

POETRY CORNER

At Orcas Island

by Chris Bratt (2009)

What I see when coming to rest
at the edge of the sound
is exactly what I came to see

with family cottaged along
the shore.
I let me be me and you be you
while in the sun-reflected waters

we deck the narrow handrails
with low tide remains.
Mother Nature has left us to drift

after wood, rock, and shell
until we find our limit
in this limitless environment.

Out in the kayaks, persons I know
carefully drop crab pots
splashing paddles in pristine seas

and being comfortable in my own
beliefs and yours
I see no need for promises

except to Mother Nature herself
who calls on us
to hear the sound's

creative spirit of the first peoples
and sustain the bounty
of this striking landscape.



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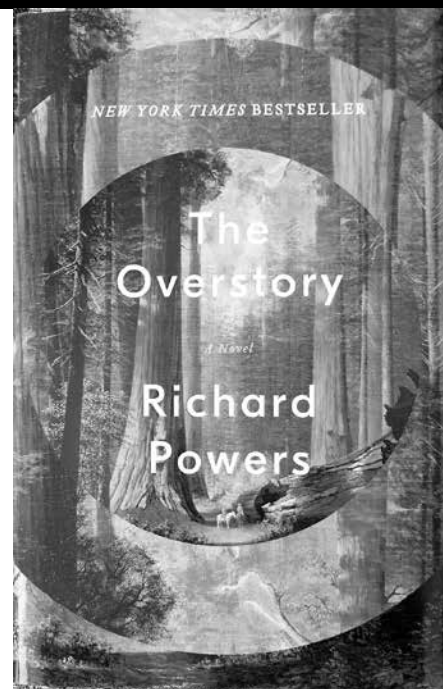
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BOOK REVIEW

The Overstory

Richard Powers
(2018) Paperback
now available.



In *The Overstory*, Richard Powers seems at first to be writing short stories about immigrant families branching across the North American continent, each planting trees from their homeland. Specific trees represent the character of individual families. These are powerful stories that would have made a great book even if each had remained a work in itself. But then, as generations sprout forth, individuals connect like roots underground, like branches overhead, and the individual stories become one story, an overstory. Their stories become a history of the earth and especially of our nation from the perspective of trees.

The design of the book is the same as that of the trees: roots, trunk, crown, seeds. Each tree—each arriving family—expands its roots in American soil. The destiny of the nation and of earth itself depends upon experiencing and nurturing this living connection.

Questions arise. Do we wonder about our connection to earth? Does our wonder rise from deeper than our life here on this good ground in this amazing place? Is the wonder that we *are* this earth? Is our origin the same as the origin of the tree? What is life worth? It is just such questions that the trees ask. And their response? “A chorus of living wood sings to the woman: If your mind were only a slightly greener thing, we’d drown you in meaning. The pine she leans against says: Listen. There’s something you need to hear.”

A quarter of the way through the novel, I couldn’t stop reading. Curled up in my big leather chair, I was conscious only of the swaying branches of a redwood on the Lost Coast of California where I sat with

two of the novel’s main characters committed to saving the ancient tree from being logged. Powers mesmerized me. When I finished, I went immediately back to page one...well, not immediately. I went into the kitchen to make a cup of tea, then sipped it while gazing at the enormous ponderosa pines rising to unimaginable heights right in my own backyard.

Here in the Applegate we know trees. Most of us have read books in virtually every genre—informational as well as inspirational—to prepare our minds and spirits to care for this magnificent environment. Local authors have written the histories of our people and our rich forests. Richard Powers, too, is writing our own Overstory, including recognizable Oregon settings. What he adds is his genius for language and an intricate construction of story itself through which the very meaning of our lives and the very life of earth itself flow unendingly.

Powers summarizes, “We need to stop being visitors here. We need to live where we live, to become indigenous again. ... If we could see green, we’d see a thing that keeps getting more interesting the closer we get. If we could see what green was doing, we’d never be lonely or bored. If we could understand green, we’d learn how to grow all the food we need in layers three deep, on a third of the ground we need right now, with plants that protect one another from pests and stress. If we knew what green wanted, we wouldn’t have to choose between the earth’s interest and ours. They’d be the same.”

After reading *The Overstory* I believed his words, one-hundred percent deep and a thousand branches high.

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■ FISH HATCHERY PARK

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to float and fish the Applegate. Floating, though, is allowed, and a popular Tahiti-raft run is from Fish Hatchery Park to Whitehorse Park on the Rogue at the confluence with the Applegate.

Sarah Garceau, director of Josephine County Parks, is enthusiastic about improvements and plans for more at Fish Hatchery. Most recently, an ADA-compliant toilet facility was added to Fish Hatchery-North. On September 28, Josephine County Parks will celebrate National Public Lands Day with a volunteer event at Fish Hatchery Park-Turtle Lane. Reorganizing department personnel and the budget has cleared the way for all three sections of the park to remain open year-round, putting an end to the annual seasonal closure of Fish Hatchery-South and Turtle Lane, a definite park improvement.

“We are reviving our volunteer programs,” Sarah added, noting that Josephine County Parks is entirely self-funded by day-use and camping fees,



In 2000, Josephine County Parks partnered with the Bureau of Land Management and the Applegate Watershed Restoration Project to plant a “Global ReLeaf Forest” in Fish Hatchery Park.

donations, and grants. Volunteers who donate eight hours to a park project can receive an annual parking pass. If interested, complete the online application on the Parks Department website at josephinecountyparks.com.

Enjoy all the recreation offered by Fish Hatchery Park this summer!

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