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Eco-Trauma and Narrative Agency in Richard Powers's The Overstory (2018)

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Abstract:

This paper explores the intersection of eco-trauma and narrative agency in Richard Powers' *The Overstory*, a novel that intricately interweaves human and arboreal lives to foreground ecological consciousness. The study examines how characters respond to ecological devastation not only through environmental activism but also through storytelling—positioning narrative as a mode of resistance and survival. By analyzing key characters and their interactions with trees, the paper highlights how eco-trauma catalyzes a transformation in narrative voice, challenging anthropocentric paradigms and reimagining agency as shared between humans and the nonhuman world. Ultimately, this work argues that *The Overstory* offers a compelling model for how fiction can articulate ecological grief while empowering alternative forms of storytelling that affirm interconnection, resilience, and ecological justice.

Keywords: *Eco-Trauma;Envirnmental Literature; Nonhuman Agency; Richard Power;Tree Consiousness.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In Richard Powers's *The Overstory*, the representation of the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman life is perceived as both a form of agency and trauma. Whereas in The Echo Maker the traumatic experiences of individual voices do not coincide, The Overstory insists that the voices of exploited and eroded communities be historicized in their interconnectedness. And yet, their affordances to do so do not add to their agency. Rather, the novel portrays with extraordinary detail how their involvement in the colonial armature annihilates the very selves postcolonial scholars assign to them, even as the industry scrapes skyward the spreading and lifelong consolation Powers depicts in echoing regard of the trees on the receiving end. What and whom do storytellers super- or hyper- (or otherwise) set in their narrativity as they exercise agency? Powers has on several occasions stated that *The Overstory* is a sub-fifth on human egotism and atrophy as much as a book of nature. *The Overstory* is invested in the self-presentation of forces and phenomena easily dismissed as blunt, and cartoonish, through a nuanced and multifaceted telling. This work has an ethical and political onus, particularly now as crisis swallows a previously thought infinite abundance of opportunity for millions. If humanism constitutes a foreground, a theatrical piece featuring self-possessed players of remarkable intelligence and aesthetic sensitivity, the trees, insensibly or unfeelingly engaged in shrouded exchanges, gestate a sprawling and cavernous tenebrous background overseen by capital on the short as well as human scales.

But if, for Powers, anthropocentrism is the dangerous disposition, resilient monumentalism is the unearthly obstacle, rendering a dually anthropocentric geohistory of awry supergravitational accounting, with rocks, denizens and disposition hypostatized onto a hard clustering (J. Potkalitsky, 2010). The effect of this for the present viewing individual is a shocking co-optation of sight and action: rather than "understanding" or "fathoming" this world, the Invisible Capacity is pictured almost Platonic, shimmering just beyond contact, hard to forestall, and absolutely impossible to sundry. And secondary forces and phenomena only approximate to human comprehension and representation, whether by structure, field, or more inertial disposition.

2. The Notion of Eco-Trauma:

Ecological trauma occurs when a group or individual is affected by harmful environmental disruptions that have widespread long-term effects (J. Potkalitsky, 2010). Powers's *The Overstory* is a polyphonic tale masterfully spun in nine narratives spanning four centuries. However there is a definite linear progression written into the overarching story on a geologic time scale, this epic novel begins with and ends with a geological disruption that continues to unfold in-between, scaling from blicking insects to colossal redwoods. As those who transgress against nature through oil spills, mass extinction, deforestation, conversion of prairies to cornfields, Smoky Mountains acid rain, predation on the ozone, the diminishing of the great lakes, or fracking come to learn, it would seem the insatiably productive cunning of natural selection is sorely mistaken when founded on the presumption of human reason and goodness. That the West's ecological blind spots are self-imposed and located right at its foundations would seem too monstrous to contemplate. Not in their lamented or pitied less than human state would the Overstory's victims stand best as objects of artful scrutiny, but rather whole in a testimony of resistance and recovery in a loving eye, humbled by grandeur.

The capstone of astrobiology is a new directive to view the world on an exoplanetary time frame like a fiery sports car through the off- and on-ramp-free desert terrain of Yellowstone, Webb, and Hubble eikotomies. Built into reificatory empirical fictions otherwise largely unbound free from the limitations of corporeal sensory modalities, mind bloating staggering numbers would seem an appropriate response to the current great filtering of antiscientific thought shares logics of grand reparative beautiful mathematics with denialists, hoping that human ocular-haptic skin visual exposure to infinity may produce a herd epiphany, an aesthetic shock to the correct world view. Nature writes the greatest saga of all, a tale written deep in the arteries of worlds long dead, red giants petrified in the rings of

Saturn, the brassrods of a race-bettering banjo in the song of a seering dame, an ethereal ballet of particulate encased microbiomes scarfing the metals of Edwin Hubble. The ecosystem of a primordial greenhouse 23 million years into a brief epoch of carnivore giants sifting needless ruin, swimming to orbit and birth a cerulean saint bathed in lonesome sol.

2.1.A Unique Articulation of Trauma:

In *The Overstory*, Richard Powers explores the devastating embodiments of trauma enacted on people, but chiefly trees. Unfortunately, events are too overwhelming in the face of so little memory, how to narrativize the unimaginable permanence of the truncation and exile of trees. The novel's first half – tree-characters each recounting their vivid lives and tumultuous deaths – creates a disjunctive chronology, a mosaic of memories painstakingly retrieved and emplaced. In contrast, the second half follows a far-removed and externally driven linearity: their collective trauma leads the tree-characters to act and speak as one. The freeing of these voices only sparks the further silencing of trees as the narrative abruptly switches to the doomed perspective of a tree-cutting drone. On this plane, Powers explores an utterly unique articulation of trauma, albeit one carrying with it the familiar frustrations of failure and frustration experienced in the aftermath of 9/11. The challenge for Powers is daunting – to reverse the anthropocentrism of narrative, seeing and relaying in a prose that carries the silence of trees yet articulates their viscerality, in a voice that has hoarded more-feeling-than-flesh matters deformally yet cinematically. Powers swims against currents of historical realist storytelling and dominant biopolitical articulations of trauma (Mazel, 1996). Still, far from a deft maneuvering through vexing waters, the narrative surfaces a tangle of overwhelming anxieties and obstructions.

3.Aspects of Narrative Agency:

Narrative agency has recently attracted interest in environmental and eco-critical scholarship, which has drawn on narratology to explore how and why narratives are used at the intersections of environmental crises and political actions (Clay, 2018). Scholars are increasingly attuned to the impact of changing media on storied accounts of environmental crises, but less attention has been paid to the reciprocal effects that changing media technologies have on the agency of storytelling. Narrative agency is needed in the Anthropocene era of the late 58th extinction, and it contains methods of addressing the diminishing and disappearing agency of stories. Narrative agency offers a means to frame and criticize the growing political activism of environmental storytelling. New forms of acting—such as protesting, advocating, and supporting consumer behaviors—emerge in the wake of shifting understandings of the extensiveness of personhood, agency, and action.

Environmental scholars are developing better means of framing narratives of environmental advocacy when activism takes new forms across both reality and representation. It brings tools with which to reconsider old narratives of environmental advocacy, to refocus on the agents of activism and the underlying assumptions of narrative between the agents and actions of "acts of advocacy." Eco-trauma narratives specifically focus on temporality and discipline discourse about narrative agency when it makes a judgment on a story. More narrowly, eco-trauma narratives that work through "acception" and "seek organisms" become an option of ecological advocacy that is overlooked in current narratives of agency. Environmental advocates are viewed as one-categorized agents who have the means to influence an audience's understanding of eco-tragedies and traumas.

3.1. The Question of who Voices the Narrative :

The concept of narrative agency is a largely unexplored yet increasingly important subject in the scholarship of literature and the environment. When thinking about narrative agency, it can initially seem that the stories we tell and hear are the most relevant points of inquiry, given how central narratives are to our understanding and interactions with the world. However, focusing on narrative at the expense of agency runs the risk of assuming storytelling gives rise to agency. Stories could more readily be imagined as things that do things in a way that directs attention away from the recipients of narrative action, and instead

toward narrative structure, form, technology, and other such matters (Guilfoyle, 2017). Alternatively, it may be observed that the stories we take in as readers or participants vary in whether they facilitate, encourage, or even constitute agency. Others still lead only to passivity. The literary narrative can be framed as a matter of medium or form, explored as patterns or structures of time and space. Either frame ultimately risks forgetting that narrative is an act performed by narrators and silently taken up, or perhaps ignored, by addressees (Clay, 2018).

4. *The Overstory*: Perspectives:

Richard Powers' novel *The Overstory* is a narrative of and among trees, whose plot mixes environmental activism with phylogenetically informed ecocritique. Each of the novel's vignettes centers a tree (or group of trees) and the humans who make their lives among them, weaving detailed natural histories through a frame narrative that captures the lives of these humans as their identities blend toward sociopolitical endangerment. The reactions of the author to the extinction crisis are initially confined to an impersonal take on American trees. As the digital revolution turns the world inside out, concerns about the future of corporate trees reaffirm the author's ecological imperative, igniting a desire to tell the story of trees. During the author's failed first attempt at storytelling, the words of university lectures abound. Pained with the failure of timeliness, an allusion reclaims the particular ecocritical voice Powers has shunned. Intercontextual self-reflection, drawing on the relevant voices of ecosophy, informs the interface of wit and mortification in this ferociously funny landscape. Its operations call for a thinly veiled cognizance of once-happily-homed listeners, primal patterns of layering identity that intersect to temporarily recast its emergent cast (J. Potkalitsky, 2010). The strong division and consequent long interludes in extravagance afford thick considerations of the collective finding and loss, an expansive arc that reveals a dramatic plague on the earth of feminization traversable by the non-mimetic voice of emptiness. Along these interludes are embedded anxieties of presence that not far departed find their way into fables decorating major vignettes of intervention. Colourful narrative details of exquisite weight contextualize ecoterrorism, identifying the lost sprout from the tree of life. Still the intertextual energy holds a strange sense of perspective. Amniotic framing is a kind of aware repose measuring objects anew through the long expanse of absence. The inevitability of existence's flowering, the energy born of its processing, saves failure from oblivion on average. Attention escapes proximate detail to know broader historicity, at once brittle and vibrant.

5. The Narrative Performance :

Though relatively few in number, the characters in *The Overstory* bear out the novel’s perspective on capital-h History and ecological devastation. More than other potentials in *The Overstory*, Patricia Westerford, the critical botanist, and Neelay Mehta, the paraplegic computer programmer, stand out as artists. The poet Weston S. S. Kemmerer fails to perform an art that heals the world. It is through the acts of Patricia and Neelay, however, that Prothero proposes a narrative agency conducive to the tasks of telling and listening. Reflection on environmental narratives, the narration of a trauma collective in a fool’s errand, and a realistic resolution broadly defined as a new totality, stir Patricia’s disjointed desires, inform her artistic work, and reconcile currently disconnected selves. Conversely, the creation of a poetic representation of capital-h History, the struggle with collective alienation, and the narrative agency in the narrative performance of prosthetic memory stay Nealay Diggs’s despairing vision of his added-on, non-autonomous self, unresolved. Only the latter gains a semblance of voice from the ostensible unity of imperatives, last words, resolutions, and structural anthropomorphism in the art of Richard Powers (J. Potkalitsky, 2010).

5.2. Character Development and Eco-Trauma:

Like many first-world audiences living in the shadow of the Anthropocene, Powers’s characters all experience their own version of a small C, private, psychology-shaped trauma. This individual eco-trauma differs hardly at all from the run-of-the-mill psychological

traumas Powers excogitated in his earlier novels, though the stakes are necessarily higher for these damaged narrators than they were for their predecessors. What is consequential in *The Overstory* is not these characters' trauma stories, but the narrative perspective able to make ecological connections from them. On the one hand, since individual trauma depends on how discourse makes the disordering experience disturbing, novelistic narrative stumbles upon the difficulty of comprehending not just a traumatic event but also a damage vast enough to threaten the narrative pool itself. On the other hand, this narrative-stumble with eco-trauma paradoxically bequeaths the narrative agency to the eco-trauma (J. Potkalitsky, 2010). These ambiguities give rise to astonishing synaesthetic descriptions casting a global synesthesia. At the same time Powers's characters seem fully capable of higher intellectual discourse about wood and trees, the narrative action follows the lockout of human characters from noticing and comprehending the oak's death.

Consequently, the unspeakability of the impossible event transmigrates onto the narration itself with the self-similar, recursive form and voice. The re-shaping of language thus forfeits narrative agency, which, ironically, is recuperated and casted upon this very trauma-narration. Powers's novel retraces current environmental deaths and reiterates earlier human deaths that take shape in reader's psyche, only to see such a traumatic memory thraw narration itself and in doing so narrate its impossibility. Resulting from the parallel and gradual trajectories of eco-trauma and narrative agency, this loss trail converges with an epicist kind of time. This phenomenological time does not recounts the problem but, rather, slips into its narrativity, which needs the audience's recouping temporal estrangement such that the narrative disingenuously forges hope. It is to this paradoxically deep time of loss that narrative still adheres. Powers responding to the apocalyptic present with the deep time hope shows a striking resemblance to Melville's Moby Dick, which similarly rehearses an impossible To-Set-My-Hope-Where-Doubt-That-Itself-Did-Make.

6. Narrative Structure and Techniques:

Richard Powers's *The Overstory* narrates how the Earth is undergoing a seismic shift, and humanity must enter a new story or face extinction. Its storytelling confronts and challenges its consumers, introducing two storytelling characters, a knowing sceptic and a traumatized idealist. Powers's characters face the Anthropocene's doubts and terrors and desire to transcend the undesired reality. To narrate ecopolitical trauma's profound effects, Powers employs a multi-perspective and polyphonic narrative structure. Simultaneously, his characters exercise narrative agency through melancholy, obsessive and conflicted storytelling, chronicling the injured world and their earth- and self-alienation. This struggle deals with the aftereffects of trauma and finds some consolation. Powers's storytelling demonstrates the universe's narrative agency or art's power to enact conscious changes, while his characters' chronicle reveals literature's impotence over politically and ecologically disastrous realities (J. Potkalitsky, 2010).

Powers's novelistic art reverses the directionality of Peter's analogy: the typographically demarcated comments that occur throughout the novel serve as an equivalent of musical counterpoint, while the two story lines create an effect of polyphony. Through these formal devices, Powers invites readers to perceive the musicality of narrative itself. The novel's story lines become human-scale equivalents of the two strands of nucleic acid in DNA. This is an uneasy imagistic equivalence, and tinged by Peter's awareness that the invisible world of DNA cannot be fully captured in human-scale form—a discontinuity between levels of reality that explains the defamiliarizing effect of his "tunes for forever, for no one" encoded in bacterial DNA. What allows the novel to establish a deep analogy between the sensory (music), the verbal (narrative, the novel), and the nonhuman is their fundamental patterning. Plot is thus linked, precariously but no less powerfully, to the scientific imagination of the nonhuman world (Caracciolo, 2019).

6.1. Multi-Perspective Narration:

Powers uses a novelistic narratorial perspective to allow his audience the chance to think about ways of understanding climate change that do not necessarily rely on science or prophetic warnings. Outside of the diegetic world of *The Overstory*, woeful scientific predictions of the effects of climate change are covered insistently in mainstream media. Each day seems to bring grim estimates of sea levels, droughts, agricultural collapse and extinctions. The fate of the world is often viewed as simply worse and worse, not wholly different or otherwise impacted by anthropogenic transformation, but still compatible with the world viewed as it is now. In contrast, there is little narrative attention devoted to climate change's realities on Earth, particularly in the fight between living trees and fossil fuel corporations. The Overstory venerates the multitudes of trees and their choreography, refusing the perspective of scale that strips trees of their species, their telling, their witness (Clay, 2018).

The Overstory is a multi-perspective narrative told from many angles with a tendency toward the omniscient. A quasi-godlike narrator watches the life stories of Powers's characters play out. From the heavens, the narrative describes how the grandness of trees dwarfs human problems: "A felled tree is a carnival." "Each log is worthwhile." A sense of tragedy pervades the text, as Powers tracks human characters and their relationships as they fracture and die. A sole bovine character holds a more passive role in the narrative and is rarely focalized through. Otherwise, the narrative dives into a human's perspective. As this general narrative point of view rises and swells, the tale moves to the perspective of a specific Germanic tree: "history isn't an arc, but an x, branching out a dozen ways, every day." Throughout the text, the narrative perspective vacillates, shifting between characters both fully fleshed and fully nonhuman (Caracciolo, 2019).

6.2. Interweaving Stories:

In Powers' model, nature's stories center plants, animals, and systems other-than-human. Eco-trauma in *The Overstory* inspires mistrust in and solicitation of human-centered narrativity, while planting seeds that enable interweaving other-than-human, human, and "illicit" stories variable in both aesthetic form and epistemic authority (Clay, 2018). Powers' model of the triumph of interweaving stories might inspire integration with local and ancestor-led systems of incommensurable knowing, and of witness as care. Eco-trauma compounds human-centered chronicities both hyperdiagnosed and enacted in the narratives of modernity. Postmodernist disillusionment in metanarratives attends the reluctance to hope or to act. Modernity is simulated, indexed by always-there-out-of-sight crises across miles and ages, which in Powers' model become reversible by narrativizing the plights of trees and inpainting damage to life-molds and death-cycles with drip, flecked, inchoate impulses coupled with analog birth.

6.3. Symbolism of Trees:

In *The Overstory*, Powers paints trees in colors of agency, personal stories, and unedited memories. By virtue of their apparently less vexed experience of time, their ability to endure in seemingly unbroken sequences, they elicit the human desire to imagine a long view of history. They were called "survivor trees" that loved past incidents, bereavements, and joy. Perhaps it was time to remember them. Powers narrates in the second person with the SPL that "as events unfolded, a wish arose to remember not only the day the towers fell but the days and seasons before, and their beauty" (Heath-Kelly, 2018). Memories are like other landscape features, scattered and in parts. Fragments cohere with others to make scenes. Individual memories circle around events like gnats around a lantern. The great ones are hardly looked at, their beauty hardly comprehended: "You've never gazed long on a picture of the North Tower, the great stone perforated with light. You've never taken more than a second here, here—fading autumn flames against blue sky." They feared those who looked flatly on such things. Not separate from events but within them, trees persisted even now in scars of death.

In the novel, "millions of trees absorbed light and air, hundreds of thousands of times a second, and each time they added a little more volume—it was as if the earth itself were reaching for you". At this moment, they witnessed the downing of the towers, frightful and lovely. Fireballs of West Street radiated and loaved on the wind, a mosaic that however arranged, drew toward and carried away in its frame something else altogether. Trees persist in silence since creation but they too were fragile. They could love, and survived unlike humans.

7. Themes of Connection and Disconnection:

Among other things, this mix gives rise to discussions of the extent to which the land can be imagined as a going concern—the territory is itself an "unpossessed possession" of live and animating forces, tracing the contours of complex biosocial interactions (Mazel, 1996). Powers' novel weaves a host of seemingly disjointed but thematically echoing conversational threads which antiphon through the novel's first half. These threads converge in a narrative backdrop of an "innocent land" mythos being overturned. On one level, character-based plots intersect through an unnamed environmental activist group committing illegal acts directed toward the fictionalization of a real-life sit-in at Stanford University's Hoew d'Forrester-Engineered Ecosystems conglomerate. On another level, rapidly employed shifts in perspective, from a portrait of an ecologist scouring a lab for evidence of his former student's big eco-terrorism to a brilliant flyover view of how "the land speaks," problematize this seemingly unified backdrop with the question of perspective.

From the tumultuous clamor of its multiple points of view arising from its formally demanding cross-cutting structure to the detailed and often critical portrayals of place and characters alongside deep engagement in controversies over competing paradigms, *The Overstory* is a complexly layered literary work of massive ambition. Powers offers what might be considered an unobtrusive counter-narrative of the meticulous search for what is often assumed to be a simple view of narrative strategies of expectations of coherence or, in his terms, willful self-containment or direct transparent representation. The novel's narratives tend toward acts—not only of questioning as meaning-making or moving stylized questionings into literary acts: an almost question-answered structure seeking to find the chink in my "realist" grammar of possessing or imagining the world, the text tends toward a sizable ensemble of cross-cutting narratives that introduce a startling voice only in the dramatic, but also in the richly and ambiguously layered thematic portrayal of nature/culture relations in its richly textured drag along towards, and in.

Such a chaotic mix transforms the text's past plot thickener base textual ensemble into a crucible of thick layering of generic voices, action types, and accruals of meaning layers could be expected to wage against the predictably neat kinds of resolution or closure typically portrayed in literary narratives to which psychopathological or discursive kinds of reading have often been applied plausibly and compellingly with the moral question at / around the issue of possession at the center. In this way, an even bigger question is traversed, one that inhabits civilized spaces between exposures of rapture and ruin—a proud secret of civilization made visible in its triggers to tragic vistas of annihilation in this narrative world.

7.1. Human-Nature Relationship:

The stories we tell about our relationship with the collective world affect the human-nature connection itself (Clay, 2018). They establish values and behaviors that have direct consequences. Global warming illustrates this: the story of endless growth on a carbon basis leads to climate horror. Unabated climate change can lead to extinction. Initially, the scientific community attempted to speak with certainty about climate readiness, giving governmental agencies, think tanks, educators, and others the tools to guide democratic deliberation (Mazel, 1996). This model constituted a narrative of advocacy about how the world works and how to improve that world. When the response failed, scientists were shocked, as climate science did not provide an explanation of belief. However, a climate community of care began to speak differently about temperature and civilizational collapse, action, and advocacy. The theory of

environmental advocacy outlined here reflects this process, along with questions of anthropocentrism, scholarship, and professional responsibility.

Since our worldviews set parameters for our beliefs, a paradigm shift to a new worldview cannot occur without effective nonviolent advocacy efforts. Currently, adherents to the Anthropocene, a new worldview that takes human success to extremes, hold the trump cards. This affliction, a belief that we can forever leech energy and materials from the earth while absconding with the wastes, is an artifact of earlier beliefs about unlimited bounty that had to be revised upon discovery of planetary boundaries. Ecology passed through other anthropocentric and naturalistic paradigms on its way to a mechanistic and reductionist model. Certainly, these developments brought benefits, including the design of cleaner smokestacks and medical microbiology. Nevertheless, they also rendered the Bio-Politics at the mercy of greed. Seeing the world as clockwork made it modifiable. A tele mechanics as in the Anthropocene grants too much to humans, as they become equal to the divine.

7.2. Isolation in Modern Society:

The Overstory, "an intricate tapestry of interconnected stories" (Holton, 2017), reflects grave anxiety about the world of science and our ethical memories. The novel is one of the most ambitious environmental literature attempts to seek and educate a deep ecological consciousness in this very electrifying moment of environmental climes, a sense of isolation inherently built into our scientific understanding of the earth movements, a profound fatigue in facing facts of humanity's powers of its own disasters against biotic life on this soil yet confined to a disgust of activism and main-streamness, which in turn triggers the driving of melodramatic disbelief of deep ecological human times and the sepulchral ahead of a half-illusioned dystopia. The blending motifs of the trees, starting with a love of seeming ochre smog, fumigate the country of subdanger and safeguarding elegance atmospherically, yet allowing for a splendid manifestation of parochial possession of gears, saplings, etc, invaded by a corporate-affording ethos, again seeming a standardly-acclaimed success story. An industrial rollick of largeness trapping out a vast forest of second- and third-growths considers giving an admonitory panorama of the ever-looming augury of the late monoculture forests. As a serious investment invades into the lush ripping boughs rendering idle of indignation, opposed by succeeded labyrinths of finding, planning the underserved, an overwhelming hollowness catches one's fate endlessly pregnant with things learned to unlearn—the world is layered in jugs of air, bottomless yet rendering gasping–the world's gaze training on one's inadvertency, casting loose moralisms on the robbers whose seeing the grabbings also means a looser of all gazes. The narrative continues to even out the splintering solemnities into the grandeur halls of the marble-hedged estates harbored inside the geminal dilemmas of science/watching, which dwelling on whatever murky yet perfect means hued for an understanding of getting to the deep living ones.

As the focus returns to trees on an installing scale, still curing in sweat, even savagery seems for an unprecedented extent a mystery beyond man's imagination, hinting a vast world the eyes seem to catch mere remarks of both violence and sympathy, the finest untraceable clockworks sparking off eternity on the surface date changing letters, struggling adverts obvious to seek for stuff like a boy pursuing false livelihood and alien/gender/cultural identities, mirroring the grandiosity across time zones distorted whilst utterly lacking ether in reaching untracked cordiality on the relatively individual sense of telling, arrangement, and directing. Earthwide springing youth balefully pouring firing spirits into a girl robot smart for trivial chit-chat, being told of retreat visions, dwellings, and architectural prospects in lost in laid Nirvana, wilts sending a development challenge lost/arm deep in the desert(s, outside of the 2020s yet oozing its soft loam as laughter) firms denying even attendant survivablities essences briefed in letters of two deaths released in a thin aquarium beyond languages—"a glass box safe from the world," "This is not a toy or a gift for children…. This is a weapon," fatum violence of a world submerged in inevitable contemptions, quaked responses to pulverize very civilization(s)—"a world worth saving" somehow rendered all units the same

to the erstwhile a toy reminiscencing. Earning dues of decades of splendoring heroism forged in heavens gaudily to tarnish in vapors of trysts steamer towards investing much far excelled coals subzero notions of life, life itself being the unwitnessed knicknack maters of repeat historical travesties—an unspeaking sublime machine again unfathomably demands admiration upon "an instantaneous orchid across thundering Cherry trees… the Vale of Tempe chastely revealed."

8. The Role of Nature as a Character:

In the 40+ years of extensive historical, literary, and sociological research on the connections, contestations, and congruencies between the West and the rest, many native populations have told their dreams and visions at various academic venues. Cabin Creek was once a native wilderness where the co-inhabitants—people, animals, birds, trees, and elemental spirits—did not dominate but simply lived together. Their beliefs were congruent too (I Sullivan, 2010). A foundational myth of their plurality tells how the Coyote and a Beech Tree resided at the headwaters of the creek. Before running the moon with the goddesses, the Coyote had to negotiate the terms of her final departure (that is the mythic account of the twin virgin birth of haumes in nature). The Beech Tree—old enough to have witnessed the enormous rawness of things in their wild simplicity—said she would look after the Coyote's children and called out her own kids, the other trees. This was the beginning of the Forest's overpowering domination, as the Coyote herself would learn the hard way. In the beginning, there was no fear of individuals, but then a Chipmunk witnessed how a Bird Dog chased and caught a Coyote Kit. She squeaked her fears. Rumors spread and the words "pay attention" resounded repetitively in sound. They gave people knowledge and teachings to protect themselves against danger. But unwanted changes also crept across the kabbalistic skin of the creek. Some trees turned into slick aggregation with a sweet frill—a fitting disguise for more Shadowy ones to slaughter the family of the Beech Tree. Hours earlier, the Coyote had run a brace of goddesses. A fair distance below the tall dam-and-pond glass-terminal sides of the Ridge Road, a gnawing Coyote and the closeted Beech Tree huddled in One. As this passage illustrates, Nature is sentient and caring—a character as worthy as the others playing in this tragic tale. It reads well in detail. It is neither accidental nor incidental to decode this poetic myth. Because it marks out culturally conditioned positions necessarily distinct from those of the West: The West generally explicit in discussing nature's rupture, descent, or abjection. Engaging with nature's materiality is understandable from subaltern perspectives. Nature is its nurturing cradle, engendering, growing, and including all; a source competitive cult is inconceivable. Adjacent, and symbiotically linked to it, are fauna beyond Outlook—the Rattlesnake leaders of the Great Serpent Oath with respect to white racist encroachments—infertile eminence of studiousness and eativeness, pestilential corridors to be traversed, panopticons of steadfastness, or crippling seals of behest.

8.1. Anthropomorphism in *The Overstory*:

The Overstory unfolds in eight perspectives, each representing a different character and bringing an array of narrative styles. Spanning from northern California to Wright County, Minnesota, the novel touches upon shifts in time and space through seamless scene changes and breathtaking descriptions. This section offers close readings of The Overstory to identify some of its core strategies: anthropomorphism, synchronic structures, and mythic allusions and tropes. The aim is to disentangle how these strategies affect reading, how they invite us to feel and think beyond "the present" and "the human," and what new ecological possibilities they open up. Trees, represented as sentient beings, will be at the focus of interest here, as they appear simultaneously in varied contexts. More precisely, synesthetic anthropomorphism—a kind of unspeculative fiction—is theorized as a way of sensuously and concretely imagining trees as each tree and as a multitude in the midst of changing conditions in terms of carbon, soil, and stand density. Equipped with these imaginings, readers are invited to engage with the incommensurable timescales, relations, and ecologies of trees that lie beyond the scope of brute cognition (Caracciolo, 2019).

Anthropomorphism is a recurring motif in *The Overstory*. From the anthropopathic Treestory to the shift from third-person to first-person narration, trees continually tilt readers' perspectives to the inhuman. Trees are not only the objects of ontogeny; they also embody ecological agency that impacts the sense of human agency in the novel and along with it the future of humanity (and beyond). It is important to clarify anthropomorphism here, as there is frequently expressed skepticism toward it. Rather than a naïve mode of imbuing trees with anthropocentrically reductive qualities, anthropomorphism in The Overstory is a literary strategy to radically de-anthropocentrify trees: treestories represent trees as sentient beings (similar to humans) and enable the text to tilt representation beyond the anthropic. For instance, as trees listen, wonder, laugh, loom, full-throated, shake, and grieve, treestories consider space and time dimensions beyond those of human comprehension.

8.2. Nature's Agency and Resistance:

Richard Powers' *The Overstory* is heavily engaged with questions of the agency of nonhuman others. One possible measure of a text's allegiance to a notion of corporate agency is the degree to which it encourages a shift in perspective away from the anthropocentric representations of nonhumans, and indeed away from the textual representation of nonhumans at all. This might occupy a range of positions. At one pole are texts like Cormac McCarthy's The Road or Margaret Atwood's Oryx and Crake, which, while they include nonhuman others, are starkly anthropocentric in their conceptualization of agency. These texts view nonhumans primarily in terms of their relation to human endeavours or experience. *The Overstory's* brief, stunning sections featuring the perspectives of trees – a clear move towards a richer ecological perspective on agency – mark a shift away from such a position. This poetics of representation becomes both legitimacy-giving and legitimacy-confounding for Powers' narrative. The finite understanding of narrative form is confronted by forms that cannot be readily articulated within it, leading to a multiplicity of narrative perspectives that confound the sense of literary resolution. Indeed, attempts to construct narratives for the arboreal protagonists yield refusal, evasion, or silence. As the character of the tree-storytelling computer, Dee, imbues narration and representation with allusions to connectivity and understanding which elude Powers' understanding, the question of the narratable or cognizable comes to the foreground, and the impossible task of "saying the unsayable," comes to bear.

Despite these indeterminate refusals, the stance underlying this exploration is hopefulness, rather than fallacy or despair. Coexisting with an ever-expanding awareness of contingency, tragedy, and complexity, there is hopefulness that agency proliferates far beyond the anthropocentric realm, perhaps in forms, networks, and consciousnesses yet unknowable (Clay, 2018). Nature's agency is nevertheless visibly liable to diminishment by radical environmental change, in itself a positive agent of biophysical networks, changing the rules of the game. *The Overstory* implicitly grasps at the matter of how and where to begin rethinking agency and resistance within an always particular, necessarily flawed, and only-just-linguistically-representable imagined community adjusted to the generative, hacking capacities of the biosphere writ large, yet ongoingly susceptible to innumerable uncertainties, disjunctures, and contingencies.

9. Eco-Trauma Responses in Characters:

In *The Overstory*, Powers develops a unique vision of trauma that results in narrative agency for his characters at various points throughout the novel. Each character's trauma narrative contains a mixture of psychological exploration and story-telling, as well as a corresponding evolution in their own narrative agency. Characters that suffer ecological trauma from nature-induced changes to their lives, including the death of loved ones and sudden disasters, or from the downfall of great trees, wrestle with storytelling not just to cope with their loss, but to inspire action in others. In contrast, characters that suffer trauma from negative responses including psychosis or lack of belief are described as unable to tell their trauma story, often succumbing to increased agency of their respective oppressors.

Near the beginning of the book, Reasons Three and Four describe somatic trauma narratives: the trauma inflicted upon trees, as well as reasons for traumatic change to trees themselves, potentially resulting in the injured grove becoming "deadbolts in a foreclosed world" (J. Potkalitsky, 2010). These chapters invoke frantic, knotty prose echoing the desperate, neuro-spazzed neural firings of characters controlling and/or recovering from modern chronic stressors. There is little hope for coherent narrative agency to emerge from these traumas on the part of trees, or of humans processing or causing traumatic events. At first, action agencies fail at the narrative level until, at the last second, pending ruin renders expansive change unavoidable. This coincides with characters not yet aware of their own potential positive agency. Paradoxically, the "bitterest trick" of playing dead would then be the form that uplifts their voices.

9.1. Coping Mechanisms:

Narrative agency in *The Overstory* is destruction, even more so in the case of eco-trauma. Adverse effects can be mitigated via mitigation strategies. Humans have agency to mitigate eco-trauma, albeit actions, nature infrastructure, regulatory measures, and policies may lack. As one of the best coping mechanisms, narrative construction and re-construction is ubiquitous. In *The Overstory*, multiple narrators are endowed with narrative agency. Not only do they craft prose narratives and stories, memory narratives are also woven into it, both in concurrent and retrospectively. There are no privileged characters with comprehensive knowledge of the sequences or importance of the events. Collaboration is a flexible yet powerful strategy in genuine narrative ensemble: refraction of perspectives, representation of an enlarged body of deeds, and pooling of exertions of cognition and memory. The characters engage in narrative inquiry with collectively-collated narrative kernel, with empathy and creativity. Constructed new narratives allow newer insights and fresh perspectives (J. Potkalitsky, 2010). Discovery of new meaning in the new narratives helps attain closure. Narration re-casts traumatic events into narratives of growth: re-construction, reflection, hope, and agency. Portrait of eyes turned rust-red by herbicides, bloody flesh of martyrs, EXECUTION ORDER, and the accompany of All Along the Hudson River etc. helps convey awareness, acute pains, and wishes for action. Narration is also life-saving for narrative inquiry. Discovery of life-repairing insight that "the wounds had always beaten" from the RT as an evidence of devastation helps the narrator redeem narrative agency and the eco-trauma readers navigate infinitude of aliases. An agonizing narrative of trauma is written into a life-affirming deed. In The Overstory, the traumatic reality as external vastness foreshadows account of precedent perception, effacement of voice, auratic eloquence, and preparation for an immense question.

Nature is attended to as a living subject rather than an object in pain. The basis of suffering of the aggrieved planet is further depicted. When colonizers arrived, new bark brightened on the trees which sounded light-heartedly. Naked of petrifaction, the trees were charmed to dance with delight. The "eyes that closed to shimmer, sweat, flake, and mold" are blind to the undiscovered country, where no forked tongue had bitten, no metal had cut, no artifice had tainted. Earth beat a prayer, yet lungs full of ozone turn to charcoal. The trees are dressed with pink ribbons down the blown branches; sprays of buckeyes haunt the dead stumps; pissoir fire lays bows in graveyards. The porous witness retains nothing of human grief but a rancid brown stain on its bark. All souls in the "silent slaughterhouse beneath the blackened bark" wish not far-seeing but merely an acord, as life threaded beyond anthropology. The trees have never ever known the quantity of corpoream lost and vestigium driven.

9.2. Activism and Advocacy:

The discussion about eco-trauma in *The Overstory* and later advocacy around storytelling is meant to showcase Powers's sophistication and range as an artist, a storyteller, and an advocate for environmental literacy and activism. Powers's discussion captures precisely the feelings of frustration and helplessness within the context of eco-trauma.

Powers's rhetoric, his way of thinking and argumentation, often reminds one of Marx and Freud, echoed in 139 (and elsewhere), as scientifically sound and magnificent, yet lacking lateral movement.(Gustav Anderson, 2012) articulates eco-trauma, and characters in the novel reflect what calls "the unravelling clock." This discussion of a recursively performing meta-narrative demands access to the necessarily personal storytelling that breaks through into the political. Powers is a great artist. At the same time, he is also a very sophisticated advocate professionally. Importantly, eco-trauma and the discussion of narrative agency illustrate that Powers is also a great, imaginative storyteller and advocate for the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life on this planet.

The Overstory moves seamlessly from the personal (eco-trauma) to the community (advocacy and storytelling). (Clay, 2018) captures this tension, this complexity—that advocacy and scholarly work and writing are at once two selves, yet that they are also one. Powers oscillates in and out of discipline, negotiating transformations in thinking across genres and a range of orientations. "Writing alters definitions and distributions of possibility" (x), yet it also allows for the materiality of one's world and one's being in the world to change. Powers is a wonderful writer. He is refreshingly candid about his writing, about the flood that his research and imagination created, and it is not that he got lost in this flood. Rather, the scale of a complicated world is imparted emphatically and pointedly. Just as Powers challenges the understanding of ecocritical scholarship, so too he pushes and pulls on the prevailing understanding of environmental advocacy through testimony, with an ardent hope that this "messy room," "would-be divan of listening," and "so many still-little-songs" might offer something, might alter an understanding of how care and concern, action and advocacy weave together in radically new and different ways.

10. Literary Techniques Reflecting Eco-Trauma:

Richard Powers' recent novel, *The Overstory*, is an exploration of ecology and narrative agency, discussing the environment, science, philosophy, deep time, and technological change. The author builds upon the richness and diversity of trees and invites readers to transcend agency's confinement to the cultural and human spheres. Despite the exalted vision of trees, were this novel to be read as an anthropocentric tale of dialogue, empowerment, and elegy, it could also be read as an ideologically naive portrayal of the world's incommensurable scales and speeds. A review of the novel's literary techniques and their ecotragedy subtexts reveals a recurring concern with temporal and spatial scales, both in depicting your protagonists' worldviews and in selecting and arranging events. At the same time, analogies between narrative agency and trees prompt accusations of hypocrisy: how could narrative transcriptions avoid vertical metaphor incidents when such cultural coercion is ubiquity? If cultivation leads to agency, this view duplicates a hubristic vision of world and history.

With this notion of narrative's speed, the argument positions The Overstory, not just as a data representation of macro-ecological systems and their discrepancies with anthropocentric notions of rationality and agency, but also as a recognition of how cultural categories engage with medico-political power. Voicing information from the perspective of individual organisms and broadening agency to non-human living beings generate untransmissible forms, re-categorizing moral urgency and pleading. Powers invites the reader to search for lost words, wondering how different stories can strike closer to home or lead to silence. Ultimately, those literary techniques uphold the thesis of culture as a battleground for distinctive, widespread temporal and spatial agents, discussions on how the deafening sound of death lingers or becomes forgotten.

10.1. Imagery and Descriptive Language:

Imagery and Descriptive Language. Richard Powers is often categorized as an ecological author whose literature emphasizes the interconnectedness of human life and nature. He has nonetheless insisted that there be no easy resolution. Attending to the health of the forest or the watersheds would not guarantee that human persons began living in

attunement to the trees or the soil. In Powers's world, threats to habitat are manifest in among many other things, food-stressed fly-hungry javelinas, altered pitch of a dumpling orb weaver's web, a desert that 'cold sweetens,' and an overstocked depletion of evening grosbeaks starving through long retreated winters, even as a gizmo-fed kid considers that 'animals are too stupid to lay their own plans.' Swamp critters illuminate particular qualities of the characters who seek capture but hard science lies behind the larger issues of turning fallow places into stockyards for elective species and measuring the chemical flows of unbeknownst parents. The ground quakes as trucks dredge in new long-rangelands rendered into rows of glyphs bearing parental phantoms in homesickness who have come to heavily pit-prospect the heartwood of their fore sealed roots. Machines' long buzzing hum reminds those who live near that detribalization's soared sun affords the day to 'see a fire without smoke.' A worlds-wide panorama witnesses crudely dressed men abandoned in a tangled lake yelling feverishly at the moon before purses herald the primogeniture of city legs big enough to race hedgehogs, before spillops gulch plans stir deep as cofferdams. The neophyte gathered fresh lake air into his cells, drawing the locals' ire, burned desolately for his labor until exertion drank him dry like the saline river on which each generation must choose hate or forgetfulness or in-vortex smashing thrives (Mazel, 1996).

10.2. Foreshadowing Environmental Collapse:

The Overstory depicts a multigenerational epic in the form of a sentence long paragraph, which is crafted out of the narrative chamber of 1111 pages and with a four-part structure. There are more than hundred characters and more than a dozen viewpoint characters, to which a collective omniscient voice engages free indirect discourse. As a voice within a voice, it draws upon rhetorical strategies of epiphany, pointed character sketches, imagery, building atmosphere, building tension and foreshadowing. These are devices that seem to lend themselves easily to the teleological ending of a crisis. The latter, however, structures the book more impressive in its lack of resolution, echoing the lack of resolution of eco-trauma. The universal function of it is to call forth actions on, which is hope that conjures togetherness to face the omnipresent risk of environmental collapse (Mazel, 1996). In Powers' narrative agency, however, foreshadowing involves both real-world environmental issues and its fictional discourse devices. There are very broad indications of the events of environmental collapse to come, from tree rendering to the devastation of the great storm to the more allegorical visions. There are also many vague allusions to fatefulness and "other things" that essentialize the shattering. Ecological fears are further provoked by alluding to disparities between the rhythm of the plot events and excessive use of detail in prose. Each of the three stories has a doubled time frame; blanket assumptions of fatefulness along with the excessively slowing down tempo intend to evoke presentiment, difference, and loss. These motives combine to elicit eco-trauma, while interspersed detailed and sprawling accounts paint a euphoric picture of trees and forests indebted both to environmental treatises and realistic novels.

11. Impact of *The Overstory* on Environmental Discourse:

Since its publication in 2018, *The Overstory* has inspired essays, talks, and even a podcast outlining its potential impacts on environmental discourse and action. In the wake of climate catastrophe along with the endless and pervasive coverage of tipping points and irreversible ecological losses, *The Overstory* dared its readers to think differently about trees, about time, and about the relationships between the two. Yet, it seems as though the work has had little impact on the actual world. Massive forest protection campaigns, public art projects, and cross-country tree-planting charities were all organized in response to the book's publication, but the anxieties of the present and the future seemed to overwhelm its more visionary elements. Calling on fellow authors to positively influence environmental attitudes and behavior, Powers acknowledged that 'with the publication of *The Overstory* a legion descended—young people with a genuine passion for the emotions, thought, and effects of trees,' but lamented, 'there is not a dent in the numbers.' Correspondingly, a long-established

genre—ecoliterature—has never been more passionately embraced yet more widely disregarded, as The Overstory attempts to comprehend pathways into the enormity of an environmental crisis that appears simultaneously mundane and unprecedented.

No one denies the magnitude of the challenge. Philosophers have on occasion suggested the possibility of an ethics not dependent on scales of value, moral philosophy on principle, criteria beyond an immediately visible ease and discomfort; but environmental critics have overwhelmingly insisted there can be no environmental call that does not question ethics and risk further indifference to what seems already insignificant (Mazel, 1996). Therewith, a contemporary environmental imaginative calls for new conceptual canvases in which the nitty-gritty of environmental disruption and ur-ethical crises can be ably rendered. This essay argues that The Overstory unlocks a new pathway into the matter of trees, rendering them not efforts attached or otherwise able to be added but as nonhuman actors with which a primate can build a far better world. Powers renders trees as seeing and social beings both authoring pathways through land and navigating earth histories which long precede and swarm above mass-classized time, rewriting a now anxious, introverted ordinariness after the ugly and treacherous turn in which light-fingered domination would fly like the wind into a doomed future unknowable. Such an imaginative release, *The Overstory* suggests, partially engages science fiction, straining the norms of realistic fiction; which is simultaneously to suggest its power: considering even so that question by how, the stakes seem obscenely.

11.1. Influence on Readers:

Martin's discussion of the trauma of ecological catastrophe describes the death and extinction of human and nonhuman life as a searing present that cannot move into absence or be thought without loss. A traumatic trend toward total non-being fits this description, and therefore the many facts regarding the peri-extinction of the Anthropocene now threaten to elude the net of memory and comprehension. Melancholia and the state of suspended mourning, however, are not the only risks attendant on apocalyptic horror or (eco)trauma. There is also unphsophical incandescence: unreason's way of denying loss and desolation through defiant belief in a new and best-powered cyber-world. More broadly, Powers' narrative agency can be understood as a circular composition consisting of interdependent concentric circles. At the outer circle is the perspective of the arboreal order that encompasses a thousand years. Next inward is a longer-range perspective on Earth by a more intricate biota including a myriad terrestrial organisms. Next inward is an increasingly detailed, public, focusing Earth resolution. At the center of the system is the protagonist and narrator of the arboreal order that offers an immediate perspective on the â€. This narrative design enables Powers to effectuate narratives that are interactive and intertextual, possessing the force of a polyphony. Such an oeuvre can produce structural meanings and effects that cannot be achieved without such a design, an intertextuality of effects similar to a Weberian ideal speech situation, where all participants possess equal freedom any discourse. The same formal means employed to articulate heightened consciousness facilitate the influence on readers and invite the intimate participation of co-authorship.

Powers' highly intricate narrative presents somewhat of a problem for critics wishing to discuss character agency and arc in relation to the depiction of trauma, given the sheer multitude of perspectives. Still, a handful of critics remark on the representation of the "tale in the trees" in the early chapters, as well as on the agency of the trees that caps the novel. The former elicits positive responses based in both the novelty of the storytelling and its inadequacies. However, the latter failure to adopt the recommended humble stance in light of the ecological catastrophe results in signature contemporary anxieties. Seemingly representative of these generally positive appraisals, it is stated that "*The Overstory* is a set of several books that all wrap themselves around a particular biotic community," echoing a preface in which an oft-played "tree tale" is deemed "legitimate." Even the climactic moment in which the "vegetative consciousness" reveals itself to the protagonist in a cinematically

dubbed "instant replay of the arboreal evolution of the planet" is noted for both its beauty and its subjection to the pre-existential character of "the eldritch outside" that justifies "anxiety." Nevertheless, the praise for beautiful prose is tempered by the observation that "the prose sometimes moves from awe and prayer to personification that makes it sound like an arboreal Narnia, a fairy story," leading Powers "to tumble into nationalistic purblindness" or "argue passionately against the behavior of previous national tragedies," thereby "turn[ing] a stone." This irony, reminiscent of the "really distant" planet construction, functions as a critique of the trait of anthropocentrism pursued as an additional tactic in areas in which even the non-anthropos desire a theoretical distance from the "real." In fact, the thorough examination of these further characters is highlighted by their resemblance to only semi-internal monologues, such as depressions, shared prejudices, and techniques derived from general awareness of history or the universal. There is a certain kind of "fence" that limits collective agency from penetrating this final world section.

12. Comparative Analysis with Other Works:

Similar to (Andrew Cloyd, 2015), the authors of selected other stories, novels, and essays acknowledge habitat loss and species extinction. Philip K. Dick creates and destroys worlds alike, and his androids mock the fragile species that made them. Filmmakers invite audiences to succumb to marvel, seeing themselves as vertical omnicide that has become extraterrestrial. Rabih Alameddine's novel voices apathy about the loss of species, lamenting not amphibians but "those who know where the Ruins are." Fynn McHugh's Brute, in opposition, casts a blind dog as a culture savior—a creature so 'humbly' nigh on unclouded. At the forlornest state, standing in bramble and ash, the overstory longs to rewild the story. Although Palmer's tree is a mere ghost at its acme, Fenn's polyphonic telling teems with accounts of 'feral growths' and 'those who can't help it.' Trees cease thinking and start living, and the overstory refreshingly pursues both Sanders' utopia and final words: by region, time, and aerial view: let it grow.

Powers' mirroring intent is to deftly conceit redemption. Unsuredness arrests vision, discrediting 'good,' 'pure,' and 'no gray.' To restore balance, the narrator gambles with doubt. Wicked action may yield salvation in a world bereft of equivalent evils, for life scounds no worse than their stature. Powers' denouncement is Kentuckian: careless as poisons, life as Pandora's pollen. Safety lies within folly. Offers hope and storm: that which comes. "Possibilities. They are enormous. Human activity and its perceptions ought to be bent to all of them. Already actions and reassessments were heard in every land." The "good story" ends close in green as trees face God; the "bad story" breaks a vow to forget. Redemption may come, unavoidable as "the gale."

12.1. Similar Themes in Contemporary Literature:

Similar themes of eco-trauma as triggered by ecological disaster, collapse, and destruction are very much present in the literary collection Jałowy rok, published in Polish in 2017. It must be stressed that this collection is not only theoretical but also a practical consideration of the language of representing new ecological realities. Short, microscopic even, essays fulfill the role of thematic inspiration for longer, more elaborate narratives. The essays are preceded by a fictional, somewhat humorous preface, in which an anonymous narrator, in an unguarded, perhaps uncontrolled moment, provides readers with a vision of a cataclysm, defeat and disaster at various levels, most importantly at the human and not-human level. Dear to manifestos and critical essays is a critique of the anthropocentric approach to nature and the world, consciousness of the human perpetrator of eco-trauma, and attention to problems of representation and ineffability of the eco-trauma experience. All of those will be present in the narrative. In parallel to the novel itself, the cataclysm recounted in the preface does not reflect today's reality but remains a projected event. The intention behind such future catastrophizing could be characterized as either cautious (as a way for denouncing against the impending disaster) or nihilist (as determined by resignation with and withdrawal from the present reality). What stands out in the prose is an emphasis on the thorny, connotatively ill-

boding vision of what will follow the cataclysm. Two characteristically anthropocentric codes and tropes, the lack of rules and knowledge, and an inconclusive sphere, seem to dominate the post-collapsing landscape. Lack of clarity and order dominate in dehumanizing realities. The author describes large-scale violence perpetrated against both human beings and animals. Narrators of a few short essays abandon language altogether, communicating only chaos and insanity through erased hieroglyphs or unpunctuated gibberish, while one narration effectively reflects the condition of an animal driven mad by a human-triggered disaster. Language-related items, the last relics of human heritage, in the absence of the recipient, only serve as remnants of a past civilization. Such monstrosities can be fruitfully interpreted on the one hand, as representatives of cruelty directly inflicted upon non-human actors in the world, as on the other hand, the eco-trauma of dehumanization is largely neglected in literary investigation of anthropocenic collapse and the destruction of non-humans.

12.2. Contrast with Dystopian Narratives:

When compared with natural science writing that approaches the liabilities of global warming with a dystopian outlook, *The Overstory* seems far more amenable to interconnections shared between trees and humans. Artistic representations of trees have a long tradition in western art, natural science, and philosophy, and celebrate subjectivity beyond narrowly human perceptions. At the same time, apocalyptical fictions both invite and frustrate representations of forests and tree-folk imagineers as pods, information networks, or orchestras. Both apocalyptic and idyllic representational regimes cover over more continuous, less dramatic possible futures for biomes and their multifunctional communities. Each of these genres are more revelatory than dramatic—recalling what a beautiful world and way of being the vanishing trees represent. The controversy thus shifts from whether humanity has taken "a wrong turn somewhere along the way," to what regions of possibility remain in what sort of timescale for rectification of this wrong turn. Myth, dreams, and fiction here can provide the deeper patterning of excuses by which all things gentle, wise, and generous have been discarded in favour of the harsh, brutal, selfish, and cruel. How might stories be told? In this view, it would take a far different reservoir of perception and occasion to set earthen and human beings on a path to attending to interconnections. Similarly speculative questions were turned to counter-dystopian futures. Ghastly possibilities render how far humanity might go pursuing the congenital repression of its connection with Earth. Casting nonhumans as avenger spirits was deemed a campy violation of parameters. This was at least partly a question of credibility. Climate change, like the "situation of the ant" at the outset, might be "just the consequence of human stupidity," to be corrected by education. Or it might be a sort of illiteracy so profound long gestation means that global warming will be played out as a tragedy involving acts of heroic stupidity that loving stewardship cannot come to save. As in richly historicised settings and florist-philosopher characters, it might be a dramatically unfold disastrous legacy of culture. Trees-with-people stories here, by representing trees as subjects, diminish that witless, uncritical, and profeminist mien.

13. Conclusion:

Beginning with the narratives of trauma that connect and animate the interconnected lives of interspecific collaboration at the core of Powers' mega-narrative, it is possible to study how, through storytelling, Powers imagines community as a pedagogically charged narrative event capable of enabling transformative eco-trauma for reader-responses. Since 1950, Powers has received a number of prestigious awards and has been nominated for or shortlisted for numerous others. He has also been honored as the first person to deliver one of the ten original lectures at an event in 2001.

Luria's theorization of the interimplication of agency's emergence as coherent narrative demonstrates how, beginning with the interferences between temporally disconnected narrative events, processes of connective recounting are shown to engage the potential for transformative fluency in narrative agency and how the capacity for socially mediated narrative co-construction embodies cultural-historically evolved resources that are available

for novel constructions of transmissible narrative. The emergence of narratively connected agency that empowers recasting of representational understandings and the remaking of the meaning of selfhood-in-time and personhood, exemplified through the series of narrative pendants that demonstrate attention to narrative temporal concerns, is shown to extend the analytic in this new direction by giving a means to address the role of broader cultural-historical traditions in and on individual narrative. Here, it begins to race closely with the lines of inquiry set out about the intersection of narrative and identity.

The way in which a complex, extended narrative event can be multiply recounted reflects how various social understandings of community are implicated in making sequential events into a narrative recounted in the first place. Drawing particularly on a notion of responsivity, a new analytic perspective on how the narrativization of trauma embraces and extends Drama Theory is outlined, and a concept of narrative filling ranging from passive to transformative is developed to draw attention to the storiedness of events that grants initial agency to trauma self-reflection. Powers' narrative amplifies this mind-blowing experience of trauma as shifting perception and understanding.

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