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Marshall University Graduate College

August 10, 1998

I hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under my supervision by **Cathy Pleska** entitled **"In the Fullness of Time: The Literature of Denise Giardina"** be accepted in partial fulfillment of the degree of MASTER OF ARTS IN HUMANITIES.

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Thesis Committee:

In the Fullness of Time:

The Literature of Denise Giardina

by
Cathy Pleska

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the Humanities Program of the Marshall University Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Humanities.

August 1998

Thesis Advisor: Arline Thorn, Ph.D.

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My thanks to Denise Giardina, a fine human being who agreed to talk with me about herself and her literature. She is that rarest of authors whose books make each of us want to be a better person.

Dedication

To my husband Dan and my daughter Katie, I want to acknowledge their patience and support. They were so very generous with both while I wrote this thesis. I am afraid I asked more of them than I had a right. My sincere thanks and love to them both.

Cathy Pleska, August 21, 1998

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Chapter One

Introduction to the Literature of Denise Giardina

"But when I would pause in the field, lean against my hoe, and the wind would stir and bear a shriek, thin and ghostlike . . . the death cry of some huge tree, fallen to make mine timbers and houses for American Coal--then my dream of sanctuary on the farm seemed a mockery and a reproach."--Storming Heaven by Denise Giardina

Appalachia can lay claim to many authors who have written works worthy of critical analysis and scholarly research, as the literature they have produced warrants consideration. This consideration, however, is often not forthcoming, and it is the situation concerning West Virginia author Denise Giardina. To date there has been no definitive, full length study on her and her literature. As an author of considerable talent, who by any measure has published literature of significant quality, she deserves serious scholarly study, not just as an author of regional literature, but also as a contemporary author of the late twentieth century.

The purpose of this thesis is to begin filling the gap that exists regarding research on Giardina and her work. Giardina's main body of literature to date comprises four historical novels: Good King Harry (Harper and Row 1984), about King Henry V of England and his perilous rise to the monarchy in the fifteenth century; Storming Heaven (Norton 1987), about the mine wars in southern West Virginia and eastern Kentucky; The Unquiet Earth (Norton 1992), the sequel to Storming Heaven, about the aftermath of continuing coal development in West Virginia; Saints and Villains (Norton 1998), about German minister Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was involved in a plot to assassinate Hitler. Although a thorough

discussion of all her works is desirable, this thesis will discuss her two Appalachian novels only.

Denise Giardina was born in 1951 in McDowell County, West Virginia, and spent the first thirteen years of her life in Black Wolf Coal Camp. The daughter of a bookkeeper for Page Coal Company and a nurse, she moved to Kanawha County, West Virginia, in 1964. She went on to receive a B. A. in history at West Virginia Wesleyan College in 1973 and eventually received an M.A. in divinity from Virginia Seminary in 1979. Throughout the decade of the 80s and most of the 90s, Denise wrote the body of literature which places her among the ranks of authors worthy of study.

What Giardina accomplishes in her work is considerable. With her background in history and theology, she has acquired a remarkable sense of what it means to be human, but especially what it means to be human within a historical context. Additionally, she is someone who was raised in a society with an oral tradition, which translates in her case into her being a writer with a particularly good ear for dialogue and a well-developed understanding of human nature.

In the Appalachians, history was also recorded via stories, tales, riddles, and songs. Giardina's love of stories stems from the oral tales of her region and from hearing stories from the Bible as a child. The ability to listen to the story is as important as the ability to relate one. It is clear that Giardina was a good listener, and now her ability to turn some of what she heard into rich, vivid stories is apparent to anyone who reads her work.

One of her most significant achievements via her literature is that she has given voice to members of what was essentially an oppressed, colonized society who seldom had the

opportunity to be heard. Even further, she has given voice to groups within that larger oppressed society discriminated against by race, gender, and class. The voices she created to speak of their condition tell the story in a concrete and visceral style. Additionally, she unflinchingly opens to examination political realities in central Appalachia, not only in the earlier days of this century, but in Appalachia as they continue today.

Considering her accomplishments, one would think a number of critical articles would be extant. I did find two, both written by Laurie Lindberg, Ph.D., of Pikeville College (Kentucky). I believe a discussion in this chapter of Lindberg's two articles will aid in laying a foundation for further analysis of Giardina's work. One of Lindberg's articles raises the interesting issue of regionalism, which I believe also deserves further discussion in this chapter. Lindberg's analysis helps explain why the label of regional is too narrow a definition for Giardina. The other article, concerning ethics, underscores the theological issues Giardina discusses in her literature. There is no doubt that with Giardina's maturation as an author there will be more analytical and critical articles forthcoming.

Discussion of the formal elements of Giardina's literature, that is, narration, character and plot development, use of language, and other literary techniques, is certainly necessary, as published analysis on these elements in Giardina's canon is scant. I have elected to handle this discussion within the individual chapters on her two Appalachian novels. I will use a number of sources with which to give support to my analysis, particularly criticism related to race, class, and gender. Among the sources I will use are Patricia Hill Collins' nonfiction book Black Feminist Thought (1991), and Tillie Olsen's book Silences (1978), both covering the subjects of oppression and suppression in societies where there are exploited

groups. Editors Lewis, Johnson, and Askins, in their book Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case (1978), provide a wealth of information and perspective about the condition of colonialism in central Appalachia, which is the condition that developed in this society with the advancement of the coal mining industry. In addition, I will include critical reviews of her work plus past and recent interviews with her which I believe will help place Giardina in the proper context as an author in the late twentieth century.

Beyond the concerns of extant criticism, the issues of regionalism, colonialism, and formal elements, Giardina's work can best be examined via the two most important issues that thread through, and sometimes form the foundation of, her literature: politics and theology. Her political and theological world views create perspectives which invest in her works an extraordinary level of depth and understanding of human conditions. Viewing her literature through these twin lenses aids in analysis by focusing on important issues, such as raising the reader's awareness of the political and social realities of the societies of which she writes, exposing conditions of oppression, and revealing the spiritual natures of Appalachians in her novels. An interviewer once noted a significance about Giardina as a writer: "She has established herself as a writer of considerable insight into the psychological and spiritual forces that motivate human action" (Brown 40).

Lindberg's article, "An Ethical Inquiry into the Works of Denise Giardina," included in the anthology Appalachia Inside and Out, analyzes the ethics in Giardina's literature. She examines both Storming Heaven and The Unquiet Earth from a critical stance of Ethics formulated by Wayne Booth in his book The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction (1988). In this piece, Lindberg used criteria established by Booth to demonstrate how the

ethics of the author are imposed upon the reader via the characters and that for the length of time one reads a story, one actually lives that ethical moment. A reader would appear to ascribe temporarily (or perhaps a lifetime) to those moral and ethical ideas as presented in the story. This critical stance follows from the Reader Response school of criticism in which the "affective fallacy" is not deceptive at all, but is in fact a legitimate way of analyzing literature and, further, literature should be evaluated with "reference to reality" (665).

Lindberg goes on to show how each character in both books represents some moral or ethical stance and how those stances are really the beliefs of the author. Further, she shows how Giardina, through her books, attempts to persuade readers to think as her characters do for the duration of the novels. Inherent in this critical stance must be the belief that an author cannot present an ethical or moral stance which she herself does not believe.

Related to the issue of ethics as Lindberg presents it is the issue of theology which underscores much of Giardina's literature. However, I would question whether Giardina is persuading her readers to accept a particular theology, as Lindberg suggests she is persuading readers to accept her ethics. I think Giardina engages her readers to consider a number of possible theological concerns through her characters, and she perhaps wishes to educate those unfamiliar with fundamental religions as practiced in the coal fields, then and now. Perhaps, what is more important, she offers the opportunity for discourse on the moral and ethical decisions made by people who are sometimes engaged in extraordinary circumstances.

However, it is not the case that theology exists merely as subject matter in her work. As a licensed Episcopal deacon, Giardina couches issues and concerns in terms of theology,

meaning it is part of her world view. She explores these issues via each character's particular theological viewpoint. Lindberg said that "Giardina's works welcome, even invite, questions about values, about ethics, and what 'character' and 'integrity' are" (667). I agree with Lindberg's assessment.

Lindberg uses a comparison/contrast method of discussion in her second article "Llewellyn and Giardina, Two Novels About Coal Mining," included in the Journal of Appalachian Studies. Comparing Richard Llewellyn's novel How Green Was My Valley with Giardina's Storming Heaven, she notes for the most part the remarkable similarities between the characters and events. Llewellyn's book is about coal miners in Wales who were dispossessed of their land by large coal companies just as the southern West Virginians and eastern Kentuckians were in Giardina's book.

In fact, Giardina read Llewellyn's book when she was thirteen (1964), just after she and her family had moved from Black Wolf Coal Camp. I asked her about her reaction to the book: "I read it and became homesick. This was a book about *me*." The similarities in story line and character, however, stem from the similarities of the two regions' histories, rather than any effort by Giardina to duplicate story lines.

Since Lindberg's article offers a brief discussion regarding regional literature as a neglected area for serious study, it is from this point that a more thorough analysis of regionalism and universality and their relationship to Giardina's work would be appropriate. Springing from that analysis, explanations of colonialism and the Culture of Poverty Model, both of which impacted central Appalachia extensively, details of which Giardina so eloquently presents through her literature, will further set the stage for discussion.

Lindberg states that early critics confused regional literature with local color writing, which depicted the local people as grotesque and the writing as merely sentimental prose. She suggests that Giardina's Storming Heaven and Llewellyn's How Green Was My Valley are among the best of regional works because of their universality, which is the decisive criterion of any work of literature. Lindberg stated concerning regional literature, "Yet we've all heard the term [regional] used as a pejorative, that writer is only a *regional* writer; that novel only a *regional* work." She goes on to assert that "Good regional literature has an application far beyond the region it claims to describe" (133). In short, I agree with Lindberg in that regional writing can demonstrate aspects of human character and condition, which are common to all people throughout recorded history. I think this demonstration is accomplished by writers using particular characters in particular places but then illuminating not only what is unique about these characters, but what is commonly characteristic to all.

Because the issue of regional writing used as a pejorative term continues to flourish, the question one might ask is why has literature labeled regional continued to be considered a substandard form of literature? The discussion about the acceptance of Appalachian literature has been raging for a couple of decades now and continues. It helps to understand how Appalachia became a region in the first place. It seems it was an invention with a recent history.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, there began the rise of what became known as "local color writers," as Lindberg mentioned. These were writers who wrote about a specific place and character. A more concise description of local color writing concerning Appalachia is provided in the Journal of Appalachian Studies in "Appalachian

Culture and Economic Development," by authors Ronald Lewis and Dwight Billings:

> It was not until the 'the local color movement' in the post-Civil War era that the 'mountaineer' actually emerged as a separate and distinct persona from the pioneer and the backwoodsman. The phrase 'local color' is used to describe a genre of dialect tales and travel sketches which dominated the 'middle brow' literary magazines so popular in the 1870s and 1880s. This enormously popular genre was intended to entertain the reading public with the distinctiveness of the regional cultures which were already rapidly disappearing before a national American culture in the postwar years. (12)

The irony is that Appalachia was never separate from the rest of America, but after the Civil War a new national identity needed to be forged. Part of that definition process meant that people also defined themselves by what they were not. Appalachia was enclosed by America, peopled by Americans, but through the colorist description, the region took on an "otherness" which distinguished it from every other place. So Appalachia as a region became fact (Lewis and Billings 13).

Much of what the early writers wrote about this region was in fact bunk. Still, the images endured. When researchers in the sociological and economical fields in the 1960s and 1970s began to conduct research on the region to depict a clearer view of the region's economic status regarding governmental funding, they perpetuated the myth of Appalachia. Rather than conducting their own careful scientific studies as to the true state of the region and its people, they relied on older, definitely unscientific studies and the color literature of nearly a century before. These researchers, though faulty in their methods (and intentionally

or unintentionally creating a sympathetic scenario) succeeded in painting a picture of an area which was in sore need of governmental funding, by a government newly dedicated to fighting the war on poverty during the 1960s. What evolved was the Culture of Poverty Model, which resulted in the development of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), and the influx of volunteers working for Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). The Culture of Poverty Model led to the implementing of those programs.

The editors of Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case state: "The Culture of Poverty Model attributes regional problems to the deficiencies of the people and their culture" (Lewis, Johnson, Askins 1). In other words, the basis of evidence to formulate this model is the belief that it is the fault of the people who live within the region that they are poor. The causes of the problems in Appalachia are variously listed as "hillbillies are dumb . . . apathetic, fatalistic . . . [in] poor health . . . defective or deprived [people who] settled the region and developed a defective culture . . . backwards and primitive people who cannot cope in the modern world" (1). Armed with such damning criteria, the federal government formulated their self-help programs, such as ARC and VISTA, and rushed to the aid of the American urban and rural poor.

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), founded in 1965, received over one billion dollars in federal funds for economic development. Eighty percent of those funds were to be spent on improving highways throughout Appalachia to promote businesses, industry, and to create tourism. VISTA was a domestic counterpart to the Peace Corps, whose volunteers were working in urban and rural communities to assist in setting up self-help programs. The problem was that economic, social, and cultural needs based on

erroneous information and misconceptions about a region led to programs and good intentions not succeeding (Lewis and Billings 13-21).

A case in point, which Giardina skillfully relates in The Unquiet Earth, is the attempt by VISTA workerTom Kolwiecki, a Jesuit priest, to start a food co-op for the residents of Number Thirteen Coal Camp on Blackberry Creek (the coal camp and creek are fictional, but based on real places) in southern West Virginia. The result of the well-meaning VISTA worker's attempts meant that residents were threatened with losing food stamps if they participated in the co-op. As one of the insightful residents, Hassel Day, observed, "That is one thing about the government, it is so big that for a spell the right hand don't know what the left hand is up to" (217). This is an amusing anecdote, but the reality was that services only partially met the needs of the poor in Appalachia.

Economics aside, the reports which came out about Appalachia continued to fuel the negative stereotypes both inside and outside the region, attitudes which prevail today. The area has remained, to mainstream America, a place of "otherness," perhaps to be gawked at and made fun of, but certainly no place to take seriously, and its literature would be considered less seriously.

Former state resident and successful author Richard Currey offered some thoughts in an interview with Kate Long in the Sunday Gazette Mail about why Appalachia's literature continues to fail to stir interest among the academic and media critics. He felt that it was a "long term problem, not just for West Virginia, but peculiar to states that do not have enough money, whose towns have been destroyed by corporate America. All those places have lost ground in the cultural mind of America. They're not New York and Los Angeles.

And New York and Los Angeles control the large cultural mind of the country" (1E). He also mentioned that when his latest novel was published and the publisher was considering where Currey should appear for a book signing, a visit to West Virginia, Currey's home state, was vetoed. The publisher assumed that "few state residents read books" (Long 1E).

Perhaps given the myths about the region which have persisted academia remains confused as to the quality of literature Appalachian authors consistently produce. In Black Feminist Thought Patricia Hill Collins discusses the problems inherent with the politics of academic scholarship. She states that the academic power structure reflects the Eurocentric, white male standpoint, and that any group outside that sphere will face difficulty in maintaining credibility for views which do not fit the already established criteria. She believes that "because elite white men and their representatives control structures of knowledge validation, white male interests pervade the thematic content of traditional scholarship and . . . [literature concerned with] political activism, colonialism, [and] oppression have been routinely distorted or excluded from traditional academic discourse" (201). In fact, she adds that any literature outside the established criteria is considered an "anomaly" (203). Significantly, inside the influence of academia are "scholars, publishers and other experts" who validate their knowledge claims within "the political and epistemological criteria of the contexts in which they reside" (203). These contexts are still predominantly Eurocentric, white male.

Interestingly, Tillie Olsen, in Silences wrote about these same problems, particularly as to women writers, regarding academia a couple of decades earlier. Olsen states that "power is still in the hands of men. Power of validation, publication, approval, reputation,

coercions, penalties" (257). It is disheartening that it is still necessary to raise the issue of academic power regarding its acceptance of all literature after so many years of discourse on the subject.

Proponents, authors, and researchers continue to argue for the inclusion of regional literature for serious study and validation by academia. The truth is few books, if any, are published from the region today that are lacking in universal themes or peopled with stereotypical rubes. In Giardina's literature, not only have two of her books been about an English king and a German minister, hardly regional subject matter, but it is also important to realize that her novels set in Appalachia are about universal concerns, specifically colonization and the marginalization of specific groups and the effect on that culture. However, if Collins' and Olsen's arguments are accurate, then any novel about Appalachia stands a good chance of being ignored.

While academia may not validate works regarding oppression, colonization, and political activism, the excuse seems particularly flimsy given the numbers of books written about these same subjects, such as Les Miserables and Heart of Darkness, two novels about colonization and oppression written from the perspective of two Eurocentric, white males. Perhaps only authors from among the ranks of the oppressed have to face the problem of acceptance.

The common charge that Appalachian literature contains stereotypical characters is not borne out in Giardina's literature. The characters as she has portrayed them are complete, distinct, real people, who react, not as stereotypes, but with intelligence and individuality as those in any region of the world might think and act. Use of a nonstandard

dialect, and also political, theological, and societal beliefs of any group outside mainstream society are not valid reasons to disregard a piece of literature for serious study or general reading. Giardina asked when she read about a book by Ben Okri, The Famished Road, a book set in Nigeria: "It is not valid for anybody else because it's set in Nigeria? Or is it that we need to open ourselves up to other places? If something is well written, it taps into that universal thing" (Douglass 390). It seems inevitable that in most interviews with Giardina she has had to speak to the prevalent, static, old ideas about regional literature.

If academia ignores Giardina's work on the basis of political activism, that activism was certainly noted by critical reviewers. Some critics have accused Giardina of promoting political propaganda in her literature, perhaps using the author's highly visible political actions in her personal life for theoretical support. Regarding her Appalachian novels, critic Robert Olen Butler of the Chicago Tribune called her writing "artful propaganda." Critic Douglas Bauer in a review of Storming Heaven in the New York Times reduced it to mere melodrama: "One senses in the prose such an urgency to draw, in black and white, the operators' villainy and the miners' heroism, that each side becomes a caricature." He accused Giardina of using "manipulative prose," and although he did not doubt that the coal owners did commit "evil acts" and that there were "union miners . . . capable of extraordinary charity," he felt Giardina had failed in her rhetorical strategy in producing a "revealing work of fiction."

Giardina has responded to these charges unequivocally. She said in an interview in Appalachian Journal, "My work has political content because it has to be there. In a sense that is a part of me, part of my interest, part of the way I see the world. . . . I don't have a

political agenda in the sense of promoting an ideology, because I don't have one" (Douglass 390-91).

In another interview, she deals with the subject again. She told Tom Boudreau, "I didn't make anything up. I didn't want to be accused of exaggerating. I even left out some atrocities [perpetrated by the coal companies] because I was afraid readers wouldn't believe them" (9). She further justified the standpoint in her novels, "I think I do make an assumption that the coal industry has devastated and blighted the land and people's lives. I think it's a legitimate assumption to make, a value judgment. In writing a book about the Holocaust, I would begin with the basic assumption that what happened was pretty evil. I think there are some things you can assume . . ." (Douglass 391).

She may not have an ideology to promote through her literature, but what Giardina does promote is a clear idea of what happened to the people where she grew up and to herself as a member of the communities about which she writes. In truth, everything is political if it stands outside the viewpoint of the prevailing ideology. Those outside and unfamiliar with the region which Giardina describes perhaps feel justified in calling a standpoint political. Their opinion represents their own political stance. Though much is political, it does not mean literature exposing a political reality is propaganda. Giardina is not promoting an ideology nor engaging in didactic point-making. She is simply writing what she discovered as fact in written reports, articles, and carefully researched historical data and from personal experience.

These accusations of "political propaganda" and "manipulation" are reminiscent of comments directed against the powerful work <u>Grapes of Wrath</u>, by John Steinbeck, a work

to which Giardina's Storming Heaven is compared. The two works had much more in common than titles lifted from the Bible. Steinbeck, too, was accused of using his novel as a political tool and of exaggerating the incidents to manipulate government policies regarding the Midwestern tenant farmers' migration west. Congressman Lyle Boren in 1940 went so far as to rebut Steinbeck's reports on the plight of migrant workers and made it a part of the Congressional Record. Citing passages from The Grapes of Wrath as evidence he accused Steinbeck of fabricating the plight of the migrant workers and damned the whole book as a piece of vulgarity.

Both writers wrote from their experience. Steinbeck's work had more of a sense of urgency, because even as he wrote, migrant workers were dying. Giardina wrote her story sixty years after the incidents in Storming Heaven. Still, it is true that writers write of where they are from, what they know, and how they see the world. Giardina grew up in a coal camp in southern West Virginia, and it is here she absorbed the history of her part of the state, and where political issues have strongly driven the lives of all whom she knew. It is only natural that politics enter a story about coal companies and employees during a time when unionization was on the minds of the people. These are issues still relevant to the area today, as one has only to pick up the state's daily newspapers and read of the continuing controversy between coal companies and the residents in the coal fields.

Yet, the politics of a society is not the only concern of Giardina within her literature. Theology is an important issue to Giardina as well. She said in an interview in Publishers Weekly, "My books are more theological than political" (Oder). Just as the politics in her literature spring from the nature of what she is writing about, theology is also innate in what

she knows, from her upbringing with the Bible as her first exposure to literature, to her ordination as a deacon. It is important to understand concerning Giardina that the political and theological concerns in her literature provide forums from which she discusses major moral and ethical issues which concern her and, as she told me recently, she likes to think may concern her readers. But she pointed out to Tom Douglass regarding the theology and politics in her works, "The job of fiction is not in answering questions, but in asking them" (392). I believe Giardina accomplishes this effectively through her characters, as I will discuss later.

In analyzing Giardina's literature, at least for this thesis, I was faced with a daunting task since little has been published: what to include and what to exclude. In pulling together a comprehensive treatise, one must necessarily consider all of the issues which Giardina covers in her literature, but the number of issues she raises are considerable: colonization and marginalization; oppression of groups within the larger group of the colonized; regionalism and the politics of academia; the often controversial subjects of politics and theology; cultural and ideological issues. These are all issues which are hotly debated in literary, sociological, environmental, economical, and various other disciplines with respect to the history and culture of Appalachia. To raise only these issues barely scratches the surface in studying her literature.

But one must begin somewhere, and as I will show within the following two chapters on Storming Heaven and The Unquiet Earth, respectively, Giardina has written books which encompass myriad issues. Yet, she has done so with a skill and a competence which places her on the list of the best authors the late twentieth century has to offer.

Chapter Two

Storming Heaven

There's not much knowledge of our Appalachian heritage. . . . It's important to know that people fought back. When I found out that people fought back, I thought maybe I should too."--Denise Giardina

Stories of kings and knights and ladies have fascinated Giardina since she was a child when her parents read fairy tales to her. She began writing a story about King Henry V of England while in junior high school. After she received her B. A. in history at West Virginia Wesleyan College in 1973, however, she became interested in the history of Appalachia (Boudreau 9). She thought about writing a book set in Appalachia, but she feared negative reception by critics because Appalachian literature, like its people, has often been marginalized. So she finished her novel about King Henry, and with the help of writer George Garrett, whom she met in a workshop at Morris Harvey College (now University of Charleston), she acquired an agent, and Good King Harry was published in 1984.

Giardina commented about writing Good King Harry first: "Sometimes we [authors] have to write about other places to show the Appalachian experience as universal . . . the themes of exploitation that are seen in Appalachia are also universal" (Boudreau 10). Certainly she writes in Good King Harry about oppression of the Welsh at the hands of the English (and note that oppression of the Welsh by the English is again subject matter in Llewelln's How Green Was My Valley hundreds of years later). But also with this novel she had proved that she could write historical events with considerable insight and skill,

masterfully weaving fact and fiction.

Bolstered by her success at getting her first novel published, Giardina knew it was time to write Storming Heaven. Arming herself with archived articles and Senate records, interviewing individuals who lived the experience, and drawing on her own experience as someone who had grown up in the coal fields, she finished Storming Heaven. It was published by Norton in 1987. It received several awards, including the New Voices award and the W. D. Weatherford Award.

Storming Heaven is about a society of people in southern West Virginia and eastern Kentucky who undergo massive social, economical, and cultural changes brought on by the development of coal mining, where previously the economy was largely agrarian based. The story builds up to the historical event of what became known as a "mine war"on Blair Mountain in southern West Virginia. In August 1921, 10,000 miners fought coal company-employed Baldwin-Felts guards, the State Police, and even the United States Army Air Corps for the right to unionize, among other reforms.

Giardina's Justice County, West Virginia, is fictional, as are the characters, though most are composites of people living at the time. Her careful attention to factual detail lends an air of authority and believability to the book that makes it read almost as a nonfiction piece. Details of the cultural and social aspects such as mores, food, music, and dialect, reflect her ability to render a world that is not just imaginary but concrete and visceral.

The subplot in the novel is a love story between main characters Rondal Lloyd and Carrie Bishop Freeman. Their lives and love, as with the other characters, are mediated by the sweeping changes brought on by the production of coal mining and the resulting

abuse a number of coal companies enacted against their employees. Throughout the novel, miners fight for the right to unionize in order to mitigate those abuses.

In Storming Heaven Giardina chronicles the very real details of how wealthy investors (largely railroad companies who realized the monetary advantages of mining, selling, and transporting coal) from outside the region cajoled, threatened, and sometimes murdered native inhabitants to get them to agree to sign away the mineral rights to their property. They needed the land to get at the coal under the ground. At times, people gladly sold land to the investors but often did not receive fair compensation. If compensation was considered adequate, there was still the matter of many being forced off the land when they had been told it would not be necessary.

To further bolster their cases to win land away from the natives, the companies sometimes cited the existence of "senior" patents, which the companies claimed had legal precedence over the "junior" patents that the landowners supposedly possessed. These large companies claimed that descendants of the Revolutionary War were given property in the coal fields as a gift for having served in that war. They bought these senior patents, therefore establishing the right to claim the property of families who had lived in Appalachia only since the early 1800s. Because the companies knew few people in the area could travel to distant judges who had ruled on these deeds, they were assured of virtually uncontested ownership.

In some instances the inhabitants were assured that the investors wanted mineral rights only and that there was no interest in claiming the surface. However, all that changed when the investors turned the deeds over to the coal companies, which were often their

subsidiaries. The coal companies now cited the precedence of mineral owners over surface owners, and once the people were evicted, the coal companies began the business of digging coal. There arose immediately the need for a work force to mine the coal, and the companies offered jobs to many natives. Entrepeneurs entered the areas to provide satellite industries which spring up whenever a new industry develops, such as general stores, carpentry and blacksmiths shops, for example. The rise of the coal industry did bring employment and converted the largely agrarian-based society into a monetary-based one founded on the sale a product already produced by nature and one which seemed to be waiting for man to market it.

Initially, the rise of a new industry can seem to bring promising changes to a society. Unfortunately, as Giardina so plainly shows in her novel Storming Heaven, exploitation of all resources, including humans, by the coal companies began almost immediately. As the industry advanced, the practices of colonization put in place resulted in wholesale destruction of the land, lives, and a way of life.

Writer Jack Weller, in an article titled "Appalachia: America's Mineral Colony," succinctly defined colonialism, particularly as the definition applies to Appalachia: " A colony . . . is a group of people with land and resources which are owned or controlled by persons other than themselves, and whose resources and productive capacities are used for the advantage of those who control them" (48). Inherent in this description is the opposite side of the coin to colonization: People are colonized and therefore controlled by the dominant group. Control in this case meant oppressed. It has only been in the last two or three decades, however, that the term colonialism has been fully realized as the event which

took place in Appalachia, and research is continuing.

Colonization of a society is not new, but what is significant about Giardina's story is that she gives voice to those who were not in control. Down through history, the oppressed rarely had the opportunity to have their standpoint heard and considered. When their voices were heard, prevailing propaganda from those in power controlled the images of those oppressed to the outside world. Collins in Black Feminist Thought writes about oppressed groups' lack of opportunity to be judged from their standpoint: "Groups unequal in power are correspondingly unequal in their ability to make their standpoint known to themselves and others" (26).

The reason for this difficulty for those oppressed in Storming Heaven in expressing their standpoint was that those in power in Storming Heaven controlled every aspect of their employees' lives. The companies provided housing and decided what kind of housing was available. The miners were paid in special money called scrip, which could be used only in company-owned stores. Wage scales and benefits were set by the company and not subject to negotiation. Significantly, the companies controlled all local institutions from the schools to local law enforcement, and further, the companies controlled many of the newspapers. In short, any information about the miners was mediated by the coal companies.

Collins states that "domination always involves attempts to objectify the subordinate group" (69). As subjects, people can define their own reality and form a definition of who and what they are. But as objects, a group's reality is defined for them. In fact, dominant groups will often use prevailing imagery and symbols to their advantage, or make some up that suits their purpose (67-68). Since colorist literature had already erroneously depicted

Appalachians as backward and ignorant, the companies had ready images to exploit to their advantage.

With the publication of Storming Heaven, Giardina immediately garnered positive reviews from such national publications as the Chicago Times, the Los Angeles Times Book Review, and Publishers Weekly, among others, whose reviewers proclaimed Storming Heaven "brilliant," "tough and tender," "gripping," and "powerful." She was extensively interviewed, particularly for Appalachian journals and publications, and state newspapers. Only two critics (Butler and Bauer, whose reviews I cited in chapter one) reviewed her novel with what could be considered negative reviews, with charges of "manipulative" prose and "artful propaganda."

Lives of the people in Storming Heaven are tied to the land, and one can not imagine one without the other. Both were irrevocably changed once mining and its spin-off industries developed. Giardina is especially attuned to the displacement as it happened to her family in the form of downsizing in the early 1960s by Page Coal Company where her father worked. She and her family were forced to move, not unlike those long-ago native West Virginians who are represented in her novel. Giardina remarked to interviewer Dale Brown of those times: "There was a traumatic loss of community" (40). Giardina felt that loss keenly as a child and has managed to convey that sense of loss eloquently in her work. She deals effectively with the massive social changes that took place during the time period she covers in Storming Heaven.

After writing five hundred pages of Storming Heaven from third person point of view, she abandoned those efforts and began again. This time she wrote with multiple

narrators, telling the story from first person point of view. Four characters take charge of chapters and further their own story and that of the plot of the novel.

Choosing this method presented her with a number of advantages. First person point of view is a literary technique that allows the reader to more readily access the action and plot in a more personal manner. By using this technique, Giardina could more easily and naturally introduce political and theological debates and discussions not only through dialogue, but also through the reader's advantage of knowing the thoughts of the main characters. By using first person and multiple narrators, this technique allowed her to give voice to groups of people who suffer multiple oppressions based on race, gender, and class.

Giardina commented on using first person point of view, "I want the reader to experience what those people were experiencing. The trick is to do that without being manipulative . . ." (Douglass 390-91). She accomplishes telling this story without being manipulative because her characters are people who are far from rigid, stereotypical inventions. The people in her novels do make wrong choices and at such times that it leads them to personal sorrow and loss. Moreover, perfect individuals would not only be unreal, but also merely representative types whose sole purpose would be promotion of Giardina's political stance.

Yet another reason for allowing her characters to tell their own stories is that she firmly believes that the characters take on lives of their own, and she cannot force them to do something against their natures. She allows them to be "free," and she gets "to know them first." This technique also allows not only the author but the reader as well a glimpse into the psychology of the character. Understanding the psychology aids in understanding

the motivation of individual characters. Apparently, it is this psychology Giardina pays attention to as she writes, allowing her characters free will. She remarked in one interview: "They tell me what's going to happen next" (Douglass 385). In this sense, they almost "write" the story for her.

The use of first person, multiple narrator, a modernist and sophisticated technique, was used by William Faulkner, of whom Giardina has said she has read a good deal. Faulkner's novella, As I Lay Dying, is written using this method and seems particularly the progenitor for Giardina's technique. Mary Lee Settle, a fellow West Virginian, also wrote about the coalfields and used multiple characters' viewpoints, although mostly in third person. Giardina is quite familiar with Settle's work as well.

True to the characters' voices, Giardina also created an appropriate, distinctive dialect for them. She uses a southern West Virginian and eastern Kentucky dialect, widely spoken by the natives during the time of which she is writing. Vestiges of this Appalachian dialect remain in the more rural regions of both states today. Since she was born in southern West Virginia, and in a time when the dialect was still largely used, her ear became attuned to the speech patterns of her native area, and she uses dialect effectively in this novel.

The use of dialect allows distinction between characters' personalities, but also it establishes the difference between those characters who are oppressed and the oppressors. Language has always stood as a political issue. Distinctions between people based on speech as to their class ultimately demonstrated who was in power.

She does change the spelling of certain words and those with contractions. To give the feel for the clipped, abbreviated pronunciation common with this dialect, Giardina elects

to drop the apostrophe in words such as *cant*, *aint*, and *wont*. She is generous with the old English pronoun *hit*. It is used in place of *it*. In addition, she phonetically spells other words to give a flavor of the dialect without overwhelming the reader who may be challenged to understand what the character is actually saying: *banjer* for banjo, *clost* for close, *outen* for out of, *scairt* for scared, *forgit* for forget. She also occasionally drops the *g* on the end of words such as *movin* or *headin* to simulate how speakers of the dialect shortened some words in speech.

Sprinkled throughout the text are word phrases and idioms that flavor the speeches in this Appalachian dialect: *granny woman* is a midwife; *free-talkin man* to indicate an individual who speaks freely the thoughts on his mind; *I swan* is a common exclamation and means roughly "I swear"; *het up* means angry.

Giardina and other authors who choose to use dialect and phonetic spelling to convey a sense of the spoken language invariably suffer negative criticism for that choice. Often the practice is seen by natives and those outside the Appalachian region, in particular, as perpetuating the belief that Appalachians today remain ignorant of standard English. Giardina believes that readers should be willing to read what she calls "alternative" language (Brown 51). Shortly after The Unquiet Earth was published, which also uses dialect, she reacted to the criticism about her use of dialect and her concerns with it in an interview with Dale Brown in Carolina Quarterly:

> I had to wonder if people would think I was poking fun by using regional speech. I've done readings at schools outside this region and had people laugh in passages I meant to be serious. I think that's because of the sound

of the voice and accent. I've wanted to slam the book and go strangle somebody at times. I've had people say, "This character seemed too intelligent to talk this way." (43)

What many critics fail to take into consideration is that Giardina is using dialect which correctly portrays the speech patterns of a certain people during a certain time, particularly the early part of this century. That some areas retain vestiges of this dialect is really what is at issue, along with the assumption that anyone who does not speak standard English is substandard in intelligence. As discussed in Appalachia: Inside and Out, in the preface to the section on language and dialect, Southern Appalachian speech is often considered so distinct that nonnative speakers of Appalachia consider the dialect to be "quaint, backward, and/or amusing" (Higgs, Manning, and Miller 483).

To accurately portray a dialect is no mean feat, and that Giardina has mastered the ability to do this is evidenced not only in Storming Heaven, and The Unquiet Earth, but also in her other two novels: Good King Harry, where she simulates the speech patterns of medieval England, and Saints and Villains, where she uses German words and phrases for the effect of realism. With the use of dialect, Giardina shows the biased attitude against dialect from "mainstream" America, or any place outside Appalachia. In Storming Heaven she does this both directly and indirectly. For example, character Carrie Bishop and her brother Miles discuss the changes in his dialect when he finishes his education at Berea in Kentucky. Miles tells Carrie, "It sounds ignorant to say 'hit.' They shamed us out of it at school. Same with 'aint.' Educated people don't use those words" (59). He believed that it was the "scientific age" and that the time to speak dialect was long past. However, Miles

was not the only one who was sensitive to dialect. Carrie became conscious of it when she asked two reporters from New York for help when Rondal is shot. As she is riding in the reporters' car, she carefully enunciates a response, "We aren't Bolsheviks, . . .we're all kinds of things" (281). By illustrating the characters' awareness of the attitudes of those outside the region toward dialect, Giardina effectively proves that Appalachians were and are far from ignorant about the prejudice.

With rich and vivid descriptions of her characters, Giardina builds a metaphor between the land and the people in the beginning chapters by giving the land characteristics of humans. She uses this metaphor to emphasize the way of life prior to the sweeping, and mostly devastating, changes brought on by the evolvement of coal mining. In her graphic descriptions of the mountains and the surrounding countryside, she invariably pairs that description with a characterization of the people. Character C. J. Marcum speaks of how he was sure he heard the trees "shriek, thin and ghostlike . . . the death cry of some huge tree" (9) as they were cut to be used as coal tipples, supporting mine timbers, and housing. The trees, too, were ripped from the land reflecting the plight of the natives as they were displaced.

Giardina's association of landscape and people is most effective. The faces of characters seem to spring from the visage of the mountains. When we are first introduced to Carrie Bishop, she laments how she looks like the more unattractive side of her family, but her Aunt Jane speaks of how faces have character, like the mountains. Speaking of her deceased husband, Aunt Jane tells Carrie, "They wasn't no forgitting what he looked like, no more than you could forgit the mountains. When I stand on my porch and look at those

mountains, I still yet see him everywhere" (31).

Carrie also describes her connection to the mountains once she is grown, speaking of them as if they had human hearts that could suffer from longing: "I have traveled outside the mountains, but never lived apart from them. I always feared the mountains could be as jealous, as unforgiving, as any spurned lover" (89). Throughout Storming Heaven, characters often speak of the pull of the mountains, finding them hard to leave and the devastating changes hard to watch, for changes to the land meant irrevocable changes for them.

Narrator Carrie Bishop enjoys the lion's share of space to tell her story, comprising eleven of the novel's twenty-five chapters, and Carrie is the strongest of the female voices in this novel. As a young girl, Carrie falls in love with the character Heathcliff of Wuthering Heights, a man she sees as possessing both passion and menace, and prophetically, she falls for exactly this type in the person of Rondal. In fact, Giardina did read and is a fan of Wuthering Heights, and it influenced her depiction of relationships between men and women in her novels (Oder).

In her story, Carrie reveals what life was like for her and her family in Kentucky before the development of coal. She is someone who makes somewhat uncommon choices for a woman of her time and does not adhere to all the cultural customs inherent in her society. As a child, Carrie's family lamented that she was "not deferrin enough" (31), a phrase which means that she refused to be subordinate to any man. To her family that meant she would probably never marry because in that society most men preferred their female relatives to defer to their position as head of the household. Carrie becomes a nurse

(Giardina's mother was a nurse in the coal fields, and details about Carrie's profession are to some extent based on her mother's experience) and stays in the coal fields to care for the beleaguered miners and their families. Carrie does eventually marry, and her nursing skills aid in providing for herself and her husband.

Carrie is an assertive woman who later becomes the mother of an illegitimate child, and she resists any censure of her actions from her community. Patricia Hill Collins notes the particular problems of assertive women: "Aggressive, assertive women are penalized--they are abandoned by their men, end up impoverished, and are stigmatized as being unfeminine" (75).

Giardina invests in her Carrie a strength that is drawn from women she knew or read about during her research. But, as is often the case, few know about such women because of their lack of opportunity to be heard. Tillie Olsen discusses the fact that the very existence of women traditionally brings with that existence a host of difficulties as members of an oppressed society. They are people who are "traditionally second class citizens in a patriarchal world" (27). As a member of a marginalized, oppressed society, Carrie speaks for women of that long ago society who would not have had the opportunity, nor likely the self-knowledge, to speak out even if they had not been part of a patriarchy.

In contrast are the lead female characters in Mary Lee Settle's The Scapegoat, (1980) whose story took place in West Virginia around the same time as the events in Giardina's Storming Heaven. These women are the daughters of a mine superintendent, that is, members of a privileged class. Other females in Storming Heaven are characterized as women of strength and intelligence, women who often display love, understanding, and

incredible feats of endurance. They are not perfect, however, and Giardina is careful not to make female characters representational types in the negative sense of stereotyping, but real women who lived and still yet live. Yet another example is Harriet Arnow's The Dollmaker (1954), which chronicles a woman and her family who leave the coal fields to eke out a living in Detroit. But these few examples point to the fact that women's voices are seldom heard from this region and time.

Giardina included, as an example of female strength and activism in the coal fields and based on an actual events, (though not during the mine wars) women who form a united front and accomplish astonishing feats. At one point in Storming Heaven as the families are forced from their homes and into tents, the Baldwin-Felts guards fire on them, careless of the presence of women and children. Giardina's women take up arms to defend themselves and their families against the deadly force of the company guards. One thousand strong, women of every ethnicity, join ranks to beat back mine guards with brooms and pots and pans and overtake a company store in which food and guns are stashed.

Counterpart to the strength of Carrie is Rondal Lloyd, a strong voice among the miners who fight for humane treatment from the coal company owners. He begins his story revealing life for West Virginians before the development of coal much as Carrie's story began revealing the life styles of Kentuckians. When he becomes a union organizer in the coal fields, he remains a dedicated activist and idealist, often placing himself in the "front lines" to recruit the miners into the union. It is through this character that the plot advances and the political shenanigans of the coal operators are most thoroughly revealed.

As a child, Rondal is taken into the mines by his father to dig coal. This was an

exploitation of the child labor laws, but such violations were necessary for the survival of the entire family, who were forced to try to survive on extremely meager wages. Traumatized when he witnesses the death of another miner in a roof fall, he vows never to enter another mine. However, when he is older, he realizes that if he is to recruit miners into the union, he must return underground. It is there he can reach the men, talk to them, reason with them, support them, and convince them that joining the union is their only hope of lasting change. At that time, recruiting for the union was strictly forbidden by the mine owners under penalty of termination, blacklisting, and often death.

Throughout his life, Rondal gives up any hope of a peaceful existence by continually placing himself in danger in order to help organize the union. He is eventually evicted from the state of West Virginia by coal company owners and must hide for the rest of his life. Rondal could be compared to the character Tom Joad in The Grapes of Wrath (1939). In Steinbeck's great mid-century novel, Tom, much like Rondal, places himself in increasing danger in order to aid the migrant farm workers in organizing a union in California. He, too, is forced to hide from the law, meeting with migrant workers in secret to campaign for solidarity. Rondal does the same for his miners, at one point meeting under the guise of prayer meetings.

Through this character, Giardina perhaps dealt most with the realities of what it cost any person who worked to establish a better standard of living and fought against the most serious effects of colonization. Rondal is not created, however, as a man with all the answers, nor one who is faultless in his zeal to win against the coal company. He believes, as many do, that violence is the only action which would result in any concessions from the

coal companies.

A third narrator is C. J. Marcum, friend and distant relative of main character Rondal Lloyd. Through C. J. readers sense the frustration of the inhabitants of central Appalachia who mourn for what has been lost. During C. J.'s childhood, his grandfather is murdered because he would not sign over the mineral rights to his property. C. J. and his grandmother are evicted from their land. When he is grown, he fights against the coal owners by studying and becoming a Socialist. Along with Doc Booker, a black doctor in a nearby coal camp, he prints a radical newspaper, the Annadel Free Press, in the town of Annadel, one of the few towns not owned by coal companies (due to the fact there was no coal under the town).

Socialism was a fairly new ideology to the American worker at the time of events in Storming Heaven. Spreading from Europe, where it was first established after the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century, socialism became the weapon forged by workers at that time to force Capitalists to recognize the rights of employees. With the influx of European laborers to work in the burgeoning American industries, such as mining and timber, they brought with them socialist ideas long accepted in their countries. The ideas quickly spread to native laborers as an answer to surmounting problems within the work force.

Author Priscilla Long discusses the rise of socialism in America in Where the Sun Never Shines, a nonfiction work about coal mining in America. She speaks of its effect on both capitalists and workers in the wake of the rising industrial revolution: "Socialism was a significant political current in American life, and the Socialists pounded on . . . corporate greed . . . Writers like Upton Sinclair . . . lit up the darker corners of American society to

expose poverty, political corruption, and the varied evils of unrestrained power" (306-307). Significantly, as evidence to the widespread knowledge about socialism, Long states that "[i]n 1912, the Socialist Party could claim eighteen thousand members . . . twelve hundred public officials . . . and the combined circulation of 323 socialist newspapers reached over two million" (306). Clearly the idea of socialism was pervasive in American society early in this century.

Giardina spends a good deal of time on socialism in the coal fields, particularly through C. J. and Doc Booker, but their conversations also presented her with an opportunity to further nullify and redefine stereotypical ideas about Appalachians. C. J. and Doc Booker form the Annadel Political and Social Club, where people can gather under the aegis of a discussion club (the coal companies were beginning to enforce the rules prohibiting people to gather in groups). Gathered at the local saloon, members discuss all manner of subjects.

One of the misconceptions about Appalachia is that the inhabitants were isolated by the rugged terrain of the mountains and the lack of roads in and out of the region, and therefore, knew nothing about the world outside. Although rugged terrain distinguishes West Virginia, it did not mean that citizens were unaware of what was taking place outside their communities. Actually, with the development of coal mining, the companies first built an extensive rail system to transport the coal out of the state. Passenger trains traveled those same rails and provided travel in and out of the region for thousands of natives and non-natives. Exposure to and discussion of more cosmopolitan issues was common among the population of central Appalachia.

Conversations were varied and informed at the Annadel club. C. J. Marcum comments: "We took turns discussing what we should talk about . . . to discuss the Brussels Congress of the Second Socialist International . . .wrangled over the fighting in the Balkans . . . Woodrow Wilson, the Niagara Convention, and the Ku Klux Klan" (120). And of course they talked about the union and what people should do about supporting it.

In discussing their particular situation, which continued to deteriorate as the mine owners beefed up their numbers of guards and as threats increased, the group express how they feel about the events, but they also begin to define who and what they are in face of the changes. This is something the coal owners want to prevent and the reason they fight so strongly against the gathering of the residents. Collins discusses the issue of knowledge and self-definement, and the threat it poses to the dominant group: "Knowledge is a vitally important part of the social relations of domination and resistance . . . [and] offering subordinate groups new knowledge about their own experiences can be empowering . . . revealing that knowledge allow[s] the subordinate group to define their own reality" (221-222). The coal owners in Storming Heaven counted on measures of suppression and censorship (they eventually destroy the Annadel Free Press) to control the group they are exploiting.

Further abuses under colonialism included the marginalization of ethnic groups in the coal fields. With character Rosa Angelelli, an Italian immigrant, Giardina exposes yet more oppression. She once again gives voice to someone who bears a triple burden as a resident of a coal camp, a member of an ethnic group, and a woman.

Most of Rosa's chapters are only two pages in length, but told in a rather obscure

way, a literary tactic which gives the feeling of the confusion experienced by many foreign immigrants, who could neither speak nor read English. She suffers at the hands of a brutal husband and must endure her husband's abuse of their children. She works for an exploitative boss, who is a mine superintendent. Eventually, she loses four sons in one of the all-to-frequent mine explosions. Finally, Rosa is committed to an institution for the insane.

Rosa is a nod to Giardina's own ancestry. In 1911, Giardina's grandfather came from Sicily to McDowell County to mine coal. She told me in an interview: "I wanted to include something on the immigrant experience as they came into the coal fields. Their stories had been largely untold." Little work has been done to date to fill the gap of information regarding immigration from Europe and other parts of the world to the coal fields. But in fact, members of ethnic groups came by the thousands in just a short time, particularly to West Virginia. In comparing the statistics between immigration rates of 1900 and 1910, a total of 37,000 foreign-born immigrants had settled in the state, an increase of forty percent in just ten years (United States Government 583). The majority of those immigrants came to southern West Virginia to mine coal, run the railroads and harvest timber.

As Giardina shows, however, native populations in central Appalachia were often biased. The sentiment against blacks in Appalachia was on the whole much as it was throughout most of the United States, particularly in the southern regions. But with the influx of thousands of immigrants and African Americans, the natives often felt threatened, fearing loss of jobs. Problems with language, different customs, and manners aggrivated the tense relations.

Juxtaposed to the changes brought on by colonialism, particularly to the politics and social life of these people, is the theological base of the society, which girds, guides, and strengthens the people. Dale Brown remarked on the political and religious aspects of the novel: "Giardina has inherited their [the miners'] sense of outrage along with the theological base that supports the culture"(41).

In the character of Albion Freeman, Giardina explores especially well one aspect of religion in the coal fields, fundamentalist Christianity. Albion's is a "hardshell" Baptist, whose members interpreted the Bible literally. He was a No Heller, which meant that he did not believe God preordained who was to go to heaven or to hell. He saw no sin as being worse than the next and believed that everyone was a sinner. He believed in the Fall and that humans were all destined to sin but that salvation was possible for everyone. He tells his wife Carrie: "Jesus will haul them out. That there is Jesus's job" (134-35).

As a young man, Albion wanders from community to community with his "drummer" father (a peddlar), trying to eke out a living after they too are set off land by coal companies. A thoughtful and humble character, he exhibits keen insight into the suffering of all living things, even to the point of being sympathetic to a mad dog about to maul him (43). Afraid of furthering his education for fear that new information might push out what he has already accumulated (39), he nonetheless learns to read so that he can at least understand the Bible.

Giardina's Albion is reminiscent of Steinbeck's preacher Jim Casey. He too was a lay preacher called from the ranks of the common people to bring the word of God to his own. But whereas Casey struggles with his own sin, only growing strong in his faith toward the end of the novel, Albion continually draws strength as time passes. He only seems to

falter, however, when he realizes the extent to which the coal companies are guilty of heinous crimes. Then he envisions the coal owners and the Baldwin-Felts guards in hell and then finally envisioning them storming heaven along with the miners, a difficult concept for him to reconcile with his faith.

Yet another comparison to Albion can be made between him and Mr. Gruffydd in Richard Llewellyn's How Green Was My Valley. In Laurie Lindberg's article about Giardina's and Llewellyn's books, she compares Giardina's Albion and Gruffydd and the resemblance is strong. For example, Albion believes he is called by God to preach in the mines. When he spies the coal tipple he pronounces it "his church" (163). He gets permission from the mine superintendent to hold prayer meetings at dinner times. Eventually, the meetings are held at his small coal camp home on Wednesday evenings. What really takes place among the sermons, hymn sings, and amens is recruiting for the union. In comparison Mr. Gruffydd helps his miners fight for better wages and safer conditions. He is reminded by coal company owners that his business with the miners is their spiritual welfare. Mr. Gruffydd tells them, "My business . . . is anything that comes between man and the spirit of God" (137). Lindberg points out that "Gruffydd encourages the men to state their grievances boldly and to fight for their rights" (137).

In the same way, Albion finds justification for violence against the coal company. Albion's gospel is to follow Jesus's use of nonviolence in the fight against the coal owners, but when the coal company's guards begin murdering miners with impunity, Albion preaches a faith that understands what humans must do to survive, and he sees their actions as not unlike sinners storming the gates of heaven. He tells the rallying miners, "Most of you got

guns here . . . hit's a sin to have them. Hit was a sin to shoot down them gun thugs . . . but I'll not condemn you for carrying those guns. You carry those guns in God's freedom. You make mistakes because you are alive and free. You can't escape your sin, so sin boldly and know God loves you. Only try to do good for the glory of God" (193). If some question Albion's stance, another character notes that Albion is quoting directly from St. Paul in the Bible. Both ministers stand ready to help their congregation in any way possible, even if it means putting themselves at considerable risk.

Though some characters, such as Albion, use their faith to support what was essentially a rebellion, some other characters use their faith as a shield against horrors happening in the coal field societies that their minds can not bear. Vernie Lloyd, mother of Rondal, uses religion as a shield against losing what she loves--her sons-- to the mines. Her fundamental, and strict, Christianity seems to bring her little comfort, however, as she sees her sons one by one go into the mines at the tender ages of eight and ten. She even succeeds in turning her youngest son Kerwin to her vigilant faith. She manages to keep him the longest from the mines, but eventually she loses him and her husband in a mine explosion (75-77). It seems that once colonialism progressed some people of religious faith retreat further into the literal word of the Bible to create a stable environment. If they were not conscientiously religious prior to the devastating changes of colonialism, some find solace within the local churches. Whichever it is, religion is where, as in most societies, some find the strength they need to endure.

Perhaps one of Giardina's achievements with this novel is demonstrating the colonization's changes and impact on the society's class strata. Most residents of southern

West Virginia and eastern Kentucky had traditionally been farmers, taking from the land what they needed to survive, operating from a base that saw most citizens economically more or less equal. With the influx of the coal companies, the economic base of the society changed. Creating grave problems was the use of company scrip which severely limited the miner's ability to patronize businesses not owned by coal companies. Some area stores floundered due to this fact. Other store owners, such as character Ermel Justice, find themselves with a distinct advantage. Ermel prospers as the spin-off industries come into his area and the new people patronize his store. He does so well that he continues to build his own town, brings gambling to the area (from which he further profits), and begins to dabble in politics so that he can control the local police force and a senator or two.

Yet, as some prosper, others fail, no longer able to farm on what little land the coal companies have left them. Some leave the state altogether, while others feel they have no choice but to go into the mines. Where there had been largely equality among the people of that region before, more and more layers of wealth and poverty form, which worsens the animosity between the residents. Adding to their economic woes is the continual flow of miners from Europe and blacks from the south, who are recruited into the mines, and a once fairly homogenous society has to learn to cope with prejudices and biases against those who are different. A society which was once unified, now becomes stratified and split, disrupting harmony and destroying a way of life forever.

The final chapters of Storming Heaven deal with the preparations for and execution of a battle between the miners and the mine owners. Although the miners were ten thousand strong, the coal company owners had the backing of the local, state, and federal government.

In the end, the miners did not win the war. When the miners saw the American soldiers, alongside whom just a few short years earlier they had fought in World War I, they could not bring themselves to fight (Savage 148).

Similar battles raged in other parts of the country where workers made efforts to end the tyranny of capitalism from the turn of the century and well into this century. For a while, news of the miners' struggle to unionize in West Virginia and Kentucky, and the Battle of Blair Mountain, as it came to be known, caught the attention of the rest of the nation. However, it failed to bring any immediate changes for the better to the miners in the region. It would not be until the early 1930s that the unions would be recognized. Actually, West Virginia's and Kentucky's overall roles in the labor history of the United States are only now being completely assessed.

Significantly, Giardina has participated in that process of recognition through her two novels. Although a number of nonfiction books exist on the coal mine wars and labor history, few have told it from the standpoint of Giardina's Storming Heaven. And few have so eloquently given voice, as she has, to so many marginalized within one society and examined so thoroughly and humanly the spiritual and political infrastructures of such a society.

Reaching from her store of tales she heard as a child which inculcated in her the data she needed to tell a good story, and coupled with her exhaustive research of the era, Giardina turned these stories, perhaps destined to remain elements of her oral culture, into an offering of literature which allows readers to hear voices from the past.

In the sequel, The Unquiet Earth, Giardina continues writing of the exploited and

describes the assimilation which took place after the initial colonization of central Appalachia. In this novel, the storytelling is perhaps more pronounced than in Storming Heaven, as Giardina herself continues to realize how important it is for all members of any society to tell their own story.

Chapter Three

The Unquiet Earth

"There will be no peace in West Virginia because there is no justice."--Mother Jones

At the urging of her editors at Norton, Giardina wrote The Unquiet Earth (1992) as a sequel to Storming Heaven. She had not planned a sequel, but when an author's book sells well and garners favorable reviews by the nation's largest publications, the publisher often encourages that author to write another book. I asked Giardina if she wanted to change anything about any of her four books: "Yes," she said, "one thing. Take out the afterword in Storming Heaven." In the brief afterword, the character Dillon Freeman, son of Rondal Lloyd and Carrie Bishop Freeman, who were main characters in Storming Heaven, tells what happened to his people. At that time, it was a way for Giardina to conclude the novel, bringing the events' impact into the future. But when she began the sequel the afterword then seemed redundant.

In The Unquiet Earth, Giardina brings the history of King Coal in central Appalachia from the end of the Blair Mountain Mine War in 1921, through the miners' continuing attempts to unionize, further chroncicling the central Appalachain societies' struggles with economic, social, and political issues, to 1990. This story reflects the process of maturing by a society which has been forced to deal with massive changes and one which continues facing the problems of assimilation into a new order.

Work becomes scarce with the advancement of technology and machines which

replace manpower and force miners to work only one day a week. Some miners accept welfare or leave the area to look for work outside the region. In this novel, the next two generations of the families introduced in Storming Heaven struggle to remain in the coal fields, continuing the fight for a reasonable existence.

Literature about the problems of the working class is not new, but Giardina is one of the few women who have taken on the subject. Interestingly, one of the first was Rebecca Harding Davis, whom Tillie Olsen quotes at length in her reflective Silences. Davis wrote the novel Life in the Iron Mills (1861) and was the first to write of the realities of the rising industrialization in America (in fiction). Although she was not of the struggling working class herself, she was a careful observer of the workers who worked in the nearby iron mill. Olsen feels Davis contributed to a more accurate depiction of the reality of the working class: "Nowhere in fiction was industrialization, the significant development that would transform the nation, a concern--nor its consuming of the lives of numberless human beings. No one in literature had opposed the 'American right to rise'" (49). The dearth of fiction about the working class (and written by the working class) was due in part to the lack of opportunity, that is the time and the education. In addition, the suppression and lack of serious critical attention to working class conditions, let alone literature, (which parallels marginalization of regional literature), guaranteed that few works, either fictional or nonfictional, garnered attention.

In Giardina's novels, it is the men who are working and initially facing inequitable treatment, but that did not mean women and other members of the society were not severely affected, nor, conversely, that they did not take an active part in bringing about a more

equitable society. Significantly, one of the accomplishments of Giardina's literature is that she shows how women and children were impacted by the colonization. Women in both books participate in retaliation against mine guards and scab coal truck drivers in physical ways, so that not only does she give voice to all those who were truly affected by the circumstances, she also gives them strong and direct roles which more closely reflect the reality of the situation.

In Storming Heaven, the exterior landscape seemed reflected in the character and personality of the inhabitants. The elements were almost anthropomorphic through Giardina's description. In The Unquiet Earth, Giardina seems more concerned with the change or damage to those characters' personalities, which seemed to form alongside the damage and changes to the land. In contrast, few books I have read written by men concerning the mine wars, the colonization of Appalachia, and the war on poverty, deal with relationships to any extent, with the exception of the relationship between the men and the colonizers.

Patricia Collins noted the difference between how men and women write about significant events. Collins has found in talking to women writers that they were interested in the oral traditions of storytelling in which the consciousness of the hearer, rather than the speaker, was important. By the same token she noticed women are often more interested in the stories of the acted upon rather than the actors (often men), which after all, is the state (acted upon) in which most marginalized groups are relegated. Further, Collins goes on to quote author Gayl Jones on the subject: "With many women writers, relationships within family, community, between men and women, and among women . . . are treated as complex

and significant relationships, whereas with many men the significant relationships are those that involve confrontation--relationships outside the family and community" (213-14). This is exactly what Giardina does: Her stories chronicle how colonialism affected personal relationships between men and women and their families.

Again, this harkens to Giardina's particular talent with storytelling, a talent formerly inherent in many members of the Appalachian society, but one which is nevertheless fading with the increasing attention people give technology. Audiences receive their stories through a medium, television or the Internet for example, which is heavily mediated by the advertisers who support the programing. Fewer people sit around on a porch, or gather in a home and hear stories told by relatives, friends or the older generation.

Giardina includes a number of stories and storytellers in The Unquiet Earth. For example, the character Uncle Brigham tells stories to young protagonist Jackie. She seems to doubt his talent, and laments that he always tells the same story about the "Big Toe" over and over. But what Giardina is cleverly showing through Uncle Brigham is that he needs to tell these stories as much as Jackie needs to hear them. Perhaps his story makes him forget, for a brief moment, the constant pain he is in resulting from a mine accident. Maybe it reminds him of the simpler days when he was a child and he had heard his own share of stories. Possibly he feels it is a tradition he must pass on.

At one point in the story, Uncle Brigham is trapped in a mine after a roof fall. He is encouraged, along with his fellow trapped miners, to tell stories, perhaps to forget the danger they are in, or to aid in bonding with one another, a step which becomes necessary if the entire group is to survive. Another character, Rachel Honaker, after joining the Army,

talks of needing a story to distinguish oneself from others. Above the brow and below the chin, she looks just like every other soldier. However storytelling is used in the novel, as the daughter of a society in which storytelling was, and in some places, still is, important, Giardina uses the method to good effect.

It is difficult to condense the plot of The Unquiet Earth into a summary of a few brief lines. Everything about the novel is more complex than the initial novel, particularly the characters who drive the story. Lillian Robinson, reviewing The Unquiet Earth in The Nation, commented on the characters and the humans they represent in history: "All too often fiction about the working class that centers on union organizing has characters designed to represent different positions . . . within the struggle . . . by contrast, historical fiction shows us that history is about people, that we make it as it makes us . . . . [Giardina's] people become literary characters, but they begin and end as human beings" (816).

As in Storming Heaven, political matters abound, and in this novel, religious issues garner more attention as Giardina shows how faith supports a society which seldom feels it is winning the war begun decades before. At times she seems to satirize elements of the fundamentalist believers as a way of juxtaposing their beliefs against what appears to be the saner attitudes of the government policies in place to "help" the residents of Blackberry Creek. Satire also characterizes the media and government officials, both of which "find" a supposedly "Third World" society inside the United States.

Giardina movingly expresses how the years of efforts on behalf of the central Appalachians to assimilate following the initial colonization continues to affect their lives in

large and small ways. The novel spans the decades from the 1930s up to 1990. Characters grow up, grow old, and die. Women still struggle to be heard, and racism still exists. In this novel, we see the belated response by the government to alleviate the economic problems of the poor in Appalachia. Programs such as ARC and VISTA are born.

Giardina received several awards for The Unquiet Earth. Among them were the American Book award, the Before Columbus Award, the Lillian Smith Award, and the Southern Earth Award. The novel was a finalist for both Book of the Month and Quality Paperback Book Clubs. As with Storming Heaven, she sold the paperback rights and each are still in print.

Critical reception of Giardina's third novel was largely favorable. A reviewer for the New York Times called the book a "powerful sequel" (Kimble), although another critic from the ChicagoTribune felt the novel "stands too firmly on its own legs to be called a sequel" (Bell). However, an anonymous reviewer for Kirkus said the book was a "disappointingly unaffecting saga."

John Howland of the Washington Post lauded Giardina's "subtle exposure of cultural stereotyping." He went on to remark that a reader should be discomforted to realize the "extent to which ethnic slurs involving mountain people are still current in politically correct circles that tolerate the Snuffy Smith comic strip." Commenting on the content of the novel, he astutely pointed out that "secrets involving poverty, passions, and paternity are the stuff of all great novels."

Just as in Storming Heaven Giardina continued the literary technique of multiple narrators to tell the story. In contrast to the four narrators in Storming Heaven, however, in

The Unquiet Earth there are a total of seven narrators. A stylistic difference in presenting the narrators is Giardina's use of different speakers within each section. Further, rather than chapters, the novel is divided into four "Books." Also, narrators take turns speaking in Storming Heaven, but in The Unquiet Earth, Giardina abandons that method, and narrators do not necessarily handle individual sections. The mixing of narrators within each book helps establish a more complex psychology within the characters, which in turn reflects a more complex world from that of Storming Heaven.

Interestingly, the seventh narrator, Tom Kolwiecki speaks only once at the very end of the novel. All through the book readers can only guess at his true thoughts and observe his actions via other characters' comments. Shortly before he dies at the end of the story, we hear his brief but poignant thoughts as he perishes in the flood.

Giardina is adept in using realism in building a solid world through concrete details and vivid description, as realism is the dominant style of novels that explore social issues in depth. She accomplished this in Storming Heaven through details of food, music, description, dialogue, and she accomplishes the building of a concrete world in The Unquiet Earth as well. Complex detail revealed through simple exposition is evidenced from an example which appears early in the text. Character Dillon Freeman, at that time a young man, discusses the stir the appearance of "already baked-and-sliced light bread" caused when it first appeared in central Appalachia in the early 1930s: "A poke of light bread is prized, for it means you can afford to spend money to replace the biscuits and cornbread people bake themselves" (5). The children whose parents could not afford to buy bread were forced to continue carrying cornbread or homemade bread for their lunches at school, and

they were ashamed of it as a symbol of poverty. But Dillon carries his in plain sight because of his mother Carrie's attitude toward light bread. She denounces it "a waste of money" and "as tasty as a handkerchief" (5). That simple pronouncement reflects a common attitude among those natives of central Appalachia whose lives have been affected by the industrialization in the area. In this narrative on light bread, Giardina has shown how many considered their former way of life sensibly frugal and equalitarian in nature. Buried within this exchange were the seeds of class bias that rose with the development of industry allowing some to be prosperous and others to fall below the living level they enjoyed previously.

Giardina likewise accomplishes a very interesting, and difficult, feat with dialect in this book. In the beginning of the book, set in the 1930s, the language of the people is mostly like that found in the first novel, whose story ended in the 1920s. But as the story advances through the years and the characters acquire more education, travel outside the region, and begin watching television, the dialect subtly changes, progressing more toward standard English.

In Storming Heaven Giardina chooses to use a written representation of the characters' dialect. And once again, in The Unquiet Earth, Giardina shows the continuing bias toward those who speak an Appalachian dialect. For instance, when characters Rachel Honaker and Tommie Justice travel as Army nurses on a hospital ship in World War II, they are teased about their mountain accents. They choose to play up to the teasing and decided to exaggerate the differences others seem to notice, using humor to protect themselves against the prejudice (47).

Alternatively spelled words to indicate written speech are generally absent from The Unquiet Earth, as opposed to the plethora of altered words in Storming Heaven. Some colloquialisms give the flavor of mountain speech, such as the use of the description of Dillon as being a "woods colt," which meant an illegitimate child of love (3). A few of the characters, representing an older generation, retain more of the dialect than the characters who appear in more recent times. Characters such as Uncle Brigham, Hassel Day, and Dillon Freeman still use the pronoun *hit* and some adverbs such as *oncet*. With their speech or thoughts, Giardina keeps the apostrophes in most contractions except with the dialect word *aint*.

In The Unquiet Earth, Giardina retained the literary technique of using the land and its elements as a metaphor for the complex interior psychology of her characters. But in this novel, water seems to stand as a symbol for the characters and events in the story. It could represent the slow flow of time, like a meandering stream, when efforts to adapt seem to ripple resolutely through people's lives. But time can gush as fast as a raging flash flood as people are swept along in the tide of change. In the beginning of the novel, a character is snatched to safety from icy water, while at the end of the story others are swept away in a flood of Biblical proportions. Water at times seems to symbolize the elements of oppression: Anyone who has observed a flood (as with oppression) knows that there is little on this earth that can stop it once it begins.

Water is a particularly powerful symbol strongly associated with major character Rachel Honaker. Early in the story, Rachel nearly drowns when ice floes break upriver and swamp her and her mule as they cross. When Rachel serves as an Army nurse on a hospital

ship in the South Pacific, Dillon, her cousin and lover, notes his anxiety concerning Rachel and water: "Water is bad luck for her. She almost drowned at the Homeplace" (37). At the end of Rachel's life, she passes away of congestive heart failure, and Jackie tells Dillon, "Do you know how she's dying? Her lungs are filling up with water. It's like she's drowning slow in her bed" (233). This slow drowning might also be an image analogous to the slow drowning of the people in Number Thirteen Coal Camp who fail to receive the help they deserve.

When the real flood happens, people look no further than to the American Coal Company, which fails to safeguard the lives of the inhabitants of Blackberry Creek. The company had long piled waste from the mines at the head of the hollow above Blackberry Creek creating a slag dam. It was unstable, and it appears the company knew the possible danger. I believe Giardina metaphorically used the slag dam to represent all the pent-up anger and anguish of the people in the coal fields. It is also an appropriate Biblical image. The unstable dam held back the sludge drained from the mines, and at the end of the novel, homes and people are swept away in a violent few moments when the dam bursts. (Giardina modeled this incident of the bursting dam and resulting flood after the real life incident on Buffalo Creek, West Virginia, in 1972.)

In The Unquiet Earth, two characters who represent the tie between the two novels first tell their history. These two characters are Rachel Honaker and Dillon Freeman, first cousins and children of sisters Flora Honaker and Carrie Freeman, respectively. As in Storming Heaven, this method serves to set the tone, the setting, and to forward the plot. Although born after the onset of colonization, Rachel and Dillon seem to straddle the

way of life before and after, and they struggle to adapt. But Dillon, in particular, clings to a way of life that was essentially rural Appalachian. He laments a number of times over how he and others have been torn from their home places. He takes care of the family cemetery until the bodies of his kin are torn from the ground too in the wake of the coal company's desire to take more land for strip mining. He tries to instill in his daughter, Jackie, who represents the current generation, the love he has for the land and what that connection means.

As first cousins, Rachel and Dillon are forbidden by law and by social and religious convention to marry or to indulge in physical love, but they do fall in love and eventually consummate that love, but only after a number of years of tormented emotions and violent arguments. With this coupling, Giardina took a risk with her literature. Even today, Appalachians are teased by those outside the area about inbreeding, and residents still suffer the negative, stereotypical ideas born from long ago local color literature.

However, Giardina more than rises to the difficult task of portraying forbidden love by skillfully representing the characters' realistic emotions which ground the relationship, thereby avoiding love as a convention to handily develop a plot line. These people are human, as Giardina has created them, yet they do not fall into this relationship because of stereotypical notions of isolation and convenience.

Dillon is the son of a union activist father, and although he never knew his father, Rondal Lloyd (who died shortly after Dillon was born), he nevertheless inherited his zeal to reform as an activist ready to step into the line of fire. Rondal was an activist born from having lived the atrocities visited upon miners at the hands of the coal owners. In contrast

Dillon, though inheriting his father's spirit to rebel, nevertheless arrives at his personal conviction from an experience as a soldier in World War II. His conviction is born of a religious epiphany after he chooses to shoot a fellow soldier in self defense. He questions why he chose himself over the other man: "I chose me, and that's a sin. I am no better than a Nazi. That's what they do, choose themselves. It's sin and the only way you can burn it out is to die. Only it don't work if you just die for yourself, it's got to be for somebody else" (39). Readers can draw an analogy to the larger social problems in the coal fields from Dillon's sentiment, as one can see that the wealthy coal mine owners, and the corrupted union, chose profit over the welfare of employees.

Dillon is similar in form to both Rondal and Jesuit priest Tom Kolwiecki. All three seem to be based on Heathcliff of Wuthering Heights, a man considered difficult, one who seems to guarantee any woman a troubled relationship. All three men choose political, religious, or humanitarian causes over attention to a relationship with a woman. Dillon and Rachel are more successful in achieving a semblence of a relationship, but even they split over political differences.

Rachel is portrayed as someone who places a shield between herself and the confusing political and social problems inherent in the coal fields. Rachel is overly concerned with social propriety, coached on ideas of culture and refinement by her mother from an early age. The desire to behave "properly" is a shield she erects between her and Dillon, and she refuses for years to admit her attraction for him. However, Rachel always tries to do the best she can for her daughter (the child of Dillon), which in her case means choosing to marry a man of means for security rather than for love. Though she and

Dillon remain divided along personal and political lines, she nevertheless finds ways to help in her community as the county nurse providing free health care in a local clinic, not unlike her aunt Carrie in Storming Heaven.

With Rachel, Giardina again gives women in the coal fields a strong voice. Although Rachel is not as free-thinking as Carrie, and she is more bound to social conventions, she is tough-minded, intelligent, and never loses sight of the fact that it is she alone who must take care of her daughter once she leaves her loveless first marriage.

Giardina invests a number of autobiographical elements in the character Jackie, Rachel and Dillon's daughter. Like Jackie, she grew up in a coal camp, and both Jackie and Giardina desired to be a writer as a child but did not think it was possible. Her early sentiment about writing is echoed in Jackie's words, "So there is not a thing to write about, only hillbillies and nobody cares to hear about hillbillies" (108). Jackie thinks that writers live in New York or Paris, an idea once shared by Giardina. Both Giardina and Jackie lived for a while in Washington, D. C., and both eventually returned home to West Virginia to fight on behalf of the citizens in the coal fields against the abuses of the large coal companies.

It is through Jackie, and later the activist Tom Kolwiecki, that Giardina explores the government's plan to save the urban and rural poor, via agencies such as ARC and programs such as VISTA. In the 1960s residents first learn they are in an area called Appalachia. The powerful medium of television serves up a continuing erroneous vision of Appalachia. In news shows, the focus falls on the worst areas of Appalachia, which prompted some to charitable action. In one satirical scene, Jackie tells about a television crew coming to her

school to film the donation of shoes sent from a shoe store in New Jersey. When the television crew learns there is no library or cafeteria in which to film the children receiving the shoes, they decide the hallway "has a nice bleakness" (125). Rather than attempting to report realistic conditions within the Appalachians, the television crew is interested only in interpreting the popular line of faulty thinking about the area. After all, a dramatic story about poor children with no shoes to wear is much more entertaining and melodramatic than discovering the true, and accurate, nature of the area. They failed to discover that this was and is an area of diversity and which contains elements of poverty and plenty as any other area in the United States.

While it is certain that some children did need shoes, these were not people used to a hand-out. The children are confused about the charity, as are the adults, who often reflect differing notions about it. But the children are clearly appalled at what are obviously shoes unwanted by anyone. The store's charitableness might have received the benefit of the doubt had the shoes not been homely, uncomfortable, and overstocked or failed models. I think it was obvious to any observer that the shoe company realized the charity was good for them in terms of advertisement and probably as a tax write-off.

In a poignant scene, Jackie, whose mother enjoys a more secure and affluent position as a nurse, does not need shoes, but she receives a rather ugly pair of purple plastic sandals. She tells two other children that she will throw hers away, and she tells them that she has no need for the shoes she was given. They turn on her and begin to beat her (125). They, unlike Jackie, need the shoes, and anyone who brags they do not have a need only makes them feel more poor and like people who are less worthy for having accepted charity.

Through Tom Kolwiecki, Giardina explores her theological side. Interviewer Dale W. Brown noted that the character Tom "gives Giardina a chance to reflect on her own seminary training and her attitudes toward the exploitation of the poor. Tom's work in Honduras also provides Giardina a way of suggesting that the problems in Appalachia are universal ones" (41). Perhaps, too, Tom was in Honduras because Jackie (whom he loved) was not. His attraction for her meant he spent a lot of time questioning whether or not he was suited for the priesthood.

Tom is based in part on the Jesuit priests Giardina once worked with in Lincoln County, West Virginia, soon after she graduated from Virginia Seminary. The Jesuits worked on behalf of the poor. When Tom comes to Number Thirteen Coal Camp, he brings a missionary zeal to help people he has understood are starving. He believes in the Culture of Poverty Model and has the answers for the residents: He is there to help these people help themselves, and he begins by helping them form a food co-op. Unfortunately, the Culture of Poverty Model, which in effect blames the victims for their woes (Lewis, Johnson, and Askins 1) turned out to be an erroneous model. In contrast, Giardina is careful to show that, though the government may not have understood the most effective way to help the Appalachian poor, the Appalachians certainly did. One of those who knows what they need and fights for it all through the novel is Hassel Day (a prophetic and appropriate name for this tenacious character). He understands that building a car bridge allowing people an easier drive in and out of the coal camp is a long-term solution for the residents. They can more easily access health care, job markets, and other facilities necessary to quality living without moving away from their homes. It would also mean that outside people have

easier access to drive to Number Thirteen Coal Camp, perhaps stimulating the few businesses in town. Hassel fails to convince Tom of the sensibilities of his plan. But even Tom did not forsee how his co-op plan would backfire and he decides feeding the residents is more important. The state government threatens to cut off the food stamps of anyone who participates in the co-op as it violates the policies regulating need.

In fairness and with a sense of balance, Giardina did note to interviewer Dale Brown that some poverty programs did help a bit. She remembered seeing half the children with whom she went to school with rotten teeth. Some dental and health services provided by the money from the war on poverty did manage to find a way to help (43-44).

Though essentially formed to help people better their lives, it was not only erroneous information about the area and uninformed officials who created problems as a result. Helen Lewis and Edward Knipe, in an article written on colonialism, discuss the various problems with the war on poverty programs. "Early war on poverty programs tried to create political action; such action was frightening to the local power structure and to the corporate interests" (25).

An example of that fear to representatives of the local power structure generated by poverty programs is found in the character of Arthur Lee Sizemore, who is a superintendent of mines for American Coal Company. He is a native of the area who is exceedingly corrupt. He has the local county officials in his pocket. During the Kennedy campaign, for instance, Sizemore accepts money from the Democratic Party to put up signs in his county campaigning for Hubert Humphrey. But when the state Democratic leaders in Charleston offer Sizemore considerably more money to put up Kennedy signs, he switches sides and

becomes a "Kennedy man." He assures Kennedy's people in Charleston that not only were signs in place but the votes were too. He thinks: "So they owned me and I thought I owned them" (137). Unfortunately, Sizemore reflects the way politics were often handled in a number of southern West Virginia counties.

The threat Sizemore sees from the development of a food co-op, as he tells it, is that it is a Communist plot to overthrow the government, as self sufficiency is considered akin to Socialist and communistic policies. It is Sizemore who reports to the government that some residents receiving food stamps were participating in the co-op. But this accusation of communism is probably nothing more than a convenient scapegoat, something which he undoubtedly knew would guarantee sympathy in the days of the cold war. The fact that Sizemore owns the local grocery store is not lost on anyone.

As a representative of the coal companies, Giardina has not drawn Sizemore as a mere caricature. Stung by the remarks from a campaign official in Charleston who says to Sizemore "you're one little hillbilly county," Sizemore tells the man: "One little hillbilly county with a bunch of armed reds running wild up the hollers and half the cameras in the country filming every tarpaper shack they can find . . . and talking to every troublemaker that wants to get on TV and tell the whole world about it. I bet they're watching in goddam Moscow" (137). Accurate assessment or not, Sizemore is as sensitive as any about the true nature of Appalachia and knows how to play political games as well as any campaign official.

At the end of the novel, he too warns those in the path of the oncoming flood, though it is clear he knew the danger previously. However, his warnings to his superiors at

American Coal go unheeded. As he runs to warn people of the bursting dam, he tells a skeptical Dillon, "Goddam you to hell. They are my people too" (330).

As the self-appointed mayor of Number Thirteen Coal Camp, Hassel Day spends all his life taking care of others. To those less informed, Hassel appears to be a country rube. Although he had not gone past the eighth grade, he is a regular visiter at the library and has read an entire set of encyclopedia. He travels with an extra radiator in the trunk of his car, the Batmobile. He lives in a tiny, funky green trailer and works as a gas station attendant (these were the days when an attendant pumped gas and cleaned windshields for the customers). But there is no mistaking that Hassel has a clear understanding of the machinations of government. When he realizes that the food co-op will not function because of differing rules within the government, he jumps at the opportunity to take advantage of the situation. With a slick, but simple, legal maneuver, he manages to halt the threats to people who receive food stamps for participating in the food co-op (217).

Giardina poses theological issues through a number of minor characters in The Unquiet Earth. It is perhaps through Louella Day that Giardina takes a satirical turn at depicting the fundamentalist beliefs of some in the coal fields. Louella sees Jesus reflected in her rear view mirror when she is bitten by a copperhead snake. At church services, this illiterate woman lapses into speaking tongues and is heard to utter Latin, a language of which she is ignorant. Louella is nonetheless someone with ingenuity and practicality, and though she seems rather eccentric, in contrast to the ridiculous attitudes and actions perpetrated on the coal field residents by the proponents of the Culture of Poverty model, she seems imminently sane.

Louella's faith is of the fundamental variety. She lives by a literal interpretation of the Bible. She learns from the Bible that in the place of great sin, there is the opportunity to gather manna from the wilderness. She interprets the passages as meaning wherever sin is created, one can find something to help one survive. She translates the verses into reality by traveling to remote areas where young people park their cars and presumably carry on in a sinful matter. Wherever people congregate there is usually trash, and in this case, the trash is returnable bottles. Louella gathers the bottles to turn in for deposit to earn money for groceries. Bottles are her manna from heaven.

Louella is a strong female voice in The Unquiet Earth although she is not a major character. In the poverty-stricken area in which she lives, resourcefulness comes in handy, and it is through her that Giardina demonstrates the lengths to which some are forced just to survive. As part of the War on Poverty efforts to improve the lives of residents in the poorer coal fields, adult education is offered. When Louella learns how to write poetry in a class, she uses it to get back at Arthur Lee Sizemore, when he tries to destroy the food co-op. She uses her newly developed skills to read an unflattering poem she has written about Sizemore on live television. He sputters in denial of the accustions she lobbies at him in her poem, but the truth is out.

Patricia Hill Collins makes an interesting observation about women characters and voice: "The act of acquiring voice through writing, of breaking silence with language, eventually moves her to the action of talking with others . . . women talk themselves free" (112). Louella, and women like her, had few opportunities to comment publicly on the abuses that not only their men, but also the women suffered from as well.

The irony in this scene is that Tom Kolwiecki, who had come to the area to help these people and who should have been more understanding as a priest, is embarrassed by Louella's doggerel poem, rather than angered by Sizemore's shady political dealings and theft of government funds meant to help the citizens.

An interesting contrast forms as one compares the fundamental Christian religion of the some of the people to the mainstream religions in the coal fields. Some of the believers in the Holiness church, for example, see images of Jesus in wood, in rear view mirrors, and in Kudzu growing on a tree. In the Methodist and Episcopalian congregations supported by the coal companies, churches usually founded to meet the spiritual needs of the more affluent in the community (Brown 49-50), worship is civilized and separated from the external world. This religious split is further evidence of the disorder caused by the division of the society wrought by the coal companies' colonialism.

It seems as if the more rational the members of the mainstream churches appeared, the more eccentric the fundamentalist churches were in contrast in this story. But though Giardina can poke fun at those in her own community, it does not mean that she is presenting these people as anything more than earnest, decent people making do in hard times. But the opportunity to satirize the religious communities is an opportunity to offer a more balanced viewpoint on the insanity perpetrated on these people at the hands of the government. Which is truly the more insane belief? Is it more insane to think that God can manifest Himself in kudzu, wood grain, or rearview mirrors, or that the government for the people allow rape of the land, devastation of lifestyle, and continued misunderstandings about the true nature of the region? Who is qualified to truly criticize how and where people

might find their faith sustained? Who among us is qualified to question the treatment of people at the hands of our own government? Perhaps these are questions and issues Giardina is asking us to consider.

My initial reading of The Unquiet Earth was not so favorable as my positive reaction to Storming Heaven. The two are very different is some ways, but then I realized why. Storming Heaven is big and noisy, involving many communities throughout southern West Virginia and eastern Kentucky. The numbers of people are greater. The scenes are perhaps more dramatic, which is only natural as there is a war taking place on American soil. The Unquiet Earth, in contrast, seems quieter, the scope smaller. The communities are confined mostly to the Homeplace and Number Thirteen Coal Camp. However, I came to see that this toned down voice of The Unquiet Earth is its strength. The historical events are there, as they are in Storming Heaven, and, significantly, these are events that even today researchers and scholars of Appalachia are still documenting and assessing.

In short, in Storming Heaven, the grand event was the corporate colonization of a region. The reaction of the colonized was naturally big and noisy as the stakes were raised with each abuse the coal companies heaped upon the miners. Deaths called for justice to be enacted, a reaction which often resulted in more deaths. But in The Unquiet Earth, the action had to do with assimilation, a quieter process, until the union proved corrupted, and the miners chose a wildcat strike. Violence, again, seemed the only answer. In the latter part of the book, Jackie goes to Washington, D. C. to live and work. At this time, various groups demonstrate outside the Capitol and other government agencies to lobby or draw attention to issues they felt needed attention. This seemed to stand in contrast to the

decades of protest on behalf of the coal miners who felt forced to resort to violence in order to bring about change. Dillon, now elderly, travels to Washington, D. C. to participate in support for Black Lung laws. The protests have become civil and nonviolent, as Albion called for long ago. However, activist Dillon is uncomfortable with this form of activism and has little faith that it will affect policy.

With her second Appalachian novel, and while adhering closely to the actual events in history, Giardina took on the heavyweight subjects of colonization and the resulting assimilation, and government bureaucracy. She examined the spiritual nature of this evolving society. She tackled complicated personal relationships and psychology, all the while setting preconceived notions of stereotypes aside.

John Howland put it so well in his review of The Unquiet Earth: "Yet there are moments when The Unquiet Earth almost breaks out in song, praising food, and fellowship and warmth and plentitude, as well as the various powers of kinship, self-sufficiency, and quick minds."

Chapter Four

Conclusion

"This is what obsessed me."--Denise Giardina

When I read Denise Giardina's two Appalachian novels, my instinct was to approach her material through her characters, and I think my instinct was and is correct. It is through her characters that one can see the true nature and strength of her writing, with her ability to create complex and complete psychologies for each person. It is through characters that she invites readers into the concrete world of colonialism and assimilation, and invites us to consider political and theological matters. Her grasp of what makes people behave the way they do is an ability which gives a quality to her writing that I would call her gift. Through her characters, the story makes sense of a confusing, and perhaps alien, society. Her writing encourages an understanding of the society's mores and cultural inclinations, the hallmark of a talented writer of fiction.

She has said that her characters take on a life of their own, and though her imagination places them in a concrete world, one with clear boundaries, she nevertheless allows them free will. They act and react according to each character's nature and psychology, and this is the secret to her accomplishment. No character stands as a representative type, and since she builds from character, no narration, description, or plot development risks being stereotypical.

In considering the characters of her novels, I am reminded of something I once heard her say about people who fascinate her: "I'm interested in people who take a dangerous stand. I have a soft spot for people who do that. We make good and bad people larger than

life. That's what I like to explore."

Each novel has characters who take dangerous stands and who seem larger than life. Yet, behind each character she has developed a psyche which may explain why it is that the characters reach the decisions made. Through male characters, for example, Giardina explores elements of altruism and risk-taking. Rondal Lloyd, in Storming Heaven, carries the burden of his father, and all fathers in the coal fields, who must send their sons into the mines. His sympathy for their grim resignation, coupled with rejection by his mother due to her fear (a common reaction among many mothers of that time) is further weighted by the fears of unsafe mining conditions. In a way, Rondal heeds a call not unlike that of the preacher Albion Freeman, as each faces individual dangers to further the cause for humane treatment. Rondal's sympathy, rage, and hurt combine to form a man whose zeal elevates him to the level of martyr, though not in the vein of Joan of Arc, for his flaws are apparent. But he becomes a legend to the miners after his death.

Rondal's counterpart in The Unquiet Earth is Dillon Freeman. He is a man who seeks to understand his martyred father, a man he never met. It is quite a legacy to live up to, and interestingly, like Albion (whose last name he shared) Dillon found his reason d'etre in the Bible. Neither Rondal nor Dillon seems to falter in his zealotry to forge a better life for miners, though each faces discouragement and frustration. By contrast, the two ministers, Albion in Storming Heaven and Tom Kolwiecki in The Unquiet Earth do falter in their faith, which hampers their ability to aid others and themselves. Albion, a No Heller, knows that in heaven the miners and the mine owners will storm the gates of heaven together. He finds it difficult to reconcile this notion with reality. Tom suffers grave doubts

about his ability to become a priest, falling into the habit of heavy drinking, succumbing to his desire for Jackie, doubting his church, and believing himself to be a coward. However, each eventually finds a measure of peace within himself before he dies. I have found that the ambiguity with the larger moral questions, as manifested within the clergy in these novels, is the theological matter Giardina places center stage in all of her books. Perhaps this is because Giardina has admitted that she has struggled with her own faith. During her study of Bonhoeffer while writing Saints and Villains, she says the effort to understand his theological stance helped bring her back to her own church. She now characterizes her faith "as a struggle to live in God." She had gone to seminary because she thought she had received a call from God to be ordained. She now believes she went because she needed the education to write (Oder).

One of the most important of many accomplishments in these two novels is Giardina's portrayal of the female characters. They, too, take risks as evidenced in the physical show of strength as some swing weapons against the mine guards and scab truck drivers. However, it is the inner strength of these women I think Giardina shows foremost of all traits. Within the context of their cultures, and in a society where choices often fell between the lesser of two evils, many women, such as Carrie Freeman, Rachel Honaker, and Louella Day, show extraordinary mental strength, physical stamina, and intelligence in handling their individual situations.

Although I have discussed mainly the major characters of each novel, the minor characters are well developed and deserve further analysis. For example, minister Doyle Ray in The Unquiet Earth, reveals a tortured young man who tries to find answers in his faith and

in kudzu growing on a tree. In Storming Heaven, African Americans Sam Gore and Doc Booker (Booker later appears in Giardina's latest novel Saints and Villains) deserve further study to understand racial relations of the time. These are only a few of the characters for which analysis and critique would prove enlightening. Beyond a close study of characters as a means to understanding Giardina's literature, the cultural components of the societies of which she writes require study that would be particularly valuable, as the impact from colonialism and assimilation has clearly changed the societies of which she writes in irreversible and dramatic ways. Changes have occurred to such basic cultural components as music, food, and the nature of man's relationship with the land.

I have discussed the realities of the internal colonialism of the central Appalachians which began shortly before the turn of this century. But the inhabitants of the coal fields, when coal became the driving force behind West Virginia's economics, did not realize fully that they were being colonized nor foresee all of the consequences of that colonization. They did, of course, realize the problems inherent with power, particularly that which often comes with wealth. Few escaped the effects of that power and the subsequent unequal distribution in their lives.

Power bestowed by wealth can at times be reason enough for any kind of action, and the result of that power is that it can distort people's sense of justice. Colonizers see a resource and are convinced that whatever the cost to seize it, they are justified in the seizure. In Appalachia, the resources were what the land held, such as coal for fuel, which was needed to power the factories in the urban areas, and timber, harvested to build homes and coal tipples. But to get to them, and harvest them, the people became a resource to exploit,

too.

Knowledge about the colonization of foreign lands has been well known for hundreds of years. Yet, only recently has the notion of internal colonization in Appalachia been understood. Information gathering about the internal colonization of Appalachia continues through research and study by sociologists, economists, politicians, historians, and readers and writers of literature. Giardina's careful and factual depiction of southern West Virginia and eastern Kentucky societies adds to our knowledge, particularly as she has represented those from within the marginalized society.

Giardina has said that she wanted to write a novel about coal miners that a coal miner could read and to which he could relate. Her vivid descriptions leave one with the feeling that a once alien world has been thoroughly illustrated. Also, she is concerned with helping people see a truth, not necessarily her truth, but a truth. "There's a responsibility to say something that's true, make people think, but also help them connect with something larger than themselves" (Oder).

Though Giardina may be telling the story of people long dead, as in Storming Heaven, or still alive, as portrayed by those characters in The Unquiet Earth, part of that accomplishment is that she is telling her own story. She firmly believes in the need to tell stories, and she also believes that each person must tell his or her own. If an individual can do so, then the silences Tillie Olsen alluded to in her book will lessen and the marginalized in every society might be heard. But part of the solution rests with the fact that there must be audiences willing to listen, particularly those audiences in academia who continue to validate, control, and designate which literature is worthy reading.

Fortunately, the numbers of works have increased for the public and the scholars to critique and analyze, and among the ranks of the best of authors are several from Appalachia. Giardina shares characteristics with many of the authors from this region, all of whom continue to mark a place of distinction in contemporary fiction of the late twentieth century. From her home state, there are Richard Currey, Mary Lee Settle, Pinckney Benedict, and Breece DJ Pancake (deceased), among others. Regionally, I would add Lee Smith to that list. Specifically, all of them write of place, telling rich stories about the people of West Virginia or Appalachia, with most using the post modernist technique of realism.

In some fashion, all of the above have had some influence on Giardina's writing. Other writers who influenced her are William Faulkner, Flannery O' Connor, Cormac McCarthy, Milan Kundera, Richard Llewellyn, Shakespeare, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and the writers of the Bible.

Certainly, Giardina deserves to be placed among the ranks of late twentieth century writers of realism as having written works of enduring quality. She belongs among writers such as Bobbie Ann Mason and Barbara Kingsolver, each of whom are adept at translating the everyday into the dramatic stories of the common life. Kingsolver, herself a native of Kentucky, writes most of her stories set in the Southwest. Mason, who is also from Kentucky, but not in the an area included in the official "borders" which designate Appalachia, writes from a more Midwestern perspective. What is most important to consider when thinking about Giardina's writing regarding region, is that rather than confining Giardina to the label of regional writer, it would be more accurate to label her (if it is necessary to label anyone) a talented fiction writer of realism who lives in Appalachia.

Yet, it is also important to note that Appalachia as a region is no more or less valid than any other region of the world as a place for authors to come from and to write about.

In most discussions of her writing, Giardina has said that she cannot write about something which does not obsess her. She remarked that even if there had been books on the bestseller lists about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, she would have written Saints and Villains anyway. She believes that whatever anyone writes, it should obsess and even possess them. "If it doesn't obsess you, I doubt if you could get it to come alive" (Douglass 386). Her obsession is our good fortune.

Just as Giardina has said that she could not believe that so few authors had written the stories about the coal mine wars other than as nonfiction, I found it difficult to believe that little analysis and scholarly research had been conducted on her work. Perhaps the rationale for this oversight can be lifted from the pages of Storming Heaven. A miner asks a preacher about why the time had come for a strike against the coal company of the magnitude that everyone knew would result in deaths and would probably lead to war: "Why now? Why not ten year ago? Ten year from now?" The preacher answers, "Hit's the fullness of time" (181).

It is the fullness of time for Giardina and her literature.

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