

## An Ethical Framework for Environmental Sustainability: Reestablishing Deep Ecology through Richard Powers' *The Overstory*

Etyczne podejście do zrównoważonego rozwoju środowiska:

Przywracanie idei głębokiej ekologii na przykładzie *The Overstory* Richarda Powersa

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Received: 30 Aug, 2025; Revised: 16 Nov, 2025; Accepted: 20 Nov, 2025;

Pre-published: 21 Nov, 2025

**Abstract:** The exploitation of the Earth's precious resources has accelerated to a level that is causing irreversible environmental damage, including natural disasters and health hazards. However, most of the natural calamities we face today result from man's anthropocentric attitude. The modern world lacks sufficient ethical values to preserve the environment. As a result, humanity faces a severe environmental crisis in which the survival of all living beings is at risk. It has therefore become essential to restore lost human values so that people can live harmoniously on Earth, protecting its natural balance and refraining from harming the environment for personal gain. Recognizing that a healthy living environment depends on valuing and respecting nature for its own sake is crucial. This paper examines how Richard Powers' Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Overstory*, reinterprets Deep Ecology to promote a healthy ecosystem and sustainability by addressing the challenges we face today. The study establishes an ethical framework for understanding the interdependence of human and non-human life by connecting individual stories with those of trees.

**Keywords:** ecocriticism, eco-centrism, deep ecology, eco-activism, environmental ethics, sustainability, SDG 12

**Streszczenie:** Eksploatacja cennych zasobów Ziemi osiągnęła poziom prowadzący do nieodwracalnych szkód środowiskowych, w tym katastrof naturalnych i zagrożeń dla zdrowia człowieka. Współczesne klęski żywiołowe wynikają jednak w dużej mierze z antropocentrycznej postawy człowieka wobec przyrody. We współczesnym świecie brakuje nam wartości etycznych, które mogłyby zapewnić skuteczną ochronę środowiska, co w konsekwencji prowadzi do kryzysu ekologicznego zagrażającego przetrwaniu wszelkich form życia na Ziemi. W tej sytuacji konieczne staje się przywrócenie utraconych wartości

humanistycznych, które umożliwiłyby ludziom życie w harmonii z planetą, ochronę jej naturalnej równowagi oraz rezygnację z działań degradujących środowisko dla doraźnych korzyści. Kluczowe jest uświadomienie sobie, że zdrowe środowisko życia wymaga uznania natury za wartość samą w sobie. Artykuł analizuje, w jaki sposób nagrodzona Pulitzerem powieść Richarda Powersa *The Overstory* reinterpretuje koncepcję głębokiej ekologii, aby promować zdrowy ekosystem i zrównoważony rozwój w obliczu współczesnych wyzwań. Badanie proponuje etyczne ramy rozumienia współzależności życia ludzkiego i nie-ludzkiego, ukazując powiązania między indywidualnymi ludzkimi historiami a „historiami drzew”.

**Słowa kluczowe:** ekokrytyka, ekocentryzm, głęboka ekologia, ekoaktywizm, etyka środowiskowa, zrównoważony rozwój, SDG 12

## Highlights

- Humans, driven by an anthropocentric attitude, overexploit the Earth's resources for their own benefit without recognizing the consequences.
- Human beings must acknowledge the intrinsic value of all living beings and treat them with genuine respect.
- The environment must be preserved for future generations through the cultivation of human virtues.
- Adhering to the principles of deep ecology fosters the creation of a sustainable planet.

## Introduction

Man's anthropocentric approach causes various harmful impacts on the ecosystem, where all living beings find solace and shelter. Many life-threatening hazards are happening worldwide. Though policies and organizations are proliferating globally, aiming to conserve a healthy planet, deterioration and degradation persist everywhere. The environment is increasingly contaminated, which leads to severe health issues and discomfort. Protecting the environment must therefore be regarded as a primary obligation. Current environmental issues, including climate change, pollution, population growth, melting icebergs, and shortages of renewable and non-renewable resources, etc. are all consequences of man's materialistic approach. Man's self-centredness devastates the environment and its resources on an unprecedented scale. The deleterious effects that harm our world are increasing rapidly. Hence, “the belief that money, possessions, and physical comforts are more important than spiritual values” (Hornby 2010).

In an era marked by escalating ecological crises, literature has emerged as a powerful medium for rethinking humanity's role within the biosphere. The novel's multifaceted narrative structure, which interweaves the lives of diverse characters with the histories of trees, offers a

profound commentary on the interconnectedness of all life forms. This study aims to critically analyse how Richard Powers' novel, *The Overstory*, urges us to reconsider humanity's bond with the natural world. The novel emphasises the implementation of conservation practices that facilitate a transition from an egocentric to an ecocentric approach through the concept of "deep ecology." The current study's objective is to critically analyse the novel's contribution to the discourse on "deep ecology", with the focus on its critique of anthropocentrism, its call for eco-centric perspectives, and its use of storytelling as a catalyst for ecological awareness and action. The paper also highlights how Richard Powers incorporates Indigenous ecological wisdom, advocating for a sustainable approach rooted in respect for nature's intrinsic value.

The environmental critic, Ursula Heise, describes human life on Earth as an uprooted condition. "Environmentalism and ecocriticism aim their critique of modernity at its presumption to know the natural world scientifically, to manipulate it technologically, and exploit it economically, and thereby ultimately to create a human sphere apart from it in a historical process that is usually labelled 'progress.' ... Such domination empties human life of the significance it has derived from living in and with nature and alienates individuals and communities from their rootedness in place." (Heise 2006). The ecosystem is in dire need of saving because it is degrading on every level. To live in harmony with nature, all species within the environment must be preserved.

According to ecocritical viewpoints, the human population and consumerism are interconnected and mutually reinforcing forces. The ecological balance should not be disrupted by unethical use of resources and excessive human consumption. Future generations should also be taken into account in today's consumer-driven society. The consumption of "the Earth's resources" by "an average American" is believed to be greater than that of "an average ecosystem dweller of the Third World" (Gadgil Madhav & Guha Ramachandran 2005). Ecological ethicists argue that all natural, non-natural, and human components of the Earth have inherent worth, and each holds a moral claim upon humanity. It is man who is capable of rational reflection. Therefore, maintaining the integrity of our ecosystem is man's primary responsibility. The way the planet is presently being used cannot continue under current conditions. The ecosphere should be sustainable and healthy for the benefit of all species, both now and in the future. "Sustainability is living within the bounds of the regenerative, assimilative, and carrying capacities of the planet indefinitely, in fairness to future generations. It seeks a just distribution of goods between present and future generations, without sacrificing one for the other" (Johnson 2021).

This study has explored Richard Powers' fictional work *The Overstory* to refocus deep ecology for sustainable development. In "Sustainability, Civilization and Women - An Environmental Study of The Overstory by Richard Powers" Nikita rebukes man's attitude, noting: "Such trees that the citizens previously admired for their immense height, greater life expectancy and the consistency of not being easily withered due to issues such as forest fires, etc., later became in their eyes a source of income" (Nikita & Shuchi 2020). According to Safina, there is a strong hope for sustainability as "there are also pastoral in the matter of time, such as nostalgia which deals with memory in the past, and utopia that highlights the hope for a better future" (Safina 2021).

## 1. Theoretical Analysis

When man's irresponsible behaviour has brought about numerous environmental hazards, environmental philosophers turned their attention to "nature" developing a new theory in philosophical framework known as "environmental ethics" with the aim of conserving the Earth. The event took place on the first Earth Day in 1970. According to Brian Duignan, environmental ethics articulates the moral connection between humans and the environment, thereby building an overwhelming sense of interconnected relationship. "By understanding the interconnectedness of all organisms—including humans—in the ecosphere and empathizing with nonhuman nature, they argue, humans would develop an ecological consciousness and a sense of ecological solidarity." (Duignan 2025) Humans therefore realize that they are "morally bound to protect the environment, as well as individual creatures and species, for their own sake" (Ambrosius 2005).

However, Van Rensselaer Potter, a scientist, developed "bioethics" as an alternative theory to environmental ethics because this ethical framework was, in his view, insufficiently rigorous. He argued that all living beings should be given equal consideration on Earth. Later on, when "...conservation scientists who find both bioethics and environmental ethics inadequate frameworks for ethical fieldwork have proposed the term 'Ecological Ethics' to shape professional ecological and conservation management in a morally complex world" (Curry 2011).

Rolston, an American utilitarian philosopher and theologian, first used the term "ecological ethics" in 1975. It addresses the ethical link between humans and the non-human world. "The study of what humans, individually and corporately, ought to value, ought to be, and ought to do in relationships with all other beings and elements in the biosphere" is how the Encyclopaedia defines ecological ethics (Ethics of Ecology 2023). It is essential to treat the

natural environment with love and respect. Every living thing in the ecosystem has inherent value, making each individual the “teleological centre of life” (Taylor 1994). Consequently, no species should be harmed through the exploitation of resources.

Environmental ethicists have a variety of perspectives on ecological ethics. In April 1984, Arne Naess and George Sessions introduced the radical environmental philosophy known as “deep ecology,” which effectively synthesized environmental philosophy into eight foundational principles. In reality, it is a collection of decades of environmentally related ideas and thoughts derived from a wide range of ideologies and religions. “Deep ecology distinguishes itself from other types of environmentalism by making broader and more basic philosophical claims about metaphysics, epistemology, environmental ethics, and social justice” (Madsen 2024). Deep ecology is more than just respecting other living beings; it is about recognizing the destructive effects of human interventions. Humans have overused resources and land, negatively impacting the environment. Humans have seized control of every aspect of the ecosystem, and deep ecology seeks to counteract society’s possessiveness, discontent, and greed (Ambrosius 2005).

With the mission of nurturing the ecosystem and reviving the planet with all of its vitality and worth, deep ecology underscores the importance of values and ethical responsibilities that every individual in the current generation should uphold (Duignan 2025). The “deep ecology movement is a direct outgrowth of the ecological concerns of the 1960s” (Zimmerman 1993), which has had a significant impact on a large number of people over the years. According to Sessions, “the heart of deep ecology is its platform” (Sessions 1995).

- “1) The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves [this is commonly referred to as inherent worth, or intrinsic value]. These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.
- 2) Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves;
- 3) Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs;
- 4) The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease in the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.
- 5) Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening;

6) Policies must therefore be changed. The changes in policies affect basic economic, technological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.

7) The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent worth) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great;

8) Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to participate in the attempt to implement the necessary changes” (Sessions 1995).

Consequently, “these all mean that deep ecology is really about ecocentrism, and not anthropocentrism, in that it is against seeing everything in terms of its beneficial usefulness (or lack thereof) to humans” (Ambrosius 2005). The interdependence of nature and man—that is, everything is interrelated—confirms the significance of biodiversity on the planet. There is no hierarchy among living things because everything depends on everything else to survive. Because everything in the web of life depends on everything else, nothing can be more or less than everything else (Ambrosius 2005).

Since humans are dependent on other living forms, we (humans) must respect their diversity and intrinsic richness. It also describes how this interdependence and biodiversity enable ecosystems to self-regulate and self-maintain. It emphasizes that every living thing must be taken into account and no human has the authority to deny another living creature the chance to survive and thrive unless it is necessary to meet one’s own basic needs. Bill Devall admits that “we reach our ecological self, we will joyfully defend and interact with that with which we identify; and instead of imposing environmental ethics on people, we will naturally respect, love, honour, and protect that which is of our self” (Devall 1985).

A final “call for an ‘obligation’ of direct or indirect action” is made to react positively as, “It is something that can and should be adopted by all humans, and through living these principles, it is theorized that not just the environmental problems will disappear, but social, political, economic, and human relational problems will dissolve as well” (Ambrosius 2005). According to Andrew Brennen, people do not care about the environment unless they perceive how beneficial it is to them. “There is a very good reason for thinking ecologically, and for encouraging human beings to act in such a way as to preserve a rich and balanced planetary ecology: human survival depends on it” (Brennan 2010). Realizing our intimate relationship

with nature makes us aware of our dependence on it. It is our responsibility as humans to preserve it and honour its inherent worth for which it was created.

## **2. Discussion**

This paper explores how Richard Powers' Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Overstory*, redefines Deep Ecology to address the challenges of creating a sustainable and thriving planet. Richard Powers' twelfth book, *The Overstory*, came out in 2018 and appeals to everyone to develop ecological consciousness by recognising the necessity of conserving trees in order to sustain life on the planet. The novel's plot demonstrates the interaction between humans and trees. The connections between the nine protagonists encouraged them to form a community through which they voiced their grief over deforestation and united as environmental activists.

## **3. Deforestation Due to Man's Anthropocentrism**

Humans require oxygen to survive, and trees are the primary source of the oxygen we breathe. Despite being aware of the advantages, humans deliberately destroy forests to make room for taller structures. Even though we may have pressing issues and other concerns, we often overlook the long-term impact of our actions on our fragile planet and its inhabitants. Cutting down trees damages the environment and exacerbates emerging environmental problems, such as climate change, soil erosion, and depletion of the ozone layer, which are among the most urgent global issues that human beings currently face.

All the adverse environmental consequences have led to "...health concerns involving reproduction, specifically the fantastically high increase in miscarriages, birth defects, and childhood deaths due to cancer..." (Stein & Unger 2004). The environmentalist Emma John states, "We are incredibly good at psychological and political dramas, but there's another kind of drama – between the humans and the non-humans – that disappeared in the late 19th century, once we thought we had dominion over the Earth. Because we won that battle" (John 2018), referring to humanity's destruction of the natural resources that provide comfort and healthy living to all beings in this ecosystem.

Deforestation is an "act of cutting down or burning the trees in an area/place" (Hornby 2010). Paul Wapner remarks that the serious impacts on humankind are due to the "severe deforestation, and lamented the loss of fertile soil and defaced landscapes" (Wapner 2010). Linda Hess condemns this, stating that "The destruction of forests is extremely grievable" (Hess 2019). The relationship between man and trees is powerful, and Richard Powers depicts it in his novel, *The Overstory*, as "Old trees are our parents, and our parents' parents, perchance. If

you would learn the secrets of Nature, you must practice more humanity...” (Powers 2018, 5). Moreover, everyone expects a healthy environment, and in the narrator’s words, “The wind blows and the hemlocks wave their feathery leading shoots. Such a graceful profile, so elegant a tree. A tree is embarrassed for people, embarrassed by efficiency, injunctions. The bark grey, the branches beginner green; the needles flat along the shoots, pointing outward and on” (Powers 2018, 292).

Powers believes his book will contribute to a change in the literary tradition that has virtually vanished in contemporary literature. The characters in the book devote themselves to planting trees and cross paths at several points. The characters in Powers will stop at nothing to defend the trees. When discussing the devastation of forest land, for instance, the narrator grieves, “Whole states lie prostrate under the saw and in the beds of enormous machines, vandals roll over the last stands of ancient redwoods and giant firs, burning the stumps and setting the cinders adrift in the updrafts” (Powers 2018, 54). Man’s materialistic attitude is thus confessed by Thomas Cleary that “No crime is greater than approving of greed, / no calamity is greater than discontent, / no fault is greater than possessiveness” (Cleary 1991).

#### **4. Realizing the Intrinsic Worth of Interconnected Life Forms**

The book’s sections are designated as “Roots,” “Trunk,” “Crown,” and “Seeds.” The artistic structure of each section demonstrates the symbolic relationship to life and its moral principles. Trees, plants, and all wildlife are considered “mere property” by contemporary man. To authorities that turn into the source of a far more serious issue, “alienation” (John 2018). Powers claims in the opening chapter, “Roots,” that “there is always as much below ground as above” (Powers 2018). The novel’s characters are empathetic towards the environment by realizing the interconnectedness between humans and the environment. Powers’ protagonists are environmental activists who are inspired to save the trees they care about after going through a horrific experience.

Patricia Westerford, the novel’s main character, is an academic scholar. She reflects on the interconnectedness and the interdependence of trees: “All the trees are connected, she says. Underground. That’s how they talk. That’s how they share what they need. That’s how they give. The underground exchange” (Powers 2018, 25). Jorgen Hoel, an environmental artist, planted a chestnut tree because he believed his children would enjoy playing in his yard more. After all, they would “shake the trunks and eat [its fruit] for free” (Powers 2018, 7). Half-Chinese engineer Mimi Ma also works to prevent deforestation and grows trees. Every being on the planet needs a fresh form of connection with others. A tree’s roots provide the framework



for its growth and development. Despite being invisible from the outside, roots are crucial to a tree's development. In the same manner, each person's inner life is of foundational value.

Since it links the roots to the other components of the tree, the second chapter, "Trunk," stands as a linking agent. It supports the tree's stability and upward growth. The tree's trunk reveals its strength and endurance. Similarly, each person in the ecosystem is intricately linked to every other person and entity in the ecosystem. This link facilitates upward growth. It also demonstrates intense aspirations and hopes of living beings. The Air Force employee in the novel, Douglas Pavlicek, was drawn to reforestation efforts. He was seriously injured in a plane crash, but he survived after falling over a banyan tree in a forest. He wanted to spend time in that banyan tree since he had developed a deep reverence for it. This shows that Powers' characters have realized their intrinsic value and are interconnected with the environment.

The female characters in the novel *The Overstory* share a similar level of enthusiasm and desire to recognize nature's intrinsic worth, resisting the destruction of America's historic trees and seeking to live in harmony with the environment. The central character, Patricia Wester Ford, a dendrologist, has dedicated her life to researching how old trees function and calculating how they make internal connections by demonstrating that they are "members of a community" (Powers 2018, 158). These trees, she claims, are "linked together in an airborne network, sharing an immune system.... [in which the] trunks are protecting each other" (Powers 2018, 158).

The eco critic Linda Hess laments in her work, "Networks of the Grievable in Richard Powers' *The Overstory*", that "Human grief and the physical pain connected to loss are something all characters in the novel experience, in one way or the other, as elements of the understory of the forest to which they belong. They manifest and express their partnership and dialogic interconnections, and their attempt at transforming the dominator world that engenders those losses and pain into a partnership caring for harmony with all things" (Hess 2019).

## **5. Eco-activism**

Jayanta Bandyopadhyay, an environmentalist, in his work "Chipko Movement: Of Floated Myths and Flouted Realities," states, "Many courageous activists, men and women of determination, have brought 'Chipko' from the stage of a possible instrument of struggle to the stage of a trend-setting achievement" (Bandyopadhyay 1999). In Wendy Ambrosius' research work, emphasis is placed on changing human attitudes toward treating the world ethically. "To make changes, new ideals and mindsets need to come about, and thus, new policies will emerge on how humans treat the environment" (Ambrosius 2005).

Eco-activism is well reflected through the characters in the third chapter titled “Crown” from Powers’ novel, which symbolises richness or beauty. This emphasises that inner vitality and moral beauty are valued above outward appearance. One of the novel’s key characters, Olivia Vandergrief, is introduced as a sluggish college student. She once touched a socket with her moist palm and was severely shocked by the electric current. She eventually recovered. “She passed through a triangular tunnel of strobing colour and emerged into a clearing. There, the presences—presences-the only thing to call them—removed her blinders and let her look through. Then, she fell back into her prison body, and the incredible vistas blurred to nothing” (Powers 2018). She is the one who brings the characters together for the significant transformation that the community brought about. She united the characters in environmental activism and called the group “Life Defence Force” after learning that Californian redwoods were in danger of being destroyed. Together, they resisted the loggers’ efforts to take down the trees.

Olivia is tragically killed in an accident while attempting to burn the logging equipment. “She moans, and the noise leaks away until there’s no louder sound than the flames on three sides of them. Her eyes squeeze shut. Then they open, wild. She stares, unsure what she’s looking at” (Powers 2018). Other characters, such as a lawyer and a stenographer, are amateur performers. Ray Brinkman and Dorothy Cazaly, later married, joined together to plant trees. “Earth [must] be made profitable until every tree grows in a straight line” (Powers 2018, 434). Sacrificing one’s life for the sake of others is what the fourth chapter, “Seed,” is all about. The main objective for the ecosystem’s sustained growth is the transformation of a healthy ecosystem.

Another activist in the novel is Pavlicek, who reflects on his activism: “All I ever wanted to do was save something bigger than this little life. This stupid little human life. And look at me now” (Powers 2018, 66). This internal fight draws attention to the ethical dilemmas and personal sacrifices that environmental activists confront, illuminating the struggles that are part of eco-activist campaigning. Douglas Pavlicek became an activist after seeing that the forest, which had previously been dense with large-trunked trees, had been drastically thinned. He wanted to plant 50,000 trees to make up for the enormous loss. He then planned a celebration of successful reforestation.

“In the party, one of his friends says that he is promoting the logging companies by giving more tree trunks through his saplings. My fifty thousandth tree. Nine hours a day, rain or shine, five and a half days a week, through every planting month, for almost four years....) (And those companies you plant for?... Every time you stick one in the ground, it lets them raise the

annual allowable cut.” You’re putting in babies so they can kill grandfathers” (Powers 2018).

## **6. Advocacy of Sustainability**

Advocacy of sustainability prioritises the urgent need for balanced human development with environmental conservation. Promoting sustainability entails creating awareness and encouraging responsible practices among people to ensure the wise utilisation of natural resources for the well-being of both present and future generations. Nowadays, the task is more complicated because many inhabited forests have long been neglected. Illegal loggers are becoming increasingly greedy and violent, and at the same time, provoking widespread fear and resentment. The worries that the forefathers faced in the past have now become a reality (Murshid 2015). In Prof. Sabine’s opinion, she states, “I believe that analysing, understanding, and finding solutions to environmental problems is one of the most important tasks facing our generation and that the study of literature and culture has a significant contribution to make in this endeavour, a contribution that has not yet been sufficiently acknowledged” (Sabine 2011). The solution can be obtained by being ecologically conscious. “In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness,” she notes, “to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now” (Gettleman 2011).

Olivia Vandergriff, a once impulsive and volatile girl, changes into a peaceful and selfless person after coming so close to death by electrocution. This realisation ultimately inspires her to find her life’s purpose in tree protection, and she claims that the “large, powerful, but desperate shapes... [which]...beckoned to her” (Powers 2018, 196) guided her along the way. Olivia, on realizing that “the most wondrous products of four billion years of life need help,” these beings of light guide her thoughts and force her to go greater heights (Powers 2018, 205). Olivia sacrifices herself for the sake of the next generation. The trees are portrayed as living beings, playing an equally significant role in the environment.

Another character in the novel is Scholar Patricia Westerford, who reflects on her life’s work while retreating into the woods and suppressing her emotions, which finally surface when she is called before a judge and chastises the business community, saying,

“Yes, you should chop the old growth and plant replacement plantings that are straight-rowed so that you can harvest them a few more times. This will maximise the forest’s net present value for its current owners and provide the most wood in the shortest amount of time. But be patient and let the forest provide gradually if you want the soil of the next century, pure water, variety,

and health, as well as stabilizers and services that are impossible to quantify” (Powers 2018, 282).

As the scientist Patricia Westerford explains in her book *The Secret Forest*, she gradually begins to experience the lifelike qualities of trees during this journey. “You share an ancestry with the tree in your backyard. You two split up a billion and a half years ago. However, a quarter of your genes are still shared with that tree even now, after a long voyage in different directions” (Powers 2018, 132), thereby reinforcing the need for sustainable development. According to Andres Schipani, “If they cut down the trees now, there won’t be any air, nuts, fruits, or animals left for my children and grandchildren,” she warns, acknowledging the importance of these forests (Andres 2019). Lin Yutang’s translation work stresses that the world is not under human control and that any attempt to dominate it will lead to ruin: “There are those who will conquer the world, and make of it (what they conceive or desire). I see that they will not succeed, for the world is God’s own vessel. It cannot be made (by human interference). He who makes it spoils it. He who holds it loses it” (Yutang 1948). The quality of life on Earth can be enhanced, and a healthier world can be fostered for all species when sustainable development guidelines are followed.

## **Conclusion**

Sustainability is the essential element of existence, enabling humanity to meet present nutritional and material needs while safeguarding resources for future generations. The severity of the environmental situation is at an all-time high, and the measures required have never been more urgent. Survival is fundamentally linked to sustainability. It is the responsibility of the present generation to consider the community of the future and take the required steps to minimise the catastrophic effects of environmental degradation. This may encourage the development of healthier surroundings for the upcoming generation. However, the problem is often approached in a simplified manner, positing an antagonistic relationship between economic prosperity and environmental protection. The issue is sometimes framed as a conflict between capitalism and ecofeminism, which focuses on men’s efforts to promote sustainability. *The Overstory* is a semi-fictional narrative based on historical facts and ecological concepts.

This study focuses on a rethinking of eco-activism and sustainability through deep ecology in the contemporary novel *The Overstory* by Richard Powers. Contemporary humanity continues to degrade the environment without recognising the severity of its consequences. It requires a shift in people's attitudes towards ecocentric behaviour. One of the most effective

ways to organise the group's ideas and actions is through deep ecology, which emphasizes the recognition of the intrinsic value of all entities in this ecosystem.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, S.P.; Methodology, S.P.; Writing – Original Draft Preparation, S.P.; Review & Editing, P.R.; Supervision, P.R. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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