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Trees of Our Times: Representing Arboreal Temporalities in Ali Smith's *Autumn* and Richard Powers' *The Overstory*

by Khanh Nguyen



Abstract

This paper examines the nature of tree time and how it is represented in Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016) and Richard Powers' *The Overstory* (2018). It argues that trees' relationship to time is different from humans' and sensibility towards their temporal otherness is necessary if we are to enter into responsible relationships with trees, as well as the non-human world. Both *Autumn* and *The Overstory* facilitate such ecological awareness by staging human-tree encounters where the alterity of tree time is foregrounded. While Smith engages with tree time in its cyclical form, highlighting its heteronomy, Powers provides a good example of how the challenges of representing the linear, *longue durée* temporality of trees can be overcome. In both novels, the authors' engagement with tree time and its alterity gives rise to ideologically challenging gestures at long-held ideas of human-nature relationships. *The Overstory* unsettles anthropocentric understandings of time. Meanwhile, the cyclical form of arboreal temporality represented in *Autumn* evokes a pre-modern, pre-capitalist conception of time, which works to reveal the entanglements between the natural world and mankind.

Keywords: critical plant studies, botanical humanities, ecocriticism, contemporary literature



About the Author

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Trees of Our Times: Representing Arboreal Temporalities in Ali Smith's *Autumn* and Richard Powers' *The Overstory*

Khanh Nguyen

According to Michael Marder, “[w]henver human beings encounter plants, two or more worlds (and temporalities) intersect” (2013, 8). In this essay, I explore how Ali Smith’s novel *Autumn* (2016) and Richard Powers’ novel *The Overstory* (2018) represent and foreground trees’ temporal alterity in their encounters with the human characters. Arboreal temporality is both cyclical, in the sense that it mirrors and is affected by yearly seasonal changes, and linear, insofar as it “tends to infinity” (Marder 2013, 112). Through examining the nature of arboreal temporality, I show how trees’ relationship to time is different from humans’. Sensibility towards their temporal otherness is thus necessary if we are to enter into responsible relationships with trees, as well as the non-human world. Both *Autumn* and *The Overstory* encourage in the reader an awareness of that difference. This in turn is crucial to the arguments the two novels engage with about the problems contemporary society is facing.

I would like to start with a short philosophical inspection of the nature of vegetal temporality. As opposed to animals, which have more autonomy in both time and space, plants’ positions in those two dimensions are characterized by heteronomy, meaning that their spatial and temporal configurations depend on that which is other or extraneous to them. Spatially, plants are fixed to the Earth, immobile. Temporally, “vegetal hetero-temporality indifferently invites the time of any other to stand in for the time of plants themselves” (Marder 2013, 183). That other might pertain to human interventions, taking the form of, for instance, chemicals used in agriculture to stimulate growth and hasten the ripening process of fruits. Of more interest to me here is plants’ organic other, meaning the light, the wind, the weather, or the whole natural environment that surrounds them. These exterior elements and conditions determine their temporality. Thus, plants’ processes of “[c]oming to fruition and ripening are in

sync with the change of seasons” because of their susceptibility to the influence of the other (Marder 2013, 102). However, Marder (2013) notes that this relationship also goes the other way: vegetal time also has a strong influence on the human perception and understanding of environmental time, an influence discernible in the etymological background of the word *season*, which comes from the Latin *serere*, meaning *to sow*.

The concept of season is therefore constructed by humans but based on the natural world. A more visual example of the correlation between the time of plants and human perception of environmental time can be found in the changing appearance of trees. To perceive the seasons, we can rely on weather changes or the varying lengths of daytime. However, for many people, the different seasons are signaled most obviously by the shape and color of trees’ foliage, as well as the presence or absence of flowers and fruits. According to Marder,

plants precipitate the non-dialectical coincidence of the singular and the universal at the point where the cyclical time of nature (the changing of the seasons, the alternation of day and night) intersects with the cycles of vegetal growth (the budding and shedding of foliage, the opening and closing of a flower). The plant metonymizes this most encompassing circle and reflects it as though in a miniature mirror, where the circulation of sap . . . obeys the circularity of seasonal changes or indeed the rotations of the Earth. (2013, 113)

The covers for the Penguin edition of Smith’s four-season quartet, of which *Autumn* is the first installment, offer an excellent illustration for Marder’s argument about the intersection between environmental time and tree time. The four pictures are the different seasonal captures of the same scene: a small, somewhat overgrown pathway with trees both big and small on the two sides. Starting with *Autumn*, the foliage of the trees is green turning to the typical autumnal colors of yellow and light red. In *Winter*, all the leaves have fallen, revealing the trees’ barren branches. *Spring* sees the green leaves back on the trees, whereas *Summer* features the same green but a denser, more bushy foliage.

Set against a turbulent political backdrop, Ali Smith’s *Autumn* revolves around the special friendship between Elisabeth Demand, a thirty-something lecturer of art history, and Mr. Daniel Gluck, a comatose 100-year-old man. The novel opens with Charles Dickens’ famous quote from *A Tale of Two Cities*: “[i]t was the worst of times, it was the best of times” (quoted in Smith 2016, 3). In line with this quotation, Smith’s novel does not try to hide its obsession with time, as this essay also demonstrates. The narrative covers a period from the summer of the Brexit referendum to November of the same year, in addition to various flashbacks and revisitations to the recent and far past. When the

novel deals with the present, its narrative time is based on the changes in the natural world. When it is “just over a week since the vote,” it is not raining, the weather dry and windy (Smith 2016, 53). Then in September,

[t]he crops are high, about to be cut, bright, golden

...

The days are still warm, the air in the shadows sharper. The nights are sooner, chillier, the light a little less each time.

...

The greens of the trees have been duller since August, since July really. But the flowers are still coming. The hedgerows are still humming. The shed is already full of apples and the tree's still covered in them. (Smith 2016, 85)

October comes and “[t]he apples weighing down the tree a minute ago are gone and the tree's leaves are yellow and thinning. A frost has snapped millions of trees all across the country into brightness. The ones that aren't evergreen are a combination of beautiful and tawdry, red orange gold the leaves, then brown, and down” (Smith 2016, 177).

Here, the flow of time is rendered perceptible and tangible through the changing materiality of the natural environment in general and trees in particular. *Autumn's* timescale, based upon the natural and the organic, is therefore different from the modern construction of time, characterized by its “abstracted condition and the increasing dominance of ‘clock time’ and ‘instantaneous time’” (Jones and Cloke 2002, 222). In a similar vein, the philosopher Henri Lefebvre posits that “with modernity lived time experienced in and through nature gradually disappears. It is no longer visible and is replaced by measuring instruments, clocks, which are separate from both natural and social space” (quoted in Macnaghten and Urry 1998, 141). In using the natural world as the temporal backbone for her narrative, Smith is performing a reinhabitation of time that according to Joanna Macy is necessary “in the face of the ‘temporal trap’ of modern life,” and which can be achieved by recognizing “time in organic, ecological and even geological terms” (quoted in Jones and Cloke 2002, 223). The modern conception of time distances the human subject from the natural environment and can be said to mark the victory of culture over nature (Jones and Cloke 2002, 222). I argue that Smith's employment of ecological time, herein loosely defined as a conception of time that is based primarily on the workings of ecosystems rather than human societies, in *Autumn* challenges such triumph, the implications of which are explored more thoroughly later in this essay. For now, I want to point out that since ecological time was the predominant mode of temporality in pre-modern, pre-capitalist societies and its obliteration only came with modernity, to engage with ecological time is to look back to the past, or to bring the past to the present. However, such a gesture should not be interpreted as

regressive or as an example of sentimental nostalgia. Instead, it is one among many of Smith's returns to the past that to her holds wisdom and insights which might be enlightening for those who live in the present. This outlook is encapsulated in the symbolic rebellious acts committed by Elisabeth's mother. Angry at the enclosure of the common near to where she lives, Mrs. Demand is determined to sabotage the electrified fence that has been put up around public land by throwing antiques at it, "bombarding that fence with people's histories and with the artefacts of less cruel and more philanthropic times" (Smith 2016, 255). With various references to older literary works and historical events, *Autumn* demonstrates the instructive potential of the past. Thus, just as Mrs. Demand's antiques can be used like weapons against the present's follies, ecological time and the human attachment to nature that such a temporal conception encourages might hold the key to solving contemporary society's problems.

However, Smith's ecological time is not the smooth flow of seasons and the predictable yearly changes in nature that guided the activities of people living in pre-modern, pre-capitalist societies. In fact, the temporality that she presents through the trees and the weather is anything but smooth and predictable. Time moves abruptly in *Autumn*: "[a] minute ago it was June. Now the weather is September" (Smith 2016, 85). In October, "[o]n the warm days it feels wrong, so many leaves falling. But the nights are cool to cold" (177). The weather is autumnal in summer whereas summers, according to Elisabeth's mother, no longer exist. She looks longingly back to "[w]hen we still had seasons, not just the monoseason we have now" (215). It is easy to dismiss these references as insignificant or, at most, as yet more examples of Smith's "extraordinarily playful use of language" (Allfree 2016, para. 3). However, looking at the epigraph from an article in *The Guardian* that Smith places at the beginning of her novel, it becomes clear there is a purpose to *Autumn*'s abnormal temporal flow: "[a]t current rates of soil erosion, Britain has just 100 harvests left" (George Monbiot quoted in Smith 2016, 1). *Autumn*'s ecological time is disrupted. It feels wrong, even uncanny. Through the disruption in weather patterns and natural cycles, the author alludes to, not global warming but the *global weirding*, to use a term that Thomas Friedman (2010) suggests as a better alternative, of our planet. Consequently, Smith's reference to the two lines from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which she places right above the quote from *The Guardian*, takes on a different meaning: "[s]pring come to you at the farthest, / In the very end of harvest!" (quoted in Smith 2016, 1). The lines are spoken by Ceres, one of Prospero's spirits who represents the Roman goddess of harvest and agriculture in Miranda and Ferdinand's marriage celebration masque. The spirit wishes the newlywed couple a life of abundance, that spring will come to them right at the end of autumn so that they would not have to

endure the hardship of winter. Spoken as a blessing, the lines become unsettlingly literal in the contemporary context where the seasons are disrupted to detrimental, even disastrous, effects. Smith's engagement with climate change does not feature violent catastrophes or doomsday scenarios. It is subtle and implicit, but through that subtlety the author shows how profoundly environmental disarray can affect the human psyche. The confusion that Elisabeth's mother feels at the derangement of environmental time is therefore akin to a disturbance of one's ontological security. This happens when, according to the sociologist Anthony Giddens, one is denied "a sense of biographical continuity and wholeness that is supported and recognized in and through their relations with others" (quoted in Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017, 4). From a literary perspective, the way Smith implicitly hardwires environmental concerns into her novel's timescale might lead to a "radical openness of the ecological thought" wherein the reader and the critic are encouraged to "think the environment beyond rigid conceptual categories" (Morton 2012, 11).

It is therefore with reference to *Autumn's* awareness of contemporary ecological emergency that Smith's employment of ecological time should be made sense of. Here I return to Jones and Cloke's argument that the modern construction of time, which measures time by mechanical instruments such as the clock and detaches human society from the natural world, marks culture's triumph over nature (2002, 222). This aggressive and anthropocentric approach to nature is deeply implicated in the environmental predicament contemporary society is facing. The solution lies in a reformation of the way we imagine our relationship to the non-human. To rethink time like Smith does constitutes such a change. Ecological time evokes ways of life and modes of social organization that are more environmentally conscious. It also reveals how profoundly human society is imbricated in the natural world. Through its engagement with ecological time, *Autumn* reconnects the reader to the environment around them, encouraging them to be more observant of its changes and appreciative of its beauty.

While Smith disrupts the cyclical time of trees in order to allude to the environmental and political disruption of our contemporary society, Powers' *The Overstory* is more interested in tree time in its linear form. The novel follows a group of environmental activists as their lives become intertwined with each other and with the lives of the trees they are trying to save. Benjamin Markovits (2018) in his review of *The Overstory* in *The Guardian* writes that the novel leaves the reader "with a slightly adjusted frame of reference" and gives them a feeling that "[t]ime matters differently" (para. 11). In what follows, I explore how the novel, through its engagement with tree time, allows the reader to think in a different temporal frame. To create this effect, Powers is confronted

with the question of representation: how does one represent in writing the temporality of trees, whose flow is alien to us in both speed and length? By focusing on the Hoel family's chestnut and the ancient trees of America, I show how the author renders tree time visually and cognitively imaginable, making the reader aware of its alterity. Furthermore, I believe that paying attention to tree time and how it is represented sheds light on many important thematic aspects of the novel.

The temporality of arboreal growth is incompatible with human perception and imagination for two reasons. First, it happens on a scale so slow that it is necessarily imperceptible to the human eye. Jones and Cloke trace this mismatch back to modernity, whose “speeded-up, instantaneous temporal nature” is inherently at odds with the slow flow of tree time (2002, 222). However, for Marder, the problem lies in the fact that humans and plants occupy different temporal planes: “[t]he pulsations of vegetal temporality are often imperceptible to a conscious human observer, because even when they share a physical space, the two beings do not live in the same homogenous time but are non-contemporaneous with one another” (2013, 103). Second, the lifespan of trees often surpasses the duration of a human life, making it difficult for human imagination to perceive the *longue durée* of arboreal existence in its fullness. The problem is more extreme in the case of ancient trees, whose lifespans cover many, sometimes hundreds of, human generations. In the face of something so massive, the human imagination is rendered numb, incapable of producing a perception commensurate with the trees' temporal expansiveness. Because of these characteristics, tree time can be compared to the geological notion of *deep time*, first articulated by the Scottish geologist James Hutton. According to Hutton, the changes caused to the exterior of the Earth by natural forces take place on a timescale which is “such that it becomes near impossible to observe it in action” (quoted in Irvine 2014, 162). At the same time, such processes are not temporary but extend so far into both the past and the future that “we find no vestige of a beginning—no prospect of an end” (quoted in Irvine 2014, 163). As a result, the timescale that the Earth inhabits is necessarily *deep*. In my exploration of tree time in *The Overstory*, I frequently return to Hutton's deep time to show how philosophical and scientific understandings of the Earth's temporality are helpful for us to comprehend the temporal scale of trees.

Tree time is both so slow it is imperceptible and so massive it is difficult to imagine. As such, it presents difficult problems for representation. Powers seems to be aware of these problems and *The Overstory* provides good examples of how they can be overcome. Let us go to the very first chapter of the novel, which deals with the story of the Hoel family. Jørgen Hoel, a Norwegian immigrant, arrives in Iowa from Brooklyn,

accompanied by his wife and, unbeknownst to him until later, six chestnuts in his smock pocket. Out of the six that he plants, only one survives. Hundreds of miles from its native land in the Eastern part of the European continent, the tree thrives. It is to become the silent witness of the Hoels' fight for survival in the harsh Midwest, watching their moments of happiness and despair, observing how their diligent and hardworking hands turn empty land into a life-sustaining homestead. It will be one of the few American chestnuts left in the country after most of the others have succumbed to a fungus disease. One day Jørgen starts a project that will be continued through many future generations of the Hoels: every month on the same day, he takes a photo of his chestnut from the same angle. When Nicolas Hoel, Jørgen Hoel's great-great-great grandchild, takes over the farm after all his family dies in a gas leak accident, the chestnut has become a giant ancient tree that can be seen from miles away while its monthly snapshots have amounted to almost a thousand. Any reader of *The Overstory* will soon find out that the book is not about humans but trees. The author himself says in a podcast that the human characters only serve as intermediaries into the world of trees, which take center stage (Markovits and Powers 2018). Likewise, the purpose of the Hoels' intergenerational photography project is to bring about a moment of revelation when the stack of monthly photographs is flipped through, making visible the movements in time of the chestnut that in normal circumstances fall below the threshold of human perception. Serving as an apparatus that "negotiates between human time and tree time" (Spengler 2019, 82), the photo album visualizes the time of the tree and allows it to disclose itself. However, the form of temporality revealed is not time as such but rather time after it has been converted into the changes in the tree's spatial materiality: its height, the shape of its foliage and the appearance of its branches. Looking at the photo album, one becomes aware that the tree's static and non-temporal guise is only an illusion. It turns out that the chestnut is a temporal creature that changes and moves in time, albeit in its own inconspicuous way. In disclosing the tree's constant and determined reach towards the sky, the photo album comes close to revealing its intention, or that "something" which the second generation American Hoel, John, suspected the tree was seeking (Powers 2019, 15). The stack of black and white photos can be seen as a form of time lapse photography, which is often used to "illustrate the extremely active life of trees and plants, presenting a view usually closed off to us due to the fundamentally different timescales which trees and humans occupy" (Jones and Cloke 2002, 225). It can also be likened to optical devices such as the phantasmagoria or magic lantern that, according to David Shackleton, nineteenth-century geology lecturers relied on to give their students a visual impression of the long history of the Earth or, in other words, of deep time (2017, 842).

If the Hoels' photo album makes the reader aware of the seemingly imperceptible changes of the chestnut over time, the encounters with America's ancient trees reveal the *longue durée* of arboreal temporality. Throughout of the novel, Powers gives several examples of trees whose life began in the distant past. Patricia, one of the characters, talks about a Florida bald cypress "one and a half millennia older than Christianity" (Powers 2019, 567–68). Some of the redwoods that Mother N and her allies try to save were around "before Jesus was born" (204). By placing the trees along the axis of human history, Powers makes their long lifespan more cognitively imaginable without reducing their lives to the narrow time frame of human existence: Christianity might have been around for a long time, but some trees that are alive and growing today might have sprouted even before Jesus. However, a crucial question remains: how to imagine something so ancient? Or rather, what does a tree whose lifespan is comparable to Christianity look like? The answer is Mimas, the giant redwood on which Olivia and Nicolas live for a year in their persistent protest against its felling. To Nicolas, Mimas is the "largest, strongest, widest, oldest, surest, sanest living thing he has ever seen" (Powers 2019, 327–28). It is:

wider across than his great-great-great-grandfather's old farmhouse. Here, as sundown blankets them, the feel is primeval, darshan, a face-to-face intro to divinity. The tree runs straight up like a chimney butte and neglects to stop. From underneath, it could be Yggdrasil, the World Tree, with its roots in the underworld and crown in the world above. Twenty-five feet aboveground, a secondary trunk springs out of the expanse of flank, a branch bigger than the Hoel Chestnut. Two more trunks flare out higher up the main shaft. The whole ensemble looks like some exercise in cladistics, the Evolutionary Tree of Life—one great idea splintering into whole new family branches, high up in the run of long time. (Powers 2019, 325)

Henri Bergson contends that "[w]herever anything lives, there is, open somewhere, a register in which time is being inscribed" (quoted in Marder 2013, 112). The inscription of time on living things becomes literal and visual in the case of trees, with their trunk growing in size over time and their rings recording the years that passed. That process is violently laid bare when Mimas is later cut down. Nicolas camps on the stump that is left and his body traces the history of the world, of the American continent, and his family, as well as his own life story, through the rings of the ancient tree:

He lies on his side as night comes on, his head on a wadded jacket near the ring laid down the year Charlemagne died. Somewhere underneath his coccyx, Columbus. Past his ankles, the first Hoel leaves Norway for Brooklyn and the expanses of Iowa. Beyond the length of his body, crowding up to the cut's cliff, are the rings of his own birth, the death of

his family, the roadside visit of the woman who recognized him, who taught him how to hang on and live. (Powers 2019, 446–47)

Mimas is revealed to be “half as old as Christianity” (Powers 2019, 408), keeping the memories of “half a million days and nights” (328). While these temporal descriptors are not easy for either Nicolas or the reader to imagine, the encounter with its sublime and massive physical presence renders its ancient origin more palpable. In other words, Mimas’ size hints at its age. To look at its body is, like Nicolas does, to go back in time and evolution, to face the primordial world of myth and divinity. In this sense, the meeting with tree time is similar to the encounter with geological deep time that Richard Irvine argues is “not just a process of abstraction, but a sensory engagement” (2014, 163). Nicolas’ awestruck reaction upon seeing Mimas for the first time parallels what John Playfair, one of Hutton’s geology students, felt when seeing the rock formations on the Berwickshire coast that supposedly reveal the long history of the Earth: “[o]n us who saw these phenomena for the first time, the impression made will not easily be forgotten . . . The mind seemed to grow giddy by looking so far into the abyss of time” (quoted in Irvine 2014, 163).

I believe Powers’ representation of tree time in *The Overstory* provides the reader with what Elizabeth Grosz calls a possibility “for being otherwise” (2011, 78). In other words, it forces on us an awareness of the temporality of non-human beings, which might not always fit into the time frames we are familiar with. That awareness has the potential to change humans’ relationship to the natural world and our perception of mankind’s place on the Earth. As Birgit Spengler argues, to usher in such a paradigm shift requires us to unsettle “anthropocentric notions of world, including conceptualizations of time and space that are at the core of our present political order and the exploitative-extractive economies that have shaped Western modernity” (2019, 68). The temporality of trees breaks down the anthropocentric illusion that time revolves around human life. It takes many generations of the Hoel family for the imperceptible movements of the chestnut to finally be visible. Likewise, the reader has to wait many pages to see the purpose of their monthly photography project. Powers and the Hoel chestnut ask us to be patient, to slow down, not to project our expectations onto things and to give them the time they need. In the same way that deep time causes any chronologies of human history to shrink to insignificance (Irvine 2014), the life of trees confronts us with the newness of our existence on this planet. Powers’ ancient trees challenge our notions of the old and the recent, as well as our conception of time itself. Thus, Adam Appich’s lighthearted surprise at the punishment he receives for his domestic terrorism conviction is the reaction of someone who has learnt to think time from the perspective of the very trees he was trying to save:

The court sentences Adam Appich to two consecutive terms of seventy years each. The lenience shocks him. He thinks: *Seventy plus seventy is nothing. A black willow plus a wild cherry.* He was thinking oak. He was thinking Douglas-fir or yew. Seventy plus seventy. With reductions for good behavior, he might even finish out the first half of the sentence just in time to die. (Powers 2019, 588)

According to Marder, “[o]nly temporal, finite, mortal beings may be the recipients of love; to attribute these qualities to a plant is to confirm that it is potentially *lovable*” (2013, 112). With its seemingly endless growth, a tree can easily be mistaken for a non-temporal, infinite being whose existence stays outside of time and will go on forever. Powers shows us the temporal nature of trees through the rings on Mimas’ body and the stack of black and white photos the Hoels take. The author also disavows the idea that trees are infinite and immortal beings by portraying an America with an indifferent government and corporations that put profits above everything else. In such a hostile culture, trees are vulnerable and fragile. It is an awareness of the trees’ “precariousness, fragility, and temporality” (Marder 2013, 111) that partly motivates the activists of the Life Defence Force into risking their lives to protect them. However, to Marder’s argument I would like to add that it is not simply that trees’ temporal nature makes them loveable, but that their time is one of the very reasons why they are worth loving. Ancient trees should be saved, Powers suggests many times in *The Overstory*, because they hold memories of times that no one can remember, because they serve as witnesses of histories that are not recorded anywhere else but on their bodies. We also encounter this idea of trees as witnesses in a recent picture essay on *The Guardian* authored by Rachel Mounsey about the people who were, not unlike Powers’ characters, camping in Victoria to protest against the felling of Australia’s last patches of old growth forests. Tiffany Tarrant, one of the activists, says she is drawn to the cause because: “I’d hate to be here when there’s nothing left. *The forest represents what it was like before colonisation.* We’re witnessing the last of the large trees and that’s quite depressing” (quoted in Mounsey 2021; emphasis added).

Even though fairly contemporaneous to each other, the two novels analyzed here come from different literary traditions and were written in different styles. Nonetheless, they both highlight the discursive potential of trees, showing how a botanically minded reading will yield illuminating insights. Specifically, Ali Smith’s *Autumn* and Richard Powers’ *The Overstory* provide complementary understandings of how trees situate themselves in time and what their temporality has to teach us about co-existing with other species. It should be pointed out that such understandings are possible only on the condition that we forsake an anthropocentric reading that treats trees as mere symbols or stand-ins for humans. The above analyses of *Autumn* and *The Overstory* have gone

beyond a symbolic interpretation of trees to consider them as characters deserving of serious critical examination. This is often difficult, especially in Smith's novel, where references to trees are scanty and can easily be overlooked. However, as this article has demonstrated, attention to arboreal representations in literature can allow us to rethink our understandings not only of trees but also of ourselves and our relationship to the non-human world. Examining the nature of arboreal temporality helps us switch from a human-centric conception of time to one that is more organic and accommodating towards other species. Such a change encourages an awareness of mankind's entanglements with the natural world, as when tree time in its cyclical form is considered, or an abandonment of human exceptionalism, as when the *longue durée* of arboreal existence is evoked. These shifts in perspective are needed in the contemporary context of severe ecological losses and global warming.

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