

VOICES OF THE VOICELESS ENTITIES IN POWERS'S *THE OVERSTORY*: AN ECO-SPIRITUAL STUDY

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Abstract

Environmentalists and eco-critics have extensively discussed culture and literature through an environmental lens to examine the relationship between humans and nature, emphasizing their inherent interconnectedness. Authors have contributed significantly by highlighting and understanding how spiritual practices and beliefs impact our connection to the environment, and how this connection influences our attitudes toward nature protection. This study aims to demonstrate the deep interdependence between nature and human systems by examining these connections in Richard Powers' *The Overstory* through the lens of sensory engagement. It offers a profound exploration of the interconnectedness of human and non-human life, emphasizing the need to listen to the "voiceless" entities of nature. The study investigates the eco-spiritual dimensions of the novel, focusing on how Powers articulates the voices of trees, plants, and the broader ecosystem, challenging anthropocentric perspectives. It employs an eco-spiritual framework to examine Richard Powers' themes and narrative structure, as well as how he uses trees as main characters to symbolize interconnectedness, wisdom, and persistence. The purpose of *The Overstory* is to help readers better grasp the relationships between nature and all living beings by highlighting their fundamental worth. The study explores the moral obligations of humans to the environment and the ethical and philosophical ramifications of ecological damage through the prism of eco-spirituality. To convey the spiritual significance of natural components in Powers' literary universe, this study aims to give voice to entities that are often unheard. It utilizes symbols of the human-tree relationship to foster ecological awareness beyond conventional divisions and to establish harmony for nature-human coexistence.

1. Introduction

Richard Powers' *The Overstory*, published in 2018, narrates the story of a group of environmental activists and their efforts to compel society to acknowledge the urgency of their cause. Through the interweaving of multiple character arcs, Powers constructs a collective narrative centered on environmental consciousness. The lives of nine individuals—Olivia Vandergriff, Adam Appich, Douglas Pavlicek, Dorothy Cazaly, Neeley Mehta, Patricia Westerford, Douglas Hoel, Mimi Ma, and Ray Brinkman—are interconnected not only with each other but also with the trees, which

they eventually come to understand as vital to the longevity, well-being, and sustainability of the planet. For most of these characters, the driving force behind their actions is the urgent threat posed by the unchecked and exploitative felling of trees. Others engage with nature in ways that may seem peripheral but are no less profound. Humans depend on nature, particularly forests, which are inextricably linked to their survival. Forests provide essential resources, yet since the Industrial Revolution, humanity's pursuit of economic gain has increasingly jeopardized forest ecosystems. Human activities such as illegal log-

ging, pollution, and deforestation have significantly reduced forest cover worldwide. However, in recent decades, awareness of the importance of forests to environmental health has grown. Many nations have established conservation areas and national parks to protect these ecosystems. People are gradually realizing that the environmental consequences of their actions come with a heavy price—one that must be paid and reckoned with. Over the past few decades, the number of people who recognize the vital role forests play on Earth has increased. By creating national parks and conservation zones, various countries have taken steps toward preservation. In support of this global movement, environmental activists continue to raise public awareness about endangered species and to challenge industrial practices that threaten ecological stability. As a result, the impact of mass extinction caused by human activity is, in some cases, beginning to decline.

2. Literature Review

The concept of the ecological self, developed in response to the deep ecology movement, has been closely examined in relation to the socially constructed idea of self (Bragg, 1996). Bragg's thought-provoking analysis on self-construct change, based on an empirical evaluation of deep ecology, explores how an individual's sense of self interacts with their environmental context. Recent studies have sparked growing interest in the exploration of environmental behavior as it relates to self and nature. Kals et al. (1999) discuss emotional affinity toward nature, while Schultz (2001) examines the attachment of nature to self, others, and the biosphere, which in turn shapes environmental concerns. Perkins (2010) emphasizes the importance of care and love for nature in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. Brugger et al. (2011) investigate the inclination to connect with nature and the environment, and Hofstra and Huisingh (2014) highlight the need to shift our perspective from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism in our interactions with nature. This shift requires a reverential respect for nature, aimed at preserving and nurturing nature's gifts to beautify the Earth. Restall and Conrad (2015) conducted a comprehensive review of connect-

edness-to-nature scales, offering valuable insights that collaborate with eco-spiritual concerns. Their study emphasizes how emotional and cognitive mechanisms are addressed across various scales for effective environmental management.

Ecological spiritualism, when implemented in the health sciences, has proven to be an effective solution for both environmental and human health. Expanding scientific research on the significance of the connection between spirituality and ecology provides evidence of its positive effects on people's physical and mental health. In this regard, several researchers have developed an appropriate view that nature is one facet of spiritualism. Lincoln (2000) has explored eco-spiritual consciousness in relation to nurses, studying their spiritual nature in the context of patient care. According to Lincoln, eco-spiritual consciousness can be defined as "assessing a deep awareness of one's eco-spiritual relationship." She identified tending, dwelling, reverence, connectedness, and sentience as core principles concerning eco-spiritual consciousness.

Puchalski et al. (2009) consider spirituality to be "an essential element that encompasses people's search for meaning and purpose, connecting them with themselves, the natural world, and entities that are significant or sacred." Delaney and Barrere (2009) have studied how environmental meditation has been effectively prescribed for heart patients in the cardiology department. Their research aims to foster awareness among healthcare professionals about eco-spirituality and its medical importance in exploring the relationship between self and environmental consciousness. Both Lincoln (2000) and Delaney and Barrere (2009) investigate and verify the significance of respecting nature for a healthy lifestyle.

Community psychologist Holmes (2010), in his study, testified to the improvement in health among people walking through green open spaces. His findings suggest that therapeutic relaxation and progress in health are achieved only when people accept and revere nature, helping to sharpen their senses and cultivate new skills (Franco et al., 2017). Therefore, it is essential to practice a spirituality that incorporates nature in order to develop the strategic skills necessary to

care for and survive in the best possible conditions (Silva-de-la-Rosa, 2022). To understand eco-spirituality, de Diego et al. (2024) suggest that we must recognize the indigenous way of life in order to achieve environmental and global health. Eco-spirituality leads to a healthier environment, which, in turn, fosters global health improvements.

3. Research Methodology

George David Haskell, in his 2017 book *The Songs of Trees*, primarily explores the networked connections beneath the surface, suggesting a form of language among trees, essentially proposing that this network significantly aids in understanding how trees communicate. A recent study conducted by Clarke (2021) highlights the significance of communicative techniques and natural processes that unite non-human and non-animal living beings. In his interpretation of the novel, Clarke observes newly discovered trends in plant behavior and creativity, suggesting that plants can send signals and call out for help, rooted in a billion-year-old evolutionary history. He discusses these connections through concepts such as animacy, animism, and metamorphosis, leading to the conclusion that scientific disciplines are gradually moving beyond Neo-Darwinist orthodoxy to explore ecological transmission across species—culminating in the development of human character and tree-based enlightenment.

4. Voices of the Voiceless

The characters' profound sense of spiritualism and interconnectivity amplifies the voices of the voiceless entities, such as trees. This spirit is embodied by Douglas Pavlicek, who plants thousands of seeds with the hope of fostering a better future. His actions reveal a deep respect for the natural world and a commitment to its preservation. Douglas is doing more than just a physical act as he walks across the destroyed landscapes, planting new life; he is giving a voice to the fallen trees. His deeds speak for the environment, underscoring the value of every tree and the interdependence of all living things. Planting seedlings becomes a symbol of rebirth and hope, reflecting the forest's silent cry for restoration.

Douglas's journey serves as evidence of how individuals can use their commitment and actions to give a voice to those without one. He exemplifies the spirit of environmental activism by sowing seeds and encouraging new growth, promoting harmony with the natural world, and ensuring that the silent voices of the trees are acknowledged and heeded. His unwavering dedication, despite the physical toll it takes on him, highlights the deep commitment necessary to amplify the voices of wordless beings like trees. The sacrifices made by environmental activists to preserve and restore nature are evident in their unceasing efforts, even when those efforts lead to personal discomfort. Douglas's determination to persevere through adversity speaks volumes about his relationship with nature. Even though his body is pushed to its limits, his spirit remains unbroken, as he is on a mission to restore life to the woodlands. This steadfast commitment amplifies the trees' silent pleas for preservation and care.

Richard Powers uses Douglas's journey to illustrate how the tireless efforts of those who stand up for the voiceless can make their voices heard. His experience serves as a powerful reminder that meaningful transformation often requires significant personal sacrifice and a strong spiritual connection to the cause. His emotional reaction to witnessing trees being taken down—marked by feelings of rage and grief—further amplifies the voices of these voiceless entities. This emotional bond draws attention to the ethical and spiritual aspects of his work. The image of his small Douglas-firs, looking dejected like pipe cleaners, beautifully conveys the young trees' brittleness and frailty, highlighting the necessity of nurturing and protecting them. Douglas's actions and emotions offer a potent reminder of the interdependence of all life and the importance of protecting and maintaining nature. His story inspires us to recognize the natural world's quiet suffering and to take significant action to preserve it. As Powers (2018) writes: "His young Douglas firs appear dejected, similar to pipe cleaners. Like train set props. Stretched across these artificial meadows, they seem, from a distance, like a crew cut on a balding guy. However, every weedy stem he plants in the ground is a millennium-old magic trick. He

loves and trusts them as much as he would his fellow men, and he deploys thousands of them” (p. 85).

Douglas Pavlicek’s commitment to planting seedlings masterfully reflects his pragmatic approach, combined with a profound respect for the natural world. The seedlings’ early artificiality and frailty are highlighted by the comparison to train set props and a crew cut on a balding man. Nevertheless, the eternal and magical quality of life is symbolized by the ancient magic imbued in each “weedy stem” he plants. Douglas has a deep spiritual bond with nature, demonstrated by his affection and trust for these seedlings, whom he compares to his fellow humans. In addition to helping physically restore the forest by planting thousands of seedlings, he raises the voices of the silent trees and defends their right to survive and flourish. This highlights the twofold nature of Douglas’s work: the material act of planting and the spiritual connection he shares with the forest. His story serves as a testament to the power of individual action within the broader environmental movement, demonstrating how a sincere love and respect for the natural world can lead to significant change.

Biologist Patricia Westerford also elevates the voices of silent entities like trees through her research, which reveals that trees can communicate with one another. She wrote *The Secret Forest*, a book on woodlands that profoundly influenced many people’s perspectives on nature and trees. In the future, she plans to publish *The Secret Forest*, with the opening reading: “There is a common ancestor between you and the tree in your garden, according to the introductory page. It was a billion and fifteen years ago that you two split. That tree and you do, however, still share 25% of your DNA despite your long journey in separate directions” (Powers, 2018, p. 122).

Patricia’s work is another example of elevating the voices of unspoken entities. Her research demonstrates that trees are social beings, a finding that challenges conventional scientific wisdom and underscores the complexity and interconnectedness of forests. Patricia raises awareness of the intricate, quiet lives of trees in *The Secret Forest*, encouraging readers to view them as sen-

tient entities with connections and means of communication beyond mere resources. By translating the quiet messages of trees into a language that humans can understand and appreciate, Patricia’s work gives voice to the trees. Her research and writings advocate for a more peaceful and respectful coexistence with nature, acting as a bridge between the natural and human worlds. Through her efforts, Patricia promotes environmental awareness and protection by providing trees with a voice. Her work serves as an example of how scientific advancements can be used to amplify the voices of those who lack them, fostering a greater understanding and respect for nature. Her experiences remind us of the interdependence of all species and the need to preserve the fragile balance of the environment.

Powers (2018) describes Patricia’s work, saying: “Kill the woodpecker and remove the snag to prevent the weevils from destroying the other trees. She paints the panicles, involucre, racemes, and drupes that one could walk by without realizing for a lifetime. She describes how gold is collected by wood-coned alders. How a nut an inch high might develop roots six feet long. How the hungry can be fed by the birches’ inner bark. A single hop hornbeam catkin has millions of pollen grains. Crushed walnut leaves are used by native fishermen to stun and catch fish. Willows are able to remove heavy metals, PCBs, and dioxins from soil” (p. 194). Through these vivid descriptions of nature’s beauty and utility, Patricia helps readers recognize the intricacy of plant life that they might otherwise overlook. Her explanations of how tiny nuts can form vast root systems, how wood-coned alders gather gold, and how birch bark can feed the hungry all illustrate nature’s remarkable adaptability and resourcefulness. Her observations of how plants help humans, such as the use of willows to purify soil or crushed walnut leaves to catch fish, emphasize the deep interconnection between humans and the natural world. These examples highlight the necessity of protecting and honoring these silent beings, who are essential for sustaining ecological balance and supporting human life.

Through the sharing of these minute details, she raises awareness of the mute voices of plants and trees, promoting their protection and encouraging a closer relationship between humans and the natural world. Most significantly, she provides detailed evidence of the advantages of trees to all other living things on Earth, including people, animals, microbes, and others. In fact, certain creatures can even benefit from dead trees. She writes in her journal about how amazing trees are and how they benefit from everything in their life, including death. Patricia, a researcher with public speaking skills, plays a pivotal role in Richard Powers' *The Overstory*. She addresses the crowd, urging them to protect the forest.

"If you want to maximize the net present value of a forest for its current owners while still delivering the most wood in the shortest amount of time, then yes: chop the old growth and plant straight-row replacement plantations that can be harvested a few more times. But if you want next century's soil, pure water, variety and health, stabilizers and services we can't even quantify, be patient and let the forest offer gradually" (Powers, 2018, p.250).

Patricia Westerford's observations, which emphasize the long-term advantages of sustainable forest management, magnify the voices of the trees. Her support for natural regeneration and patience emphasizes how crucial it is to honor the intricately interwoven systems seen in forests. According to this viewpoint, stewardship should take precedence over short-term exploitation in order to ensure that forests continue to offer essential services to future generations. Patricia highlights the variety of life that exists around us. Every living thing communicates in a unique way, and they can indicate to us if we listen to them. "Some plant has attempted every possible strategy with a slim probability of success at some point during the last 400 million years. We're only now beginning to understand how varied the workplace may be. The future always seems to find a way in life. We refer to it as memory. We refer to it as genes. We have to protect the past before we can face the future."

Her basic guideline is clear: "My basic guideline is that everything you make from a tree you chop

down should be at least as spectacular as the tree you took down" (Powers, 2018, p.392).

Patricia Westerford's principle emphasizes the ethical duty that people have to protect the environment. She highlights the necessity for a healthy balance between taking and giving when she says that anything made from a chopped-down tree should be as amazing as the tree itself. The foundation of this approach is the idea that voiceless entities, such as trees, should be respected and given more weight in decision-making. Within this framework, trees are viewed as gifts from the natural world, possessing inherent worth and a function within the ecosystem. When we take something from nature—like chopping down a tree—we must make sure our actions enhance rather than damage the natural world. This could entail transforming the tree into something equally or more valuable, or more crucially, planting to replenish the lost tree. By recognizing their significance and guaranteeing their continuous existence and good health in the ecosystem, this strategy gives trees a voice.

It encourages a considerate and sustainable relationship with the natural world, where human needs are considered alongside the needs of trees.

Patricia's concept ensures that trees are valued and given a voice by pushing for the planting of additional trees and the production of useful goods from those that are cut down. Her general guideline encourages us to view trees as living things that require attention and care, in addition to resources. In order to ensure the survival and development of the natural world, it requires that we have a thoughtful and reciprocal connection with it, giving back more than we take.

Patricia also gave a remarkable performance. She and other environmentalists have traveled across continents to gather seeds from trees that are on the verge of going extinct, in order to maintain the equilibrium of the ecosystem. She is prepared to take on such a big obligation. She dedicates her life to exploring different forests, studying trees, and taking care of the seeds to extend the life of those trees on our planet. She is an elderly woman with little time, and there are a ton of new species to find and bring aboard the ark. There is so much more to say. The book narrates

a simple tale: she may have written a page or two detailing how she and a few others traveled for years to every continent to save Antarctica. "How a portion of the species, or a few thousand seeds, were saved from extinction. That will go as the current guardians of Earth watch, taking innumerable dependents with them" (Powers, 2018, p.367).

Patricia has a sincere desire to protect trees. She took action not just for the sake of the trees but also for future generations of humans. Because trees continue to provide a multitude of vital functions, if those trees survive longer on Earth, our children, grandchildren, and countless others will have the chance to live better lives. Patricia's narrative serves as an example of the effectiveness of both individual and collective action when confronting environmental issues. It compels people to feel obligated to preserve the environment, ensuring that the voices of voiceless beings, such as trees, are acknowledged and valued.

Another example of environmental activism is Olivia Vandergriff, a young woman who becomes an environmentalist and dedicates her life to stopping deforestation. It all began one evening after she had taken a shower and was still partially submerged in water when she returned to her bedroom. A wall socket shocked her, causing her heart to stop for a moment. When she woke up, she discovered that an enigmatic light creature had visited her. The mysterious light began to speak to Olivia, and she began to understand that it was saying, "The most wondrous products of four billion years of life require assistance." Upon realizing what was being said, she left her college and traveled to an old-growth redwood forest in California to join a large group of deforestation activists.

Olivia Vandergriff's journey serves as a compelling illustration of how people can take up the cause of voiceless beings like trees. Her spiritual awakening following her near-death encounter inspired her to commit her life to stopping deforestation. This transformation demonstrates the significant influence that individual encounters and epiphanies can have on an individual's dedication to environmental advocacy. Olivia elevates the voices of the trees and promotes their protec-

tion by joining activists in California's old-growth redwood forest. Her actions draw attention to the critical need to protect these ancient woods, which are essential for maintaining the natural balance of the planet.

Olivia's story emphasizes how crucial it is to listen to and heed the unspoken messages of nature. Her commitment to the cause is a motivational example of how each person can have an impact on the fight against environmental degradation.

"Olivia. What on Earth is going on?" "I have made several new friends. Um, organizers. They have work for me." "What kind of work?" "The most magnificent results of four billion years of life require aid. It's straightforward and obvious now that the light-beings have pointed it out. Every rational individual on Earth ought to be able to see. There is a project out west. Important volunteer labor. I've been recruited." "What do you mean by recruited?" "How about your classes?" "I will not be finishing school this semester. That is why I called. I need to take some time off" (Powers, 2018, p.152-153).

Olivia Vandergriff had a near-death encounter that caused her to change drastically. This passage demonstrates her commitment to a cause bigger than herself and her newly discovered purpose. Olivia's decision to drop out of school to work on a project in the West is a testament to her dedication to giving voice to the voiceless, especially the old trees and the natural world. Olivia's persona serves as a medium for the trees, encapsulating their quiet appeal for conservation and reverence. She has a strong spiritual bond with nature, as seen through her contact with the "light-beings" and her subsequent actions.

By joining the campaigners and fighting for the defense of old-growth trees against logging and environmental damage, she assumes the role of an advocate for the trees. This transformation from a college student to an environmental activist emphasizes the importance of providing a voice to those unable to speak for themselves, as well as the concept of interconnection. Olivia's story serves as a potent reminder of the value of environmental stewardship and the impact one person can have when speaking up for the voice-

less. In this instance, she demonstrates a sincere effort to protect wildlife.

The novel's themes of environmental activism and connection are underscored by the significant encounter between Olivia and Nicholas Hoel. Olivia strikes Nicholas, an artist with a strong emotional connection to trees, as a kindred spirit. His family's relationship with the chestnut tree, which they have captured on film, represents a deep bond with the natural world that is now in jeopardy as the tree nears its end and the family farm is up for sale. His old memories come flooding back when he speaks with Olivia, and they have a great chemistry because they both want to save one of the most important species on the planet.

In addition, as Nick and Olivia reach Mimas, a large redwood, their friendship grows. "This is where they want us," Olivia remarked upon reaching Mimas. The word "they" may refer to the peculiar light that alerted her to the presence of trees. It is significant that she says, "This is where they want us," as she approaches Mimas, the enormous redwood. The enigmatic light-beings she claims have been in contact with her since her near-death encounter are likely the subject of the pronoun "they." She has been guided by these entities to become an environmental activist, with the goal of preserving the old trees.

Olivia's dedication to her cause and her role as the trees' ambassador are highlighted in this instance. She takes the light-beings' advice as a call to action and commits herself to raising awareness of the trees' silent pleas for respect and preservation. Her words and actions embody the novel's themes of interconnection and the importance of giving a voice to the voiceless. They demonstrate her strong sense of responsibility to protect these essential living species. This marks a crucial turning point in Olivia's development.

Following her near-death encounter, Olivia feels that her perspective on life and her mission have changed significantly. Her interactions with "beings of light" represent a spiritual awakening that helps her understand the value of preserving nature. Olivia's rebirth, in light of this newfound understanding, emphasizes her role as a voice for the inaudible entities—the trees and the larger

ecology. The complex and ancient web of life on Earth is referred to as the "most wondrous results of four billion years of life," and Olivia feels driven to safeguard it. Her involvement in environmental advocacy is spurred by this experience, which raises awareness of the silent pleas for respect and protection of the trees.

She passed away first, and then nothing. When she came back, everything was there, even light-bearing entities informing her that her assistance was needed for the most amazing outcomes of four billion years of existence (Powers, 2018, p. 292). Olivia's dedication to her cause and her role as the trees' ambassador are highlighted in this moment. She takes the light-beings' advice as a call to action and commits herself to raising awareness of the trees' silent pleas for respect and preservation. The novel's theme of interconnection and the importance of providing a voice to the voiceless is embodied by her actions and words, which demonstrate her strong sense of responsibility to protect these essential living species.

"For Christ's sake. It's a crop. It regrows! Do you see the forest to the south of this place?" Retorting, "It's a one-time jackpot," says Watchman. "A thousand years before the systems are back in place." "What's the issue between the two of you? Why do you hate people?" "What are you talking about?" "We are doing this for people!" she says in a stunned tone. "These trees will eventually die and topple. When they are ripe, they should be picked rather than wasted" (Powers, 2018, p. 253).

This conversation between Nick and Olivia reflects their mindset toward initiating a real environmental movement. The loggers argue that the trees will regrow after being cut down, to which Nick responds that it takes a very long time for a tree to grow and replenish the ecosystem. By confronting the loggers and educating them about the forest's value, Olivia and Nick take a commendable step toward its conservation.

As part of their green activism, Douglas and Mimi also participate in demonstrations against deforestation. Mimi Ma's father planted a mulberry tree in their yard, so like Douglas, she has an emotional connection to trees. Olivia has a pivot-

al moment when she sees the pine grove that is about to be cut down. This incident strengthens her resolve to save the trees and prompts her to join the demonstration against deforestation. Her quick decision to go to the logging site and participate in the protest shows her growing determination to speak up for the trees, who lack a voice. Olivia helps raise awareness of the trees' silent pleas for preservation by marching alongside other campaigners.

The novel's themes of interconnectivity and the power of collective action are emphasized by Olivia's gesture of solidarity with both the natural environment and her fellow campaigners. Olivia's transformation from a passive bystander to an engaged environmental defender highlights her role as a voice for the voiceless, embodying the urgent need for environmental care.

"Ten people at a time, they move across the skid road shoulder to shoulder in more rows than she can count. They sing childhood favorites, tunes that Mimi last sang at a summer camp in Northern Illinois. 'This Land Is Your Land.' 'If I Had a Hammer.' Toneless bass, Douggie hums along, grinning. In between songs, a megaphone-wielding cheerleader moves in a sideways fashion close to the front of the audience, provoking spontaneous applause. 'Cutting too much comes at a cost! Keep our last stands in mind!'"

These songs, which are associated with justice and freedom, reinforce the activists' message and give their demonstration greater resonance and lasting impact. The cheerleader's chants, including "Cutting too much comes at a cost! Remember our last stands!" succinctly convey the plight of the trees and the necessity of their preservation. This scene captures the activists' emotional connection to the trees. Olivia and her fellow demonstrators are fighting for more than just an abstract cause—they share a deep emotional bond with the trees and the natural world. Their actions and the mood of the demonstration reflect this emotional connection, which intensifies the urgency of the trees' silent pleas for help.

5. Conclusion

The Overstory offers trees and other natural elements a voice through its narrative. Through

their advocacy and deeds, the characters make these voiceless beings heard and ensure that their needs and rights are considered. This is consistent with the purpose of eco-spirituality, which is to acknowledge the inherent worth of all living forms and to speak for those who are unable to speak for themselves. The anthropocentric idea that nature exists only for human consumption is challenged in the book. By depicting trees as intelligent entities with unique histories and meanings, Powers urges readers to adopt a more environmentally conscious stance. This mental shift is necessary to promote a more considerate and sustainable relationship with the environment. By weaving together the characters' close relationships with trees, Powers inspires readers to view the natural world with greater reverence and respect. The profound spiritual connection promoted by eco-spirituality is exemplified in the joy that characters like Patricia Westerford's father experience when his children show an interest in trees. This interaction is a source of deep contentment, reinforcing the idea that a healthy relationship with nature is essential to human fulfillment. It supports the argument that protecting and preserving nature is the path to authentic humanity. Acknowledging our duty to protect the environment allows us to uphold the values of kindness, decency, and care that define us as human beings.

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