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Ecocriticism of Denise Giardina's *Storming Heaven* and *The Unquiet Earth*

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Title: Ecocriticism of Denise Giardina's *Storming Heaven* and *The Unquiet Earth*

In *Storming Heaven* (1987) and its sequel *The Unquiet Earth* (1992), set in coal mining country near the West Virginia and Kentucky border, author Denise Giardina highlights a people and culture that were dependent on the environment and affected by its desecration. While the novels have been framed as regional texts and analyzed through religious and class lenses, critics have yet to analyze the texts with an environmental lens. This paper examines how coal extraction affects the environment and characters in *Storming Heaven* and *The Unquiet Earth* and calls attention to the continued effects on the contemporary landscape. Giardina details the lasting effects of more than 100 years of environmental degradation. Her description of the changes in the environment and its people can be viewed as a warning as to what can happen when coal companies, rooted in capitalist modes of production, create conditions in which people do not live in harmony with the Earth. As a people and culture traditionally dependent on land and natural water sources for survival, industrial coal mining drastically alters their sense of identity and connection to the region and its environment. Prompted by the theoretical concept of solastalgia, defined by environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht to describe place-based distress, Giardina reimagines the people and place transformed by the industrialization of Central Appalachia.