

## Demystifying Ecofeminism: An Analysis of Ann Pancake's Strange as This Weather Has Been

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### Abstract

*This article highlights the ruthless treatment of Appalachian landscape by the capitalists through critical analysis of Ann Pancake's novel Strange As This Weather Has Been (2007). The article argues that biodiversity is being lost due to the practices of capitalists and patriarchal stakeholders, who alienate people, especially minority groups from their natural habitats, and perform ecocide in the region what Jason W Moore calls Capitalocene. Markedly, women and nature are the subaltern objects in these minority groups, which are abused by the agents of patriarchy and capitalism, and subsequently brings gender, class and land exploitation. Mountain Top Removal (MTR), in which the surface of the mountain is removed through a mechanical process is the commonest among these treatments bringing health hazards to the community. By using the concepts of Carolyn Merchant in favor for mining communities, this research further unveils the far-reaching extraction of coal and timber leaving the zone without monetary, ecological and social growth. The Paper also highlights women's rejection of the essentialists' claim of staying at home, and Appalachian women's political stance to keep their roots intact. This research is significant because it addresses the structural disparities done to the Appalachian region and raises voices for their civil rights through this creative fiction. It concludes that Appalachian women have transformative potential for their rights and sustainable lifestyle.*

**Keywords:** Appalachia, Biodiversity, Capitalocene, Ecofeminism, Mountain Top Removal

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## 1. Introduction

Eco-feminism refers to feminist approaches and activism informed by various practices in favor of ecological strength. It does so by addressing the issues of subjugation of women or marginalized sections of society along with nature. Eco-theorists struggle to liberate nature from the realm of objectification and Western discourse of modern science or essentialists' conception which is informed by portraying nature as feminine. Ecofeminists also critique the conceptual link between women and nature – women closer to nature and the processes of inferiority that mutually reinforce each other. They propose awareness that brings transformed consciousness instead of practicing any kind of axiological or environmental ethics (Kheel, 2008). Ecofeminists also proclaim that nature never favors dualistic or hierarchical practices that are considered standards for social transformation and justify the position of patriarchy. However, this change can only be brought through resource development strategies like getting the services of NGOs, live campaigns, mass, social and print media.

Francois d'Eaubonne was the pioneer of the term ecofeminism in *Le Feminisme ou la Morte* in 1974 to refer to the potential of women to bring about an ecological revolution. Ecofeminists talk about hierarchical dualism, according to which all high, prestigious and subtle traits are bestowed on masculinity rather than femininity (Warren, 1993). However, while preventing this hierarchical dualism, ecofeminists prefer their ideology which considers women and nature as dominant, because for ecofeminists, ideology is the point of juncture, and for them, it is the role of ideology when women and nature are considered dominant. Ecofeminists like Gwyn Kirk argue that to make this utopia a fact, it is needed to promote the ideology of equality, non-violence and non-hierarchical systems. Furthermore, there is a need to hold nature and all living things, whether non-human in the highest regard (Kirk, 1997). By considering the further theoretical standpoint, that “personal is political” ecofeminists argue that the sphere of a female's private life is as important as that of a male. They argue that they are in dire need to change the dominant patriarchal nature in the prevalent system of society by shifting control and

power from patriarchy (Gaard, 1993), whereas as a social movement, ecofeminism has the influence of postcolonialism and socialist materialism/ Marxism on it. It is a straightforward nature/ culture binary that joins women naturally to nature. Further, Social ecologists believe that the root cause of all oppression is hierarchy (Campbell 2008). In the context of current study, in ecofeminism, women play the principal role in saving the native land, its nature and the environment from the atrocities of powerful or capitalists' agendas. They act as activists and vanguards by putting themselves in danger. They take part in protests and organize rallies, and the Appalachian women consider their men too as participants in environmental destruction.

The present study deals with the narrative written by an Appalachian woman writer – Ann Pancake, who represents her culture and her people in her writings. Moreover, she informs about their relationships, approaches and experiences towards nature. Pancake, a writer from West Virginia, writes with superb accuracy, drawing from conversations and interviews with the people who have lived through and experienced mountaintop removal mining. *Strange As This Weather Has Been*, shows the decency and boldness of Lace and her teenage daughter, Bant amid the calamitous effects of coal mining. The novel further reveals awareness about mountain removal mining and its effect on the lives of people and the surrounding landscape. With multiple voices, which act as a replica of the originals, Pancake shows the poor community's exploitation by capitalists, and the community's counter-response, especially the response of women to save their earth and environment. As Lace says in the novel: "Stay in their way—that's the only language they can hear. We are from here, it says. This is our place, it says. Listen here, it says, we exist" (Pancake, 2007, 171).

In this way, this research problematizes that biodiversity is being lost due to capitalists and industrialists' practices, which alienate people, especially minority groups from their natural habitats, and perform ecocide in the organic regions of Appalachia. Women and nature are the particular objects of these groups, which are abused by the agents of patriarchy and capitalism, which subsequently brings gender, class and land exploitation. Thereby, this research

explores the exploitation of Appalachian women and nature by patriarchal and capitalist stakeholders in Ann Pancake's *Strange As This Weather Has Been*. For ecofeminists, these social and environmental issues are a plague to civilization, as they consider, life in nature is only nurtured through collective efforts, attention and affection.

Capitalocene is understood as "a system or framework of power, profit and re/production in the web of life" (Moore, 2017, p. 595). McBrien (2016) extends the concept by calling it Necrocene – since the system does not only gather capital but drives annihilation in the region. In the Appalachian region, it is not only capitalist development projects what Moore calls Capitalocene, but a deep extermination of the native people and their resources what he again calls Capitalogenic (Moore, 2017, p. 597). It can be said that capitalism is the center of biospheric crisis what is Capitalocene. Furthermore, Mountain Top Removal (MTR) is the second term used in this research work, which applies to erasing the upper part of the mountains to get natural resources. The process is accomplished while dumping all the litter in nearby valleys, therefore bringing environmental pollution. Additionally, removal of trees becomes a source of floods, and brings further destruction to the environment and community.

### **1.1 Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to address the exploitation of Appalachian women and the ruthless treatment that is done to their land for capitalist purposes. Afterwards, the study also unveils how female characters refute the essentialists' claim and work for the safety of their land and environment in the present novel.

### **1.2 Significance of the Study**

This research constitutes the basis for Appalachian women who are bearing the troublesome treatment of patriarchy and capitalists. These forces are not only performing ecocide, hence destroying biodiversity in the region but the stakeholders are also alienating people from their natural habitat. The study significantly addresses the issues of subaltern objects – women and nature,

which are being abused by the agents of patriarchy and capitalism; subsequently bringing class, gender and land exploitation.

## 2. Review of Literature

Authors like Henry D. Shapiro comments about Appalachia, “Appalachia lodges a prominent role in the standard popular imagination. Tinted with the characteristics of otherness- instinctive and unreasoning behavior or well-preserved heritage that can otherwise be called tradition in a progressive society like America- this land has performed multiple significant functions by which the standard norms, ‘conventional’ American culture has reflected, and reconciled challenges to its preferred identity” (Shapiro, 1978, p. 12). Similarly, Allan Batteau in the book edited by Engelhardt have commented about Appalachia, “Perhaps not surprisingly, then, considering this longstanding appropriation within urban, industrial concepts of progress and civilization, Appalachia has remained a site of extensive source extraction. Exploitative industries like timber, coal, and mining have left economic, environmental, and social demolition. In this entire scenario, leading scholars suggest that Appalachia represents a ‘Sacrificing Zone’ or an internal colony” (Engelhardt, 2005, p. 33).

There are more than a hundred unprecedented Appalachian women writers including both, established authors and incipient voices working within varying degrees of phases of history and genres. This group of writers displays incredible talent at home and around the globe. Their literature is loud and harrowing with bitter experiences of rape, discrimination, psychological and physical torture, displacement, rural poverty, dispossession of land, the nostalgia of the past culture, identity crises, settlements, and their life at reservations. Subsequently, their literature is harsh and sometimes angry as well. To name a few, these writers are Harriette Simpson Arnow, Nikki Giovanni, Annie Dillard, Denise Giardina, Jayne Anne Phillips, Barbara Kingsolver, George Ella Lyon, and Lee Smith (Sydnee & Beder, 2001). I have chosen a writer from the same tribe but her works are less researched, and secondly, her work is relevant to the research interest at present.

Ann Pancake informs about the Appalachians who have been on reservation for centuries, whom she calls 'insiders', and criticizes those who came just now, the 'outsiders', who dispossessed them, came towards frightening mountaintop removal and brought detachment and coldness. She is of the view that outsiders come and do business with them and show their haughty behavior. Also, through her fiction, she exposes the political interest of newcomers doing well in Appalachia for the smooth and sustainable functioning of this tribe, thereby representing the political paradox of working gradually (toward complete destruction). She devises her strategy for Americans to learn from these political people who serve their interests without taking care of the people. The setting of her works, most of the time is West Virginia, which she calls home with a very complex culture and place. As she says in an interview, "So being far away from here gave me the perspective to see what we had back here (Pancake, 2010). Hence, she is a writer with vision, literary insight and unusual language.

Her novel is an unwavering portrayal of a pitiable West Virginian family living in the shadow of a strip mine. On one side, it talks about Lace's longing for the hometown, practices of discrimination, and hostility, and on the other side, there are local facts about mountaintop removal mining and its aftereffects. The heart-wrenching tale of the novel takes place after real experiences and interviews by the writer with the local community intending to raise awareness in the community and around the globe to educate people that playing with nature brings shocking repercussions (Williams, 1978). Georgian writer and environmental activist, Janisse Ray has remarked Pancake's writings in general as "Shockingly pure, like holding gold in your hands, while the work *Strange As This Weather Has Been* as a true novel thronged with beauty and poetics aims at change and justice" (Ray, 2003). For critics such as Dan Chaon, Pancake's work is "astonishing, tender, alive, full of heart and empathy but never sentimental, full of clenched drama and secrets and surprises but always subtle" (Chaon, 2012).

Similarly, for Terry, the observation about Pancake goes as,

There are few writers as capable of leading the discussion as Pancake. Her award-winning fiction captures the complexity of life in Southern West Virginia, where set against the collision of nature and industry, her characters persevere amid the competing interests of family, community, religion, and work. Their struggle, formed by looming forces, mirrors that of West Virginia itself, grappling with its own identity. Nationally recognized writer Pancake tells Appalachia's story in such a way that it reflects its humanity without turning a blind eye or ignoring its challenges (WVU Tech Appalachian Writers, Lecture, 2019).

Britani W Baker's paper attempts to analyze the manipulation of men working at coal mines in Ann Pancake's novel *Strange As This Weather Has Been*. The study also explores the effects of this industry on the lives of the indigenous family and the overall community. Her research suggests that the novel uses the approach of material ecofeminism to both critically evaluate and argue the text's gender politics, whereas this research puts forward the argument that the novel associates men with machinery and the coal mining industry and they are passive to ecological destruction (2017, p. 30).

Capitalists by acting as imperial masters make the people submissive and also bring environmental damage as Fareed Zakaria attempts to recognize in his article that America's cultural, social and democratic system informs about the gaps and inconsistencies of obvious abuses and injustices. Destructive industrial practices disturb the social and familial contacts of the poor yellow-roots residents of Appalachia, where characters get angry and violent against the self-centered and indifferent capitalists. Her research concludes that white people's burden of civilizing border countries is included in their double standards towards the rights of minorities, but some characters like Bant act as discrete others who rebel against these people's restrictions (Zakaria, 2011).

### **3. Theoretical Orientation**

The theoretical orientation for this research is Ecofeminism from the perspective of Carolyn Merchant. In her book, she is of the view that global ecological crises

are far beyond the environmental crises of the 70s, which are bringing alarming situations for the whole planet. Merchant argues that the image of nature from a kind mother gradually transformed into a disordered, wild and capable of bringing violent storms and draughts and was only subdued, mastered and controlled by the man of science what she calls 'the scientific revolution'. It distorted the image of nature and exploited the poor residents of organic areas. She illustrates this when she discusses the process of mining.

An increase in Carbon dioxide, ozone depletion, emission of chlorofluorocarbon, and acid rains are disturbing Mother Earth's circulatory system. Toxic wastes from industrial processes and herbicides go into groundwater, oceans and marshes, bringing many species of animals and plants to extinction. So, she suggests a new partnership between humans and the earth as an urgent need. She also thinks that a shift from feudalism to capitalism is responsible for this drastic change and the loss of the organic world (Merchant, 1980).

Merchant further argues that due to prevalent images and culturally accepted metaphors, women are taken close to nature. Earth was taken as a beneficent mother to provide the universe in an organized way, which only vanished with the arrival of the Scientific Revolution to mechanize the worldview. Mining was an abuse of mother earth, as Roman writers like Ovid, Pliny, Seneca, and philosophers censured. It was started by the Europeans after arriving in the new world, and hence, it was a breach of human ethics. Similarly, the mechanical process of Uranium Mining on reservation brings health hazards, as it increases cancer cases there. So, to go back from these modern ideologies of progress and return to the pre-industrial period, water, wind, sun, wood, and intermediate labor-intensive ideologies can help to restore the ecological balance.

Merchant is of the view that technologies that are in harmony with natural cycles rather than bringing their exploitation also need to be developed. She also removes gender-based terminology from the account of nature while substituting it with a neutral term 'partner' (Merchant, 1980). Mrs. Overton Ellis and Margaret Russel Knudsen claim that "conservation in its material and



ethical sense is the basic principle in the life of a woman” and “home is women’s domain and then added environmental activism in this domain” respectively. Carolyn Merchant responds to these essentialist or stereotypical claims that women can both be feminists and progressive while playing the role of an activist, which is, though, for the public interest, but they may be conservative about their traditional values and lifestyle which have been rooted in their material interests” (Merchant, 1980).

An Indian environmentalist, postcolonial critic and activist, Shiva’s selected ideas from her book *Staying Alive* are linked to the present study and have been used for textual interpretation. Shiva like Merchant elaborates that women are an intimate part of nature, both in imagination and in practice. At one level nature is depicted as the feminine to produce life and provide nourishment. On the other hand, women produce and reproduce life not merely biologically but also through their social role in providing sustenance and that violation of nature is linked with the violation and marginalization of women, especially in the Global South (Shiva, 1989).

Women of South Asia what, now, preferably calls the Global South have been dispossessed of their base for sustenance, but not of their minds, and in their uncolonized minds are conserved the contrasting categories that make the sustenance of life possible. All women embedded in nature, producing life with nature, are therefore considering and taking the initiative in the recovery of nature and the new insight provided by rural women in the Global South that women and nature are associated not with passivity but creativity and in the maintenance of life. She calls this mal-development of nature due to colonizers’ activities as mal(e)development. She also gives disturbing explanations to describe the current situation of the earth, as the earth is rapidly dying, her forests are dying, her water is dying and her air is dying (Shiva, 1989). It is the capitalist exploitation of men that creates the men/women binary in Appalachia by forcing men to work in mining mechanics, leading to health hazards, economic exploitation and ecological disasters as Pancake’s work exposes.

It is qualitative research in which the text has been interpreted through close textual analysis to know the cultural patterns and experiences of Appalachian American tribes on reservations in their environmental, ideo-geographical, and political setting. Primary data, the text of the selected novel has been closely read to find references as evidence to support this research. Secondary data, which consists of different available and accessible interpretive, theoretical books, articles, journals and research papers, has also been used to inform research analysis. The chosen theorist for my research is Carolyn Merchant and, I have taken *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and Scientific Revolution*, because it is a key text to serve the purpose of the current research.

#### **4. Analysis and Discussion**

The paradigm of ecology regarding mountaintop removal/strip mining includes the study of unnecessary mountaintop removal and their disposal in nearby valleys impacting its streams' quality water and life of diverse aquatic species. Also, it deals with and covers forests, biodiversity, human health and safety. This research analyses these aspects in Ann Pancake's work *Strange As This Weather Has Been*. Appalachian writers share their firsthand experiences to convey the century's long social, economic and political injustices and cruelties towards their land. Their literature is flourishing; it covers oral tradition to postmodern and contemporary times. The historian has not made Appalachian women, authors like Cooke, Miles, Francis Goodrich and Lucy Furman, part of scholarship on environmental activism, therefore, these literary writers write to convey these historians to acknowledge and broaden the definition of literature when theorizing about women within that paradigm of environmental activism. It is because nature acts as a community for these Appalachian American women. The exploitation of resources in Appalachia, these writers write, is to that much extent which historian Albert Cowdrey terms "exploitation unlimited" (Cowdrey, 2014).

Pancake elaborates that human beings are away from each other, less social or alone because of Mining activities. This social distance is the root cause of philosophical and spiritual separation from the environment and the world

around us. Pancake pleads her case successfully by showing what MTR does to the human and aquatic community – the irredeemable loss. Hence, being the daughter of that land, she voices against political and social injustices being done to her people and pitiless activities being done to their organic land. In this way, she plays a critical role in keeping the legacy of her ancestors alive.

A close reading of the text shows Pancake, a well-observant and experienced writer, who manifests her people's plight by putting her characters into a dangerous territory of the country. It is the region where capitalists' mountaintop removal activities have destroyed the scenery and the ecosystem. Within the West Virginia setting, the protagonist, Lace is battling with the ruthless capitalists running coal mining companies, and ruining the land, quality of water and health of the people through mountaintop removal activities. These capitalists are plundering the new world and what Merchant says breaching the ethics of humanity (Merchant, 1980).

However, Lace's daughter Bantella/Bant is another active frontline warrior, who, with her mother stands up against her father and brothers, who are working as minors and ultimately endangering their lives by living from hand to mouth. It is a social and moral dilemma that Appalachia is the most forgotten and underprivileged tribe, as pancake manifests in her writing, "growing up here, you get the message very early on that your place is more backward than anywhere in the US and nobody worth much will get out soon as they can, and that doesn't come only from outside" (Pancake, 2007, p. 135). Researcher Durrans also speaks out in the same terrain highlighting that Appalachia, though rich in natural resources, for long, has remained a poor territory due to the robbing of timber and coal. Further, adding to the detail, she notes that mountaintop removal includes the removal of the topsoil to extract coal and to build tunnels or railroads. The process leads its people to be deprived and without any capital to pass on to generations. Moreover, women are doubly deprived of being ostracized socially and economically (Durrans, 2018); nonetheless, they are shown with a sense of responsibility when they stand up against the male members of their families who are complicit towards bringing ecological destruction and therefore climate change. Globally, women are with

this wisdom of responsibility for the safety and restoration of indigenous nature.

As theorized by Merchant, the text also enlightens about the role of the scientific revolution and a shift from feudalism to capitalism in this destruction and deprivation of Appalachia. Commonly, the owner of the strip mining blasts the mountain with the help of explosives, which leads to vulnerabilities in the form of blackened water, recurrent dumping of debris in nearby valleys, deforestation and flooding of noxious water. It brings demolition to human and aquatic life. In the text, Yellowroot Mountains have been hit. Lace and Jimmy Make, along with their children on the way to their hometown in West Virginia observe the same destruction of the flood and the damages done by the blast. Big trees have fallen on hollow sides. There are new burrows filled with toxic water and piles of rubbish. Ponds are stuffed with sediments and residues. The top of the Yellowroot mountain range is blasted into pieces. It shows that the absence of trees and reservoirs filled with rubbish becomes the grounds for floods. All this process has also destroyed the system of transportation, and it is startling that children experience all this devastation (Pancake, 2007).

Bant further gives a meticulous account of the ruins. She is an awe-inspiring observer and feels heartache for her people, land and community. She has the same talent as her mother. She observes that it is all black, as the blast has uprooted all the greenery. There is roughness and no weather. Further, the flood is without any warning. The backyard of their own house is filled with water. Bant's brother, Corey and her father, Jimmy touch the walls of the house while standing in the creek of water. Flood has changed everything. People have lost their property. Moreover, "all the fish and crawdads died" (Pancake, 2007, p. 59). The goat drowned in the strong current of water, and Nathan was about to drown in an attempt to rescue it. Every mountain range has a hollow with it. The flood over another side, Slatybank Hollow has created a terrible situation and people are abandoning this place for grassy areas. Walking paths have been tumbledown and filled with stinky water. But some never left the place, such as Lace's family and the person with truck parts in Slatybank. Bant adds that the smell of November rains is left yet to rot the leaves (Pancake, 2007). This

destruction speaks of the idea of ecocide and Moore's concept of Capitalocene since capitalists have played their part in the destruction of natural land for their monetary agendas, thus leaving the land with more rains, floods and diseases.

Contrary to the female characters are men – Corey and his father Jimmy. Corey is also called a little Jimmy due to similar habits of his father. Jimmy and Corey have internalized all this exploitation, working on MTR, and minor wages. So, when it blasts on the top of the mountain or when the flood comes, they go out to watch, taking it as an adventure (Pancake, 2007, p. 41). Moreover, he has a mechanical mind. Their approach in this regard is not rational, and it ironically serves ecofeminists' idea of associating men with culture. This gender binary not only serves the literary taste of the writers (what is cultured in these binaries which men associate with them considering it superior, delivering power, etc.) but highlights identity politics also (by identifying men with culture – powerful, dominant and superior, and women with nature – fragile, subordinate and inferior). It is the point where Merchant's idea of a 'gender-neutral partnership' can work better for the health and survival of the planet.

Grandparents, especially mothers, play a pivotal role in Appalachian literature. In this narrative, it is Lace, Bant, and the grandmother who speak out in favor of their land. Their effort indicates Shiva's stance that they not only produce biologically but provide sustenance in the social atmosphere also. Bant's grandma, when Bant throws wrappers in the backyard, says, "You live off these mountains, Bant," and "You don't dirty up where you eat" (Pancake, 2007, p. 45). Moreover, she opines that only Bant is different with an intense love for the land, and the same has been said for Aunt Moge. In this way, grandma's epigrammatic style imparts land ethics and love for the homeland. Also, she seems to end up on the front lines of protest against environmental degradation. She acts as a didactic figure and helps in explaining the traditional idea that due to gender 'feminine', and allies of nature, women have distinctive liabilities to care for nature and save this planet (Merchant, 1980). Bant also notes that her grandma is worried due to violence on that piece of ground she loves the most. In this narrative, this is how female characters, no matter young or old, are explicitly involved to save the earth to make it a livable place. As Carole Ganim

also notices that dynamically, “women have accomplished an “ethic of caring,” a union of matter and spirit that are not present in the patriarchy” (Ganim, 1986, p. 258).

Bant shares her observation that looking at the dead mountain was her death. Through this metaphorical death of Bant, Pancake highlights women’s connection to the natural habitat. Bant wished that she had not seen that destruction. Her eyes were burning with heat, gases, and coal dust, and ‘there was a need to open them wide’ (Pancake, 2007, p. 56). She seems devoted to the land and grandma alike. She delineates the annotations of herself and grandma that capitalists wants to uproot the roots of Native Appalachian people showing further how capitalism becomes the center of biospheric crisis in the region what Jason Moore calls Capitalocene (Moore, 2017). Grandma loves her quiet places, places with sharpness, landscapes, and with lush greenery that “you have to slow down to refocus your eyes”, and “then they become newer places, bulldozers, loaders, raw muddy roads, copper with black flecks, and all shit” (Pancake, 2007, p. 67). They have transformed their land from organic to inorganic, agrarian to industrial, mountainous to plain and green to black. They have snatched the beauty of the land and habitat of all living beings. They are playing with humanity.

Putting Merchant’s claim of ruining the health of living beings because of scientific revolution or technological advancement into work, the text establishes several illustrations. For example, the mechanical practice of Uranium Excavating on reservations, especially in Appalachia brings health hazards to the workers and community. Polluted air during this process damages the air sacs of the lungs. In Pancake’s narrative, Mrs. Taylor is the first skeptic about the end of the world due to the ongoing circumstances, and secondly, she is facing the troubles brought by this mining process; she is suffering from Emphysema. She is fighting with coal dust. Her children are in Cleveland. Lace and Jimmy’s son Dane attend to her all the time. Mrs. Taylor’s house is among many houses so, every time, her house and yard are safe from water’s atrocities, but this time it hit her house also.

This current demolition reminds her of the past and Mrs. Taylor talks about the menace of Buffalo Creek, which the February 26, 1972, flood had brought. This memory of her carries the trauma of the past along with the oral tradition of storytelling of these Appalachian people, while, watching the devastation of her house, “her emphysema rises, wheezing starts, which makes the situation wretched and scares to death” (Pancake, 2007, p. 78). Helpless Mrs. Taylor asks to open the Bible and recites, “God will bring ruin to those ruining the earth” (Pancake, 2007, p. 132). For her, it was a better remedy to console the conscience, when she is unable to respond to those destructions by taking some practical action. She offers a vibrant picture of the complexities of the region. Moreover, the death of Lace’s father due to a respiratory tract infection augments the existing picture, especially, when oxygen even fails to function (Pancake, 2007). Merchant’s suggestion that moving back to the pre-industrial period, water, wind, wood, and sun, amidst labor-intensive ideologies can only help to reinstate the ecological steadiness that can work better for the healthy survival of these people.

In the coming times, while talking to Lucy, Mrs. Taylor says that the flood’s destruction cannot be put into words. It seemed as if “the world went inside out” (Pancake, 2007, p. 205). Everything smashed. Everything went disordered. Black mud was everywhere. People were rising out of the black mud. This havoc makes the reader cry, especially, when Taylor utters, “truth was, there was left nothing to feel with” (Pancake, 2007, p. 205). It was thorough chaos. Dirty water brought stomach diseases. Children were crying for help, but no one came. Her voice trembles and goes like the working of machines. She asks God for mercy. So, it is valid to say that capitalists through systematic ecocide are threatening all human population in the territory who are promised subjects of the natural resources. Taylor further adds, “They can play with your property”. They can destroy what they want. And, if someone resists, they put them into jail” (Pancake, 2007, p. 246).

The exploitation of the local workers on their land has also remained a centuries-old phenomenon. Hobart’s boarding house works as a resort for those companies working in their region. Jimmy is forced to work there, otherwise,

there is no chance. Lace's daughter Bant ends up working there. She says, "There wasn't any place else around where I could get work" (Pancake, 2007, p. 173). She needs to do work because the flood has messed up her window and she floats in the gasoline smell (Pancake, 2007). Jimmy gets back from North Carolina after his grandma's passing away, but the company does not rehire him. In this way, capitalists act as masters of their fate what McBrien has devised as Necrocene (McBrian, 2016), since the capitalists do not only accomplish their agendas of establishing industries in the territory but also extinct the nature – in the form of robbing nature by cutting timber, and people in the region – when working with chemicals in the industry brings respiratory diseases for the workers and the community. Their livelihoods depend upon capitalist's mercy. Lace talks about unemployment in the 80s. It was at its peak, and the situation is still the same. The only job is to work in coalfields. It is the most deprived region (Pancake, 2007). Clouds of smoke were part of the magazine but with no name of the region, which indicates the capitalists' exploitation of the environment and human rights. It brings pain, anxiety and anger to native people (2007). Whatever they do, or the stance they take goes impractical, and troubled Dane speaks, "seems like there are two laws, one for the rich people, and one for the poor" (2007, p. 175). It was just an outlandish fantasy for all the characters to dissociate themselves from this turmoil. Mogeys thinks that it is the duty of every institution, especially the church to speak against the injustice being done to the environment in the form of dumping of waste, but the church does not speak against this destruction (Pancake, 2007, p. 177), a clear reflection of governing and politicizing the ideological state institutions, which then work according to the command of controlling power.

Moreover, Merchant rejects essentialism and it is vibrantly noted in Pancake's imposing female characters. Bant has spoken earlier. Now, Lace rejects the essentialists' view associated with women due to some psychological features, i.e., empathy and nurturance. She makes calls to the environmental safety department. She takes part in March. She arranges a peace protest. She becomes a spokesperson at several events. She joins big protests at Charleston. She is no less than an environmental activist playing her role in environmental concerns and against ruthless maltreatment of land, which Shiva considers mal-



development, and terms as mal(e)development. Her part of the narrative delivers the harm that rapacious corporations have brought to family relationships for the sake of commercial achievement. Jimmy Make, her husband comes as a resistance keeping in mind that those capitalists, or what Shiva calls colonizers/capitalists will kidnap their children. Lace, a tough-spirited character responds calmly, she will kill them, and she keeps fighting against them. Pancake is successful in establishing her point in support of her community "People aren't dirt. But they know when they're being treated like dirt, whether in the Lower Ninth Ward or the hills of West Virginia". Pancake's voice echoes and adds to Shiva's stance as "the earth is rapidly dying, her forests are dying, her water is dying and her air is dying" (Shiva, 1989, p. 89).

## 5. Conclusion

This article has concluded that the intrusion of capitalists in Appalachia only brought turmoil to its people, especially women, brutalities to land and hardships to biodiversity. It has also been observed, that through firsthand experience, Pancake shares the plight of her community, where Mountaintop Removal (MTR) has become a marker of exploitation. Similarly, deforestation and floods have knocked out organic life further leaving the people economically empty. Moreover, it has been shown that among her characters where some are suffering from emphysema and other respiratory diseases, her robust female characters act as frontline warriors to control the fate of their people and the land showing how women become the saviour of land and landscapes and end up on the front lines of protest against ecological degradation. It has also been evaluated that Merchant's advice of moving back to the pre-industrial period – an organic living with water, wind, wood, and sun, amidst labor-intensive ideologies can only support to restore the environmental stability and to put an end to the exhaustive chaos in the Appalachian region. Further, the research has proved that women repudiate the essentialists' claim, to remain restricted at home, rather they rebuttal to those uncaring capitalists, and are part of environmental activism to improve the plight of their people and the land.

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