unveils the issue of black lung disease. Out of curiosity, Samantha visits the website of The Mountain Legal Aid Clinic. In her internet search, she gathers information about the working field of the clinic. She discovers that the “mission” of The Mountain Legal Aid Clinic was to “provide free legal services for low-income clients in southwest Virginia” (34). The clinic’s main concern was to provide legal aid for coal mine workers who suffer from black lung disease. At this point, Grisham draws attention to the disease, which is arguably an occupational disease threatening the lives of coal miners, and, as a lawyer by training, he starts drawing the portrayal of his ideal lawyer image. As seen throughout the novel, Samantha is represented as the idealist, honest lawyer, who fights for, as Nixon calls it, “the environmentalism of the poor.” Grisham’s far-sightedness

about black lung disease is worthy of appreciation. According to a *New York Times* article by Nadja Popovich, which reveals the shocking reality of black lung disease, “federal investigators ... identified the largest cluster of advanced black lung cases ever officially recorded” (“Black Lung Disease Comes Storming Back in Coal Country”). As Popovich reports, “more than 400 coal miners frequenting three clinics in southwestern Virginia between 2013 and 2017 were found to have complicated black lung disease, an extreme form characterized by dense masses of scar tissue in the lung” (Popovich, “Black Lung”). Therefore, the connection between coal mining and black lung disease is undeniable. Another important fact is that Popovich’s article was published on 22 February 2018 and the publication date of *Gray Mountain* is 2014. Therefore, the growing risk of black lung disease was correctly estimated by Grisham. The suffering of the coal miners is a tragedy in Appalachia, and Grisham highlights the suffering of the working class in *Gray Mountain*. Grisham is conscious of workers' rights, and he handles the subject throughout the novel in a critical manner.

Rakes provides a precise definition of the daily life of a coal miner. “In many ways, the miner's working life represented something akin to a soldier about to enter combat. Although it served as combat with Mother Nature rather than opposing human armies, the potential of death and injury remained high for many decades” (Rakes 2008, 2). The metaphor of combat is significant because of the militaristic implication. The act of coal mining is akin to waging war against nature. The worst thing about this battle is that whatever the consequences may be, both sides lose the battle. Nature is destroyed in any case. The coal miner is either directly injured, killed by accident, or suffers from the inevitable destruction of nature. This state of being trapped is evident throughout the novel.

Recent research carried out by Kara Holsopple, published on the website of The Allegheny Front on February 16, 2018, found that “despite regulations meant to protect workers from toxic coal dust, a whole new generation of miners is being diagnosed with the most severe form of black lung disease” (“A Surge of Black Lung Disease in Appalachia”). The fact that regulations are not enough to prevent the spread of black lung disease can have multiple explanations. It may be either that the preventions are regulated in conformity with the criteria of the coal mining companies or that the coal

companies do not pay the necessary attention to the regulations. In both cases, coal companies are responsible for the spread of the disease. According to The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), “coal workers’ pneumoconiosis, also known as ‘black lung disease,’ can be severe, disabling, and even deadly. Since inhalation of coal mine dust is the sole cause, it is also entirely preventable” (“Severe Black Lung Disease Found in Many Former Coal Miners”). This fact shows that coal companies threaten the lives of coal miners despite the preventable nature of the disease.

The violence coal companies inflict on coal miners is slow violence and has broad repercussions in Grisham's work, which plays a role in the perception of slow violence becoming one of the defining factors to reveal the suffering that emerges out of prolonged environmental catastrophe. The publication of *Slow Violence* has opened up a new path for environmental literature, the most effective examples of which are able to convey that the wrongdoings of coal companies are acts of slow violence because they do not happen instantaneously. They are gradual and require a long time to surface. However, the fatal consequences of slow violence, as seen in the rise of black lung disease in Appalachia, are higher than structural violence.

Grisham uses the story of Mattie Wyatt to further reveal this tragedy. Samantha finds Mattie’s seminar notes and discovers the reason why she is obsessed with black lung disease. In fact, her interest in black lung disease and her eagerness to help coal miners ailing from the disease stems from the tragedy she faced in her family. Wyatt has taken notes on black lung disease. She says that black lung disease is an occupational disease seen in coal miners, which in almost every case is fatal. Toxic coal dust cannot be taken out from the lungs once it is inhaled and it causes inflammation in the lungs. The number of miners who contract black lung disease every year is one thousand five hundred. As the disease gradually blocks the airways, it causes a painful death. The disease itself fits the description of slow violence because it happens slowly and gradually but bears drastic results. Although “Congress passed the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act” in 1969 in the hope of eradicating the disease, further investigations in 1995 showed an increase in the number of instances of black lung disease (187,188). There can be only one explanation for this uptick: coal miners had to

work longer than the federal law allowed. Miners had to work longer shifts than allowed and were thus exposed to denser toxicity than the regulations foresaw (187-191). The coal miners in the region obey the rules only when investigators are supposed to arrive. The companies know the intervals when the investigators come, and they regulate the working conditions according to the law. However, when the investigators leave, they return to making their workers work very long hours under terrible conditions. Therefore, it is not a surprise that the coal companies infringed the law and caused black lung disease in their workers.

The system entraps coal miners and indirectly forces them into submission such that they cannot defend their rights. The system does not allow the coal miners to hire lawyers, leaving them no choice but to defend themselves in the court (189). The system seems to rely on the lack of education of the coal miners and the so-called Appalachian stereotypes. Saying that coal miners must defend themselves in court on their own is not different from saying “coal miners do not have the right to sue coal companies.” The mentality is the same and the result of the case can easily be foreseen. It is nonsensical to expect an uneducated coal miner to defend himself against the coal companies’ armies of lawyers. Winning the case would be nothing but a miracle. As mentioned in the “Introduction” of the dissertation, Rob Nixon states that authorities use strategies to suppress the people affected by slow violence (Nixon 163). The oppression by the coal companies of the coal miners reminds us of these strategies. It cannot be a coincidence that the system does not allow coal miners to have a lawyer. The authorities of the system cannot be unaware of the fact that Appalachian men are (purposefully left) uneducated. They also cannot be unaware that Appalachian coal miners do not have the background to express themselves successfully in court, especially against seasoned lawyers. It is also very clearly stated that “the companies fight the claims with experienced attorneys who skillfully manipulate the system” and “for a miner who prevails, his process usually takes about five years” (189). Therefore, the system leaves the miners alone in court, does not let them hire a lawyer, makes them fight against very experienced attorneys who manipulate the system, and the system threatens and applies mobbing on the miners so that they will not sue the companies. These are the tactics of slow violence. Given that a miner ailing with black lung disease must defend himself in

court for five years under stress against giant firms and lawyers, it means nothing but to kill them slowly.

After giving details about the black lung disease and how coal companies devastate the lives of coal miners, Thomas Wilcox, a victim of slow violence, is introduced. The following paragraph that Grisham writes about this character reveals all the dirty business of the coal company and how Wilcox has suffered under slow violence:

For Thomas Wilcox, the ordeal lasted twelve years. He was born near Brady, Virginia, in 1925, fought in the war, was wounded twice, decorated, and upon his return home he got married and went to work in the mines. He was a proud miner, a staunch union man, a loyal Democrat, a fine husband and father. In 1974, he was diagnosed with black lung disease and filed a claim. He had been sick for several years and was almost too weak to work. His chest X-ray clearly showed CWP. He had worked underground for 28 years and had never smoked. His claim was initially approved, but the award was appealed by the coal company. In 1976, at the age of 51, Thomas had no choice but to retire. He continued to deteriorate, and he was soon on oxygen around the clock. With no income, his family scrambled to support themselves and cover his medical expenses. He and his wife were forced to sell the family home and live with an older daughter. (189)

There are several conclusions to draw from this paragraph. First, the Appalachian stereotype does not apply to every Appalachian person. As this dissertation has mentioned at several points, although the stereotypes are not totally flawed, the reason why the system relies on the stereotypes is clear: they want an ignorant and weak opponent whom they can easily defeat; that is why they put forward the stereotypes. Thomas Wilcox, unlike the stereotypical images portrayed by the claims of the system, was not indifferent to his family; on the contrary, he was a responsible family man who cares deeply for his family. As he was a union man, which is the syndicate of coal miners, he was involved in a proletarian class struggle. He was not a passive man who sits in front of the TV the whole day; hence, he was not the type of person whom both Pancake and Grisham criticize in their novels. Mr. Wilcox is an honorable figure who fought for environmental justice in a heroic way. He was apparently an intellectual in comparison to his limited access to education and must have been a self-educated man. Not every Appalachian man fits the stereotype and those who do not conform are the people whom Appalachia needs to establish environmental justice. Therefore, it will be right to say that there is praise for Mr. Wilcox and other brave people like him who are not afraid to defend their rights in *Gray Mountain*. Secondly, although there was clear

evidence, the coal company denied committing slow violence, and the system supported their claim. In fact, there was not a single doubt that the black lung disease was caused by the poor working conditions of the coal mine. As mentioned before, the 1969 Act put it clearly that the working hours and conditions of the coal miners were determined by law and it is simply not probable for the coal miners to have caught black lung disease unless a big infringement of the law had taken place. The company was not only responsible for Wilcox's illness but also, they were guilty of infringing Federal Law. Nonetheless, the system supported the company instead of defending Wilcox's rights. Thirdly, as this dissertation has argued so far, slow violence has been fatal. The type of slow violence Wilcox faced deprived him of his health, his work, his salary, his home, and, consequently, his life. This is why this dissertation argues that slow violence is more destructive than structural violence, because if Wilcox had died in the first place, he would not have suffered so much. He dies in the end, and the suffering he goes through makes slow violence more destructive than structural violence. He did not suffer alone; his family experienced and shared every second of Wilcox's suffering.

The final days of Wilcox's life reveal how harsh the suffering of slow violence can be. In his last days, he lost so much weight that he looked like a skeleton. He was bound to his wheelchair and could not stand up or walk alone. He lost his speaking ability. His wife and daughters fed him because he could not eat by himself. After his death, the autopsy results revealed that he had irreversible black lung disease. His wife was finally able to get benefits because "the company dropped its appeal" (190). It is very clear that the company knew it was guilty from the very beginning, otherwise they would not have dropped the appeal. The fact that the company impedes the workers until the very last step is, simply put, mobbing in the hope that the workers who sue them will give up – one of the tactics of slow violence.

It is finally revealed that Wilcox was Mattie Wyatt's father. After it is revealed that Donovan suffered extensively due to slow violence, it is also revealed that another lawyer working for the rights of the land and the people has also suffered greatly from slow violence. Therefore, Mattie and Donovan have chosen to become lawyers and fight for their land and people. The death of Thomas Wilcox is one of the "invisible deaths that don't fit the news cycle," as Nixon calls them (201). The deaths of coal miners are

full of suffering and are hideous; however, their suffering does not find media coverage. The deaths induced by slow violence, however, are greater in number and cause a denser suffering.

With the loss of Wilcox, it is not only a person who died but also a history which faded away. Wilcox arguably represents a history which has become a thing of the past and, with his death, the history also fades away. Wilcox would tell about “how to fish the *clear streams* [intonation added], camp in the caves, and even hunt deer for food,” which are things of the past that people cannot do any longer after the contamination of the land (190). The streams are either dried or have become poisonous that no fish live in them. The deer have either died or have escaped from the region. The caves are no longer ideal for camping because they have either been exploded for strip mining or occupied by coal companies. Therefore, slow violence has been killing the land slowly as well as the people and animals.



Fig. 8. A lake of toxic goo looms over Marsh Fork Elementary. This photograph reveals how slow violence gradually devastates Appalachian landscapes. Courtesy of the photographer, Vivian Stockman.

3.2.4. The Effects of Slow Violence on the Disempowered

Grisham highlights the problems in Appalachia through Samantha Kofers clients. Samantha's first client Stocky represents a helpless man who is trapped in the poverty cycle. Through her second client Phoebe, Grisham points out the problem of domestic violence and drug addiction. Phoebe is a 36-year-old woman married to a drug addict and dealer named Randy, who commits domestic violence on his wife. Verbal violence in the form of death threats was added to the physical violence. Phoebe used meth too, probably because of her problems with her husband (93). On this level, one can claim that the economic structure of Appalachia and the social hardships are seen in the form of a slow violence which induces deterioration of the locals' psychological health and leads to drug abuse and domestic violence. The indirect and slow violence affects mainly the poor people as they are under constant threat of losing their jobs and facing financial problems. Therefore, it will be correct to state that slow violence is a type of violence which mostly affects the poor by nature.

Through the character Randy, Grisham once more addresses the corruption in law. Although the presence of Randy in the vicinity of Phoebe is very dangerous, Phoebe fears that Randy will soon be set free. The reason why Phoebe thinks so is that Randy "had a lot of rough friends in the meth business" who could easily pay the bail needed to set Randy free (93). The local folks' ties with authorities are also questioned in this case. It is stated that Randy is closely acquainted with the sheriff and it is certain that the sheriff will not keep him long in prison (93). It is a horrendous event that a sheriff backs up a meth dealer. It should also be questioned why a meth dealer is backed up and, indeed, whether the system intends to create drug addicted people. In the first example, namely Stocky, the man was pushed into a poverty cycle. In the second example, namely Randy, the man is (made) a meth addict and the system supports him. It is worth questioning whether the system encourages meth use. Is it also possible that the system systematically creates poor people? It seems that the system tries to create a type of society which consists of people who are unable to defend their rights.

Bribery, nepotism, and lawlessness are evident in Appalachia. The fact that Randy will be set free is evident. Randy is supposed to be in court on Monday and Phoebe fears that Randy's friends will pay the bail and instantly set him free. This verisimilitude is so

likely that Phoebe is almost sure Randy will be free and kill her. Phoebe's distrust toward the law makes her think that "he could even be there right now getting his bond set by the judge" (94). The secret bond between the criminal Randy and the police emerged when Kofer learns in court that the police think that it was an ordinary fight; it was mutual rather than a malicious, aggravated attack, that "somehow the gun was involved" without the intention to kill (102). Therefore, there are hints that the court does not intend to imprison Randy for the attempted homicide; they want to whitewash the event and make it look like an ordinary quarrel. They also claim that Phoebe initially attacked Randy, and that, consequently, what Randy did was nothing but self-defense. The judge does not believe Randy when he says that it was his wife who initially hit Randy and said that his wife was "quite a bit smaller" than him (104).

Like every ravisher, Randy and his bully relatives do not hesitate to threaten Phoebe. They try to suppress and silence her through threats; however, Phoebe is a strong woman and does not yield. Randy's brother Tony, who has just been released from prison, threatens Phoebe, saying she had "better drop the charges" or she will pay for that and Phoebe as a strong-willed, determined and powerful woman says that she will never drop the charges (106). The judge decides at the first trial on a continuation of Randy's detention.

Mysteries start to unravel after Donovan actively participates in the story. It is through him that Grisham reveals the secrets of the region. Donovan as the experienced intrepid lawyer is, in a certain sense, the black box of the region. When Kofer sees Donovan in the office, the curious conversation between the two lawyers reveals details. As Donovan knows the local people very well, he gives a very significant detail about Randy. He claims that Donovan used to be a good person until he started using meth and, like many Appalachian men, will end up either dead or in prison (114). It is a terrifying fact that many men suffer tragic ends in Appalachia. This also is another example of slow violence. The living conditions brought on by the coal companies ruin people's mental health as they become addicted to drugs. Either the drug use itself eventually kills them or the behavioral changes, especially the tendency to violence due to drug use, cause them to be imprisoned. The use of drugs causes domestic violence and women are negatively affected by this slow violence. The situation is so indirect

that it is not very easy to determine that it is even violence. However, through life-like characters, Grisham exposes slow violence in the region by overcoming the representational challenges of slow violence.

Donavan reveals another shocking truth when Samantha Kofer wants him to find a gun for her. Kofer thinks that she is in danger and needs a gun to protect herself. She is particularly anxious of her suit against Randy. However, Donavan, as the local memory of Appalachia, states that meth dealers are not as dangerous as the coal companies and, further, that he will provide her with a gun when she starts to sue the coal companies (114). The irony of the situation is that the so-called legal companies who run their business smoothly on paper are even more dangerous than the illegal drug dealers. On the surface, the coal mining companies are the greatest employers in the region, and they claim to bring prosperity to the region; however, they are more dangerous than drug dealers. Moreover, there is no sign of prosperity in the region. The only aspect of the region associated with coal mining is suffering.

The gap between generations is a recurrent theme in *Gray Mountain*. The reason for this huge generational gap is that the older generations do not want to sell their land to the coal company and the younger generations are attracted to the money the coal companies offer them. This situation needs to be interpreted in two ways. The first is that the coal company brings-contrary to its own claim- unemployment and poverty to the region and obliges people to sell their lands. The second is that by offering a type of bribe to the younger generation, such companies widen the gap between generations and break the unity in the region, which the company sees as a threat. However, as was seen in the case of Donavan's father, selling one's land to the company does not bring prosperity; on the contrary, it brings suffering.

Every new client Grisham introduces has their own story and the novel weaves in the issue the new client brings. A new client becomes the embodiment of "the gap between generations." Mrs. Crump, whose "husband died a long ago," wants Kofer to issue a will for her which will make it impossible for her children to sell her land to the coal company (116). Mrs Crump states with her sincere local accent that she "ain't selling to no coal company" (166). She adds that the coal company is literally blasting the Cat Mountain, which is not far from her land, and that the coal companies are useless (166).

The company has offered her a huge sum of money, an amount so great that she is afraid to tell her children, thinking that they will not be able to resist it. The expression Mrs. Crump uses to define the situation is tragicomic; she says that her children will sell the land before she is “cold in the ground” if the land passes on to them (116).

A further example of how much unrest the monetary issues bring is that Mrs. Crump’s children brought her to a lawyer’s office some five years ago to forcefully have her will signed in accord with their own benefit (116). Samantha insists that Mrs. Crump state the amount the company offered because it was important to know “for tax purposes.” Mrs. Crump’s answer reveals another aspect of the company: their unreliability (117). She states that the offer was a bit more than two hundred thousand dollars and the price should normally be two or three times that because “you can’t trust a coal company” (117). Although Mrs. Crump’s children are doing wrong, it is not only their guilt. The biggest guilt belongs to the company, because it willfully creates a vicious circle – a “poverty trap,” a mechanism that forces people to remain poor, which is arguably a type of slow violence – and creates a suitable platform to exploit the land and people. This vicious “poverty trap” is defined by Sachs as a situation in which “the poor start with a very low level of capital per person, and then find themselves trapped in poverty because the ratio of capital per person actually falls from generation to generation” (244). The same situation applies to Appalachia because, as mentioned before, after coal mining started in the region, the local people of Appalachia became gradually poorer, and the poverty increased within generations. The present generation is forced to sell their land to the company. The poverty of the region is a desirable situation for the company in two ways. Firstly, the poor people are economically too weak to defend themselves; secondly, the poor people who are unemployed and are in urgent need of money must sell their lands to the company.

Mrs. Crump’s and her neighbors’ effort show us the value the older generation places in the land. Mrs Crump enters into an agreement with her neighbor Jolene and her husband, so as not to sell any land to the company. Jolene and her husband also agree to leave their land to Mrs. Crump in case they pass first (117).

The scene of Donovan's office gives a vivid archival picture of the environmental disasters occurring in the region. In order to "overcome the representational challenges" in conveying slow violence, as Nixon calls them, Grisham portrays a gigantic figure of the disaster. The archival information hangs on the wall of Donovan's office as a huge photograph. The photo is "at least eight feet tall" and one can think that the grandeur of the photograph is purposeful (119). The photograph is a "shocking and tragic" portrayal of a "massive boulder" rolling and crashing into a mobile home (119). At this point, it is clearly seen that the poor housing conditions of the local people make them more vulnerable to environmental disasters. If they had had a better house to live in, they would have gotten through the disaster with lighter damage. However, apart from the poor housing conditions in mobile homes, what Donovan mentions while referring to the disaster is very significant. Donovan says that "for about a million years, that boulder was part of Enid Mountain" (120). Grisham reveals the rapid destruction inflicted upon the land by making a contrast between the million years of geological time and an instant human intervention which destroys the mountain. Donovan adds:

A couple of years ago, they began strip-mining the mountain, blew its top off, and dug out the coal. On March 14 of last year, at four in the morning, a bulldozer owned and operated by a roguish outfit called Strayhorn Coal was clearing rock, without a permit, and this boulder was shoved into the fill area down the valley. Because of its size, it picked up momentum as it descended among this steep creek bed. (120)

In another part of the novel, there is both praise and lament for nature. Nature is praised for its beauty but at the same time its loss is lamented.

These are the most biodiverse mountains in North America, much older than any range. Home to thousands of species of plants and wildlife not found anywhere else. It took an eternity for them to become what they are...About a million years ago, coal began to form, seams of it. That was the curse. Now we're destroying the mountains as fast as possible to extract it so we can have all the cheap energy we can eat. (143)

In the above quotation, praise and tragedy go hand in hand. The richness of the endemic flora and fauna is unprecedented; however, the land is being rapidly destroyed for the sake of cheap energy. The fact that the formation of coal is likened to a curse reminds us of "cancer cells" which start to develop in one's body. The fact that the narrator uses the verb to eat for an inedible thing is ironic. Grisham ironically portrays the greed of the companies and the devastation the companies have wrought.

There are several tragic issues in this case. The first is that the company was clearing rock without permit. Secondly, the boulder caused the death of two children, Eddie Tate, age eleven and Brandon Tate, age eight (120). Grisham delves into detail to give information about the magnitude of the tragedy. “The boys were instantly killed, crushed, *flattened* (emphasis added)” (120). To the shock and horror of Samantha Kofer, the representative of the foreign objective eye, Donovan, the local, experienced eyewitness, continues to give details. Donovan remarks that every day is prone to new events in the vicinity of the mining sites. It is an everyday event that rocks fly, the ground is shaken, foundations crack, and coal dust rains on people, covering the land like a blanket. The water in the wells turns orange (120).

It turns out once again that the companies are supported by the law in Appalachia. This fact makes the hard reality of the poor local people even harder. This fact is one of the tragedies in real life as well. The coal companies in Appalachia are supported by the law and, for their violations, receive only nominal fines. This reality is pronounced once again by Donovan as he describes two cases he has experienced. One of the cases is the above-mentioned case in which two children die because of the falling boulder. The second is the incident which a couple experienced nearby their pool. In order to underscore the ridiculously low fines, Grisham employs irony. Donovan states that “Mr. And Mrs. Herzog were sitting by their small pool” and a one-ton boulder rolled down to their pond breaking their pool and creating a tsunami effect and, in return, it was only “a few bucks” that they got from the company to recover their damages (120). Again, in this example, those who are harmed by slow violence are poor local people. The poor people in Appalachia live in houses in the foothills under terrible living conditions, which make them more vulnerable and prone to danger. Coal companies cause various environmental disasters, and as they are openly supported by law, they do not feel the necessity to take precautions. That is the reason why it is always the poor people who are affected by disasters. The fact that Donovan calls the fine “a few bucks” underscores the pettiness of the fines, which must serve to encourage the companies to act freely. Inaction to calamities is also slow violence because, as Nixon has put it, “institutional actions (and institutionalized inaction) have a profound impact on environmental outcome” (39). In this case, while not thoroughly inaction, it is a symbolic action which

the authorities pretend to take. The petty fines imposed in response to environmental catastrophes support companies' slow violence, and it is even possible to understand them as a slap on the wrist, and a wink to the impunity that the companies enjoy. As the fines are symbolic and heartening rather than discouraging, the companies do not hesitate to abuse the land to the fullest. It is also possible to state that the companies prefer to pay low fees instead of establishing environmentally friendly facilities. The punishment for the other incident which is more tragic is a bit higher; however, it is still insufficient when compared to the tragic loss of two little children. Grisham highlights the disproportion between the crime and the punishment by employing an ironic style. Donavan says "the company was fined by our fearless regulators. Hit 'em hard with twenty thousand bucks" (121). Donavan mocks the cowardice of the regulators by calling them "fearless" because it is apparent that they either support or are afraid of the company.

After the insurance company comes into play, the amount the family will receive climbs up to a hundred thousand dollars. Samantha, whom one can call the objective "outsider looking in," asks timely and meaningful questions, which satisfy curiosity about details. The lead character finds the fine too low and cannot help asking "a hundred thousand dollars for two dead kids?" (121). Donavan's shocking answer reveals the corrupted policies of the region. It is obvious that the law supports the strong instead of the right. Donavan declares:

Dead kids are not worth much, especially in Appalachia. They have no economic value because they, obviously, are not employed. It's a great case for punitive damages- Strayhorn Coal is capitalized at half a billion dollars- and I'll for a million or two. But the wise people who make the laws in Virginia decided years ago to cap punitive damages. (121)

The mentality of the dominant system reveals why poor people are more prone to danger. They are simply not given worth as individuals. The fact that children are not workers makes them worthless. It is plainly apparent that the system sees people as the workers of the coal companies. That is why a fair evaluation of the environmental tragedies cannot be expected from this system and its authorities. The fact that courts are biased and tendentious makes it difficult for people to receive justice in the courts

and the biased structure of the legal system makes the poor people more vulnerable and prone to danger.

The maximum amount of punishment that the court can give the defendant is “\$350,000, regardless of how bad the defendant acted” and it was arguably “a gift from [the] General Assembly” (121). It can never be a coincidence that every new law enacted serves for the purpose of the coal companies is. It is apparent that politicians and authorities such as lawmakers “are either afraid of Big Coal or quietly supportive of it” (121). The neutrality of the court is under question in Appalachia. Unless the system changes radically, it is apparently not possible to establish environmental justice there. The fact that some individual cases are won thanks to determined lawyers who work for the poor local people and the “environmentalism of the poor” is hope-inspiring. However, the system is corrupt and protects the coal companies. It is not possible to rely on “an unbiased jury” in the court because the people in the court have relatives working for the coal mines (122). Some jurists directly support the coal companies; even the ones who hate them, however, cannot bravely confront them because of fear or since their relatives live on the money they earn from the companies. The legal system is very questionable and such a sense of justice is not sustainable. The suggestion of this dissertation is that investigations should be conducted by extraneous superintendents and the cases should be tried not in regional administrative courts but in central courts commissioned for environmental issues. It is probably the only solution to circumvent what Grisham calls the “interesting dynamics in the courtroom” (122). Given all these facts, it is clearly understood why it is mainly the disempowered people who suffer from slow violence.

Even more tragic than the symbolic compensations after winning a case, Donovan experiences losses in the court, an outcome which shows the lack of justice in Appalachia. It is even needless to mention that “environmental justice” cannot exist where justice itself does not exist. Donovan’s remark on such a case that it is a shock to hear that it ends in a loss. Coal companies know the flaws in the law and navigate according to that knowledge. Donovan tells about an accident to which a young girl named Gretchen Bane fell victim. A truck of the coal company was coming down the hill, overloaded, driving beyond the speed limit. The photographs Donovan collects

which tell the stories of the victims become the visual archive of the novel. At this point, the attention is drawn to the photograph in which the left foot of the victim was “hanging out the door” (123). This scene makes it possible to visualize the tragedy and, by reasoning, to understand the injustice in the court. As the coal companies seek to exploit the flaws in law, they send their drivers in pairs to enable the drivers to bear false witness for each other. In this case, although the young girl tragically lost her life, Donovan lost the case (123). While the drivers were driving in pairs, there were no other witnesses; therefore, the judge and jury had to believe the testimony of Big Coal. Samantha asks if Donovan plans to appeal (123). Donovan’s realistic answer reveals once again the judicial corruption in Appalachia. To Samantha’s shock, Donovan emphasizes that judge selection in West Virginia is an abomination, one to which coal companies make donations (124). The independence of the judiciary is out of the question. Supreme Court members have bonds with the coal companies, and it is ridiculous to expect justice from them.

Although justice is out of the question in the court, Grisham introduces a poetic justice to the story. In doing so, he reveals the coal companies’ dirty secrets. The same driver who is the manslayer of young Gretchen is involved in another accident. The deputy in charge of the area realizes the odd behaviors of the driver and suspects him. The deputy queries the driver and forces him to confess the truth. It turns out that the driver has drunk a vodka energy drink and taken some meth. The driver also confesses that he has been driving for ten hours, which is illegal. The driver further confesses that his boss forced him to lie in the incident. Donovan obtains the voice record of the query and applies to the court with the proof in his hands to reopen the case. The court sustains the claim (124).

In *Gray Mountain*, companies in Appalachia make bad business, threaten people, and manipulate the legal system, which shows that the fictional Appalachia of John Grisham’s overlaps the real-life Appalachia. It turns out that the Lonerock Mining Company has obfuscated the evidence. By forging documents and obfuscating the evidences, Lonerock and Casper Slate hid the fact that Buddy Ryzer contracted black lung disease due to toxic coal dust exposure. This demonstrates that coal companies do not only induce health disorders, but they also do not compensate for the damage they

instantiate. Samantha obtains the copies of documents from the hospital where Buddy Ryzer had a lung operation in 1997. Two years later, as the federal law of black lung disease passed, Ryzer was able to sue the company. And after Ryzer had filed a suit, Casper Slate began to obfuscate the evidences. Coal companies work with doctors who benefit from coal companies and issue reports in favor of the companies. The same situation applies to the Lonerock Company because during the legal procedures of the Buddy Ryzer case, “they asked the doctor to send the slides to two of the firm’s favorite experts, a Dr. Foy in Baltimore and a Dr. Aberdeen in Chicago” (227). Dr. Foy stated that the case was black lung disease and shared the information with Ryzer’s pathologist, but since Ryzer’s treatment by the pathologist had already ended in 1997, the doctor of pathology could not do anything. Dr. Foy purposefully did this to pretend that he was doing his work, aware the the pathologist could not do anything. In fact, the information had to be shared with the authorities; however, to do so would mean acceptance of the fact that the illness was induced by the coal company. With the help of the dishonest doctor and the law firm, the Lonerock coal company hid the evidence from the court. The case was too complicated for Samantha, so Donovan took the case, as he had previously won a sensational victory in the Tate case (260). He was the only lawyer who could handle the case. However, “on November 24, three days before Thanksgiving, they found him dead” (260). Donovan was mysteriously killed in a plane crash. Jeff expresses his idea that Donovan did not die in an accident but was murdered.

They are the bad guys, and there are so many of them. They are ruthless and calculating and for them killing is no big deal. They kill miners with unsafe mines. They kill hillbillies with contaminated water. They kill little boys who are sound asleep in their trailer. They kill entire communities when their dams break, and their slurry ponds flood the valleys. They killed my mother. Years ago, they killed union men who are striking for better wages. I doubt if my brother is the first lawyer they killed. (264)

Jeff’s words reveal the extent to which the coal companies can act cruelly. The fact that for them “killing is no big deal” reveals how ruthless they can be. It can easily be inferred from Jeff’s expressions that the type of violence coal companies apply on people is both structural violence and slow violence. The fact that the coal companies kill their miners by forcing them to work under poor working conditions is an example of slow violence while it happens gradually. It is also an example of direct structural

violence in that they murder their opponents. The fact that the coal companies devastate the lives of people and drive them to the level of suicide is slow violence and Jeff's and Donavan's mother's tragic death is an example of that. Towards the end of the book, it turns out that Buddy Ryzer committed suicide (423). In order to leave his family some money, Ryzer committed suicide because his insurance company paid \$50,000 to his family after his death (424). Helplessness drove him to suicide. Ryzer had no hope that he could win the case after Donavan's death. Most likely because he would soon die naturally, he decided to take his own life in order to be able to hand down enough money to his family. Slow violence is fatal and should never be underestimated. Ways to combat slow violence must be found with an urgency that speaks to the significance of its reality.

To conclude, *Gray Mountain* has shown how fatal slow violence can be. Slow violence has caused deaths, suicides, family tragedies, domestic violence, loss of housing, drug addiction, loss of mental health, and unemployment throughout the novel. The fictional Appalachia of Grisham has a one-to-one correspondence with the actual Appalachia; indeed, it is based on it. In real life, slow violence is still causing deaths, suicides, and all the problems described above daily. The people are purposefully left backward and uneducated so that they will not be powerful, and they will not be able to defend their rights. People are purposefully left poor so that they will have to work for coal companies. The novel has shown the extent to which jurists and policy makers support coal companies. Therefore, the system operates in favor of the rich and against the poor; that is why there is obvious environmental injustice in Appalachia. As seen throughout the novel, people contract deadly diseases because of coal dust pollution; however, health services are poor in the region. The number of hospitals is low, well below the great demand for full-edged hospitals in the region. New full-edged hospitals should be built in Appalachia which specialize especially in coal mining related diseases such as black lung disease and occupational disease.

The legal system is corrupt and there is a huge legal gap which coal companies abuse. The policy makers should reevaluate the rules in Appalachia and overcome the legal gaps which coal companies use for their benefits. Therefore, *Gray Mountain* reveals the legal corruption and slow violence induced by strip mining. However, at the same time,

Gray Mountain ends with a tone summoning hope. Despite the pessimistic portrayal of Appalachia, Grisham ends the novel by making Samantha decide to stay in Appalachia and fight for “the environmentalism of the poor” (459, 460). However powerful the coal companies are, Grisham encourages Appalachians to defend their rights in the court and as a symbol of victory for the activists over powerful multinational companies, Grisham ends the story with news from the court announcing that Samantha and her fellow lawyers have won most of the cases. The ending of the novel addresses the struggle against multinational companies, just as *Gain* and *Strange as This Weather Has Been* did. However difficult it may seem, it is still possible to defend the rights of the land and people despite the financial and political power of multinational companies, and all the novels studied in this dissertation encourage people to get involved in an organized struggle against environmental injustices. The publication of *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* has opened new paths for environmental writers in defining the long-term wreckage.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation examined three American environmental novels from three decades and found that Nixon's term slow violence has been and will be a defining factor to help frame, understand, and reveal the suffering that emerges out of prolonged environmental catastrophes. The original contribution of this dissertation is that it blends the theoretical framework of Rob Nixon's slow violence with contemporary American environmental fiction and thus brings theory into practice. As Nixon himself wrote on the global South in terms of environmental catastrophes which are dispersed across time, studies have been carried out which deal with slow violence issues in the global South. However, this dissertation demonstrates the presence of the theme of slow violence in contemporary American novel, that the theoretical framework of Rob Nixon applies to certain regions of the United States, as well, where disempowered communities live. Therefore, this dissertation reveals that capitalism reaches out and exploits all parts of the globe.

Slow violence in *Gain* takes place over a long time span--from the 1830s to the 1990s. The span of time is too long for anyone to bear witness; therefore, slow violence goes unnoticed. The century-long changes in the environment slowly but drastically devastate the environment and human health. After the Clare Company, over a century, changed its business structure and turned into a mass production factory, the environment became gradually, but greatly, affected by this change. The change was so gradual and slow that it escaped the public eye. Health disruptions arising from slow violence started to make an appearance within decades. The slow but fatal structure of environmental disasters and their long-term consequences are seen in the novel *Gain*. It can be concluded that discussions about the issue of slow violence had already started to appear even before the term had been coined. Powers exemplifies what Nixon calls "inattention to calamities that are slow and long-lasting" and reveals the "calamities that patiently dispense their devastation while remaining outside our flickering attention spans" in *Gain* (6). Although the Clare Company is perceived as a symbol of development for the town, it causes a slow but dramatic environmental change. These changes cause health disruptions and produce hardly any advantages for the town. A profit/loss analysis of the Clare Company would reveal that it is hazardous to both

environment and public health. The company offers almost nothing positive for the town. Contrary to common thought, multinational companies do not enrich the environment they trade on; they impoverish it and disrupt the health of its people. This shows, just as Nixon argues, that “under camouflage of developmental agendas—a neoliberal order has widened, with ruinous environmental repercussions, the gulf between the expanding classes of the super-rich and our planet’s 3 billion ultrapoor” (37). Neoliberal policies have served the purpose of further enriching the rich and impoverishing the poor, a reality which is reflected in the novels studied in this dissertation. Therefore, environmentally friendly economies need to be developed.

Slow violence in *Gain* is revealed in the narrative of the past events and their current consequences. The character Nan, in *Gain*, exemplifies that slow violence often remains undiagnosed (see Nixon 6). One of the reasons why slow violence cannot be proven is the hesitation of medical authorities to clearly state the lethal effects of industrial toxins. Powerful companies receive support from authorities, and they hesitate to reveal the outcomes of slow violence. Inattention to the lethality of toxicity and disregard for and underestimation of the reality of slow violence prove fatal in *Gain*. Laura Bodey is represented as a loyal customer of the Clare Company and refuses to acknowledge that the company causes environmental problems. However, she comes subsequently to realize that her terminal cancer was caused by the company’s pesticides she used in her garden.

Slow violence causes substantial suffering in *Gain*. Communities are affected both physically and economically. Laura suffers from cancer and loses her life to industrial toxins. Multinational companies bring small companies to the point of bankruptcy. Soap making, which was once a very common trade, has been monopolized by Clare, Inc. and many local people have lost their jobs. The advent of new machinery caused unemployment as well. Slow violence does not only damage people’s health but also causes economic crises and unemployment. It has been established that mountaintop removal does not only affect people economically, but it also affects people culturally. In *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, MTR divides people into two, for which Lace and her husband are a good example. Lace works at the Dairy Queen and fights against coal mining, while her husband, Jimmy Make, is represented as the novel’s conformist.

Mountaintop removal not only harms Appalachia ecologically but also affects the sociology of the place. Mountaintop removal changes the landscape and floods occur, damaging and destroying peoples' homes. As coal particles are sprinkled everywhere by wind, the characters suffer from respiratory problems. Lace has a family history of suffering from environmental pollution. Lace loses her mother and Lace's father suffers from lung disease which is arguably an outcome of slow violence in the form of coal toxicity. Jimmy Make's mother is another character who dies of cancer. There is a cancer history of three people in the small kinship of Lace, which exemplifies Nixon's arguments about slow violence that slow violence is gradual, but it has a high percentage of fatal consequences.

Two actual, significant environmental disasters have occurred since the publication of *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, which demonstrates how important a task Ann Pancake has carried out as a writer-activist in terms of raising awareness. The first environmental disaster which took place after the publication of Pancake's novel was the coal ash spill in Tennessee. According to NASA, on "December 22, 2008, the earthen wall of a containment pond at Tennessee's Kingston Fossil Plant gave way" releasing "1.3 million cubic meters...of fly ash" ("Coal Ash Spill, Tennessee"). According to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "in January 2014, approximately 10,000 gallons of chemicals...spilled from a storage tank into the Elk River in West Virginia" contaminating the "water source which serves about 300,000 people in the Charleston area" ("West Virginia Chemical Spill").

Given these two important environmental disasters which have happened in quick succession over a range of seven years, one can conclude that environmental disasters which stem from slow violence are in fact not rare phenomena. Pancake undertakes the mission of raising awareness of slow violence in Appalachia. Pancake also actively participates in activism, which complies with Nixon's description of writer-activism. Ann Pancake fits Nixon's description of a writer-activist whom he calls the "combative writers who have deployed their imaginative agility and worldly ardor to help amplify the media-marginalized causes of the environmentally dispossessed" (5). Media-marginalized is perhaps the most important descriptor of the concept, as people simply have not heard about the concept, because people in the media do not even know about

it. And in the novels, too, environmental catastrophes receive very little media coverage. Especially in *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, it is directly pronounced that Appalachia is marginalized by the media (3). The Appalachian characters Pancake has drawn are “environmentally dispossessed” and the awakened characters like Lace and Bant are representatives of the honorable struggle Nixon calls the environmentalism of the poor.

Just as Nixon likens the erosion in Kenya to a “territorial theft” (132), this dissertation likens the topographical change to what Nixon calls “displacement without moving” (19). Appalachians are displaced because the gigantic changes in Appalachia have made the topography a totally altered place. Although many people have not left their region, the place where they live has changed so dramatically that it is entirely different from its original state. That is why Appalachians are displaced and the displacement occurs even without moving. The only feasible solution seems to be the restoration of the land to its original state. This can only be possible by Superfund areas. This dissertation suggests that mountaintop removal must be banned, and Superfund areas must be created in the Appalachian area in order to clear the hazards of toxicity.

The terminology of slow violence has opened a new path for writers to express environmental disasters more clearly. *Gray Mountain* is a book on slow violence written after the publication of Nixon’s *Slow Violence* and it includes terminology related to the term. It is not certain whether Grisham has directly been affected by *Slow Violence*, but it can be concluded that the publication of Nixon’s book has made it easier to define the long-term wreckage that occurs out of sight. The new terminology and the clear expression of the hitherto unnamed violence have raised broad, perhaps even imperceptibly deep awareness of slow violence. Grisham directly uses the expression “the violence was slow” (148). This quotation is a solid proof that the publication of the work *Slow Violence* has given the writer the opportunity to better express the ongoing environmental hazards which escape the public eye.

The chapter also probed the big business in the region, which is coal mining, and the method of mining coal called mountaintop removal. The chapter has investigated that, as Grisham puts it, “most [of the coal companies] care nothing about the environment or

their employees” (54). The coal companies functioning in the region violate the rights of people and pollute nature simultaneously; that is to say, the coal companies in Appalachia are hazardous to environmental health and public health. The chapter has also analyzed the issue of slow violence in *Gray Mountain* and has investigated that the novel demonstrates an issue of slow violence by making a comparison between Appalachia in the past and the present. Everyday occurrences of slow violence in Appalachia have been explored in the chapter, and it has been deduced that slow violence threatens Appalachia in multiple ways. The traffic which is caused by coal companies is a significant problem and there is a huge risk of accidents in the region, not to mention the reality that the coal dust pollution caused by the transportation trucks results in a risk factor of respiratory illnesses. It has been inferred that the indirect consequences of slow violence are fatal since in both *Gray Mountain* and *Strange as This Weather Has Been*, heavy equipment, which would not have been there unless a coal mining site existed, have taken lives. Therefore, these incidents are not merely accidents; on the contrary, they are the life-threatening outcomes of slow violence.

All the three novels examined in this dissertation draw both realistic and pessimistic portrayals. However, all the novels have endings that encourage the environmentalism of the poor. The disempowered environmentalists’ struggle against powerful companies is appreciated in the novels, which supports the environmentalism of the poor. All the three environmental novels draw pessimistic portrayals but hearten the environmentalism of the poor simultaneously.

The study of all the three novels in the light of Nixon’s slow violence made visible what went unnoticed over a long period of time, demonstrated the vulnerability of ecosystems, and made the vulnerability of human health visible. By making visible what went unnoticed over a long period of time, the novels under focus brought to light the fact that environmental catastrophes are, just as Nixon states, “dispersed across time” and therefore often go unnoticed (2). In *Gain*, environmental pollution and ensuing health conditions occur over a span of two centuries. In that sense, the study of environmental literature is one of the ways in which the ecocritic can demonstrate slow violence and thus overcome what Nixon calls the representational challenges of slow violence.

Both in *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and *Gray Mountain*, slow violence in the region occurs over a period of four decades. In both novels, the past is represented as splendid and the present state is represented as polluted, which makes it possible to comprehend how slow violence takes place. It has been discovered that all the novels examined in this dissertation overcome the narrative challenges of slow violence by making a contrast between the past and the present. Each writer has a special technique which helps overcome the narrative challenges of slow violence. Powers manages to overcome them using flashbacks while Pancake and Grisham do it by employing witnesses of the past. By making visible the vulnerability of ecosystems, it is meant that, despite the general idea that nature restores itself, ecosystems are also vulnerable and weak in the face of environmental disasters.

In all three novels, the lands are polluted and in need of restoration to their original state. Therefore, the novels imply that a large-scale restoration is necessary for the health of the lands, which can be achieved by creating Superfund areas. By making the vulnerability of human health visible, it is meant that all three novels have demonstrated that the illnesses stem from environmental pollution. The novels achieve this by giving the past, the background, the procedure and the aftermath of the illnesses. Grisham manages to make the vulnerability of human health visible by revealing the connection between Laura's cancer and the use of pesticides. Both Pancake and Grisham manage to make the vulnerability of human health visible by revealing the connection between psychological health and harsh economic conditions and physical health and environmental pollution. Therefore, the mission Powers, Pancake, and Grisham undertake is significant. They overcome the "representational and narrative challenges" of slow violence and make visible what went unnoticed over a long period of time, the vulnerability of ecosystems and human health.

The coal companies do not provide Appalachia with any advantages; they make a fortune from the Appalachian land where the Appalachians remain forever poor. The situation reminds us of what Nixon calls "the resource law of inverse proximity," which means "the closer people live to the resources being "developed," the less likely they are to benefit from that "development" (165). The resource law of inverse proximity shapes the Appalachian economy and daily life because, as Nixon explains in detail in

his book, the people living near the resources are from the lower walks of the society. As such, it is quite easy for multinational companies to manipulate and manage them. Such multinationals see the rural poor local people as easy targets on whom they can freely apply slow violence.

The characteristics which this dissertation calls “Nixonian” are not limited to the writers. In all three novels, there are characters who act in a Nixonian way. Laura in *Gain* complies with the call of Nixon and speaks up against Clare, which exemplifies the environmentalism of the poor. Lace and Bant in *Strange as This Weather Has Been* educate themselves to gain environmental consciousness and involve in activism, which is also an example of the environmentalism of the poor. Samantha in *Gray Mountain* refuses to return to her hometown where she could find a well-paying job, instead devoting herself to defending the rights of the disempowered Appalachians. All the above characters engage in the environmentalism of the poor. As Buell mentions, “an awakened toxic consciousness and green activism have increased dramatically among the nonprivileged” (“Toxic” 642). The participation of the nonprivileged and disempowered people in green activism and their eagerness for toxic consciousness are echoed in all the novels studied in this dissertation. By creating life-like characters, Powers, Pancake, and Grisham raise awareness of what Buell calls toxic discourse and what Nixon calls the environmentalism of the poor. “In contemporary toxic discourse, [...] victims are permitted to reverse roles and claim authority” (655). The environmental consciousness of the character Laura in *Gain*, Lace and Bant in *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and Samantha and Donovan in *Gray Mountain* reverse roles and become the heroes and heroines of the environmentalism of the poor—Laura and Donovan posthumously. They are impoverished; however, they are simultaneously powerful because their power stems from their knowledge. In all the novels, a learned environmentalism is praised.

There is, indeed, a need for large scale restoration. A study of the novels makes clear that Superfund areas must be established in the disaster areas. According to EPA, “Superfund program is responsible for cleaning up some of the nation’s most contaminated land and responding to environmental emergencies, oil spills and natural disasters” (“Superfund”). The term “the most contaminated” fits the situation of

Appalachia. There is an environmental urgency to start Superfund programs in the region since coal-related illnesses and deaths are on the rise. Mountaintop removal threatens the region in the form of environmental disasters such as floods related to topographical change and coal-related illnesses such as chronic asthma and black lung disease. It has been discovered that several Superfund programs have been established after the publication of *Gain*. According to the EPA, some of the Superfund sites in Illinois which started after the publication of *Gain* are as follows: Beloit Corp. (2002), Circle Smelting Corp. (1999), Depue/New Jersey Zinc/Mobil Chemical Corp. (2004), DuPage County Landfill/Blackwell Forest Preserve (1990), and Galesburg/Koppers Co. (1989) (“Superfund Sites in Reuse in Illinois”).

According to Özdağ, “the memory of the once healthy landscapes described in literary works may serve as an advantage to local land managers and, ultimately, may inform planning decisions” (“Keeping Alive” 121). It can be inferred that the publication of *Gain* has directly or indirectly given way to the establishment of Superfund sites in Illinois. The term “Restoration Ecocriticism,” coined and theorized by Özdağ, gains more and more significance nowadays since environmental degradation is increasing on a global scale. As Özdağ has put it, Restoration Ecocriticism “brings to the fore the need to preserve the memory of landscapes and their wildlife, prior to their devastation” (121). The kind of ecocriticism Özdağ addresses is one that bears results. Özdağ theorizes:

Restoration Ecocriticism is the ecocritical study of literary texts that explore individual or community restoration efforts in the local lands where natural environments have been destroyed, most often caused by human influences. This new ecocritical approach may trigger new creative writing on the local environments where there is need for ecological restoration. (“Cranes Are the Trumpets” 2019a; “Healing the Wounded Lands” 2019b)

Özdağ’s description of restoration ecocriticism highlights the long-term wreckage in the lands and the need to rescue them. *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and *Gray Mountain* may trigger new Superfund sites to be established in Appalachia and may raise awareness for the need for restoration activities, primarily Superfund sites. According to Cooley, texts are places where the human and the non-human worlds meet since texts are “organic communities of interrelated entities” (252). Therefore, literary

texts have the function of reflecting writer-activism and of initiating the environmentalism of the poor, and the ecocritic may engage in what Özdağ has called “restoration ecocriticism.” *Strange as This Weather Has Been* and *Gray Mountain* raise awareness of toxic pollution and slow violence in Appalachia and the need for establishing Superfund sites in the region.

Richard Powers, Ann Pancake, and John Grisham are writer-activists in the Nixonian sense. They play a crucial role in revealing the tragedies of the disempowered people. They make the voice of the disempowered people living in the poor industrial and toxic regions in the United States of America heard worldwide. According to Nixon, “the challenge of visibility that links slow violence to the environmentalism of the poor connects directly to [...] the [...] environmental writer-activist” (5). All three writers raise awareness of slow violence which would have otherwise gone unnoticed because of its limited visibility. They also serve as a bridge between slow violence and the environmentalism of the poor.

As mentioned earlier, both ecosystems and human health are vulnerable. The reason behind their vulnerability is the fact that every entity is interrelated and a corruption in any one entity harms all other entities. Timothy Morton’s *Ecological Thought* (2014) has shown that human beings, animals, plants, and other life forms and entities exist within an interrelated framework which Morton calls “the mesh” (15). According to Morton, the interconnectedness is too vast to measure. Thus, he states that “The ecological thought imagines interconnectedness,” poses the question, “Who or what is interconnected with what or whom?” and states that “The mesh of interconnected things is vast, perhaps immeasurably so” (15). In a world where all life forms and non-living things are enmeshed, it is nonsensical to talk about a hierarchy among entities. Since the mesh lacks a center, “there is no being in the ‘middle’” (Morton, *Ecological* 38). Along with having no center, Morton’s ecological thought (not the book itself but the term is meant here) suggests that “there is no definite ‘within’ or ‘outside’ of beings” (39). The changes in attitude associated with humility towards nature and all entities, as well as those concerning the recognition of material agency and slow violence, have all attracted the attention of scholars from numerous disciplines worldwide. This is a very positive advancement; however, it is inadequate unless policymakers actively engage in this process. The fact that ecosystems and human health are interrelated and

interdependent should be recognized by policymakers. Therefore, all entities should be considered while shaping the environmental policies of nations. Throughout this dissertation it has been mentioned several times that policies are planned in favor of the rich, and this is the fatal core of the error. Eco-friendly and sustainable economies must be established.

The novels studied in this dissertation transcend locality and imagination and blur the boundaries between local and global as well as imaginary and fictional and do so in a very Carsonian way. The novels talk about a world that is really dying. Carson told of a pre-industrial world where all life forms lived in harmony (*Silent Spring* 1). She drew a utopian portrayal of the pre-industrial world before DDT (1-2) and intended to warn the society in a harsh way, adding that the beautiful world she described is dying (3). Carson's portrayal of the post-industrial world was a catastrophic vision:

Then a strange blight crept over the area and everything began to change. Some evil spell had settled on the community: mysterious maladies swept the flocks of chickens; the cattle and sheep sickened and died. Everywhere was a shadow of death. [...] There had been several and unexplained deaths. (3)

Carson blurred the boundaries between imaginary and fictional events. In fact, she was telling a real story, and transcended the boundaries of locality by generalizing it. Carson carried the issue of DDT toxicity on a global level by stating that the town she described did not exist in real life but could be anywhere in the world (3). In doing so, Carson raised awareness of pesticide use in a very effective way. If Carson had limited her setting to just one place, the story would have been local. However, Carson managed to raise a global awareness.

Richard Powers, for his part, manages to blur the boundaries between local and global and fictional and real. Illinois exists in real life; however, Lacewood is an imaginary setting. The Clare Company does not exist in real life; however, there are a great number of similar companies in Illinois. Pancake manages to blur the boundaries between local and global, and fictional and real by creating a semi-fictional plot whose setting is the real-life Appalachia inspired by people from real life. John Grisham manages to blur the boundaries between local and global, and fictional and real by creating a plot set in the real-life Appalachia whose characters are entirely fictional but perfectly true-to-life. Thus, all three writers blur the boundaries between local and

global and fictional and real in a very *Carsonian* way. As Thornber states, “because damaged environments are a global phenomenon, literary treatments of ecodegradation regularly transcend their particular cultures of production” (16). The same situation applies to the novels studied in this dissertation as they transcend locality and fictionality.

Rob Nixon’s concept of slow violence is not limited to the global South. There is, indeed, a great demand for studies examining slow violence in other American environmental novels. Related studies will raise awareness of slow violence which otherwise goes unnoticed due to what Nixon has called “the representational, narrative, (and) the strategic challenges that are posed by the invisibility of slow violence” (2). Hopefully, this dissertation will open a path in that direction. Research from such a methodological standpoint will raise awareness of slow violence, enhance its visibility, and unearth the issues of slow violence in literary texts around the world. As Buell, Heise, and Thornber state, “by themselves, creative depictions of environmental harm are unlikely to free societies from lifestyles that depend on radically transforming ecosystems;” however, “reflecting on works of imagination may prompt intensified concern about the consequences of such choices and possible alternatives to them” (“Literature and Environment” 418). American Fiction offers a multitude of novels which blend imagination and reality. Nixonian ideas as a framework is new hope for raising awareness of slow violence and the ways to combat environmental hazards.

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