

An Exploration of Richard Powers' Ecological Thoughts in His *The Echo Maker**

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Richard Powers is one of American famous contemporary writers, a rising star of American postmodernist fiction, and one of the representatives of the Generation Xers as well. He explores the impacts of some factors such as ecological environment, social culture, and family ethics on our modern society by use of his abundant knowledge about gene engineer, neurology, family ethics, etc. From the perspective of Marxism ecological philosophy, this paper deeply analyses *The Echo Maker*, Richard Powers' masterpiece and interrelates the ecological thoughts implied in this novel. This work criticizes anthropocentrism and expresses the priority of nature. Human being is part of nature which our human being bases on and human being is closely related with nature. Human being should develop ecological consciousness, respect and care nature, and try every means to keep benign interaction with nature in order to build a stable and harmonious global community.

Keywords: Richard Powers, *The Echo Maker*, The ecological thoughts

Introduction

There are different expressions of ecological philosophy in the western academic circle, such as ecology philosophy, ecological philosophy, eco-philosophy, philosophy of ecology, etc., which is the embodiment of philosophy. It is a philosophical reflection on ecological crisis in the context of global air pollution, water pollution, forest vegetation reduction, global temperature rise, intensified biological extinction, and other environmental problems that have become increasingly prominent and have seriously threatened human survival. Based on the ecological world outlook, it discusses and studies the relationship between man and nature from a philosophical perspective, and regards the pursuit of harmonious development between man and nature as the goal of mankind. At the same time, in the opinion of the ecologist Yu Mouchang, ecological philosophy is a new philosophical method, a new world outlook, a new methodology, a new value, and a new view of nature (Yu, 2000, p. 37). Zhou Guangxun states that ecological philosophy takes "man and nature" as the logical starting point, and discusses how to better realize the common development of man and nature during the development of civilization (Zhou, 2015, p. 2).

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The general laws of nature, society and the development of thinking are the main contents of Marxist philosophy. The two pillars of Marxist theory are dialectical materialism and historical materialism, and practicality is its prominent feature. It is universally acknowledged that in the long course of human development, Marxist philosophy has always focused on man, society, and nature, pointed out the direction of human development, and played an irreplaceable role in the process of social development and human progress. However, there are still some different opinions on whether there is ecological philosophy in Marxist theory. Some scholars believe that Marx's works mainly focus on class exploitation, surplus value, human historical development and liberation, and other issues. There is no obvious discussion on ecology in his works, so Marxist theory lacks attention to ecology. Of course, some scholars think that Marx is an ecologist, and his theories contain rich ecological thoughts. In fact, through the comprehensive investigation and in-depth exploration of Marx's works, we can easily find that it contains rich and profound ecological philosophy thoughts. Marxist ecological philosophy is based on practical materialism. It puts forward the dialectical unity of man and nature, the universal connection of all things, the institutional root of ecological crisis, etc. It provides us with ideological guidance to deeply understand the ecological crisis and find a way out, and also provides us with a new perspective and train of thought for in-depth development of ecological literature criticism.

As a famous contemporary American novelist, Richard Powers has made a lot of achievements in the field of post-modernist novels, and has become an important representative of "Generation X writers in the United States". Powers has a wide range of interests and loves reading. In his spare time, he read a lot of books related to history, politics, sociology, aesthetics, natural science, and literature, which laid a solid foundation for his later works. In the mid-1980s, his first novel, *Three Farmers on Their Way to Dance*, was published to wide acclaim and won two major awards: PEN/Hemingway Special Citation and Rosenthal Award of American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. Powers has been ceaseless; up to now, he has completed 12 novels; among them, *Prisoner's Dilemma*, *The Gold Bug Variations*, *Galatea 2.2*, and so on left a deep impression on the readers. In the process of creation, Powers organically combined the knowledge of genetic engineering, computer technology, music, neurology, physiology, and other aspects, conducted in-depth discussions on the themes of culture, science and technology, ethics, ecological protection and inspired people to think. Readers and critics highly praised Powers as the greatest novelist in the United States, the most creative novelist in the United States, the most promising novelist in the United States, and the smartest novelist in the literary world today. Critics also predicted he would be a strong potential contender for the Nobel Prize in literature.

Published in 2006, *The Echo Maker* is Powers' acknowledged masterpiece. It is a novel that impresses readers with its vast amount of information, extraordinary imagination, huge scientific knowledge, and unique expression. It has won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize nomination. Along the Platte River in Nebraska, the sandhill crane, a unique bird, massively migrates here every year for the winter, making it a unique landscape. However in this beautiful landscape, one cold winter night, Mark, a young local slaughterhouse worker, was driving down the straight road. Unfortunately, for some reason, he had a car accident that left him unconscious with a severe head injury. In order to take care of her injured brother, Karen, Mark's sister, had to give up her favorite job and life and go back to her hometown. After the rescue, Mark woke up with some memory gone. He remembered all his former colleagues and friends except his closest sister. Karen is very astonished and helpless, so to Gerald Web, a famous New York cognitive neuroscientist for help. Through

careful observation and diagnosis, Web thought that Mark was suffering from Capgras Syndrome, an extremely rare condition in which people often become unaware of their presumed relatives, such as parents, spouses, siblings, etc., and believe they are all fake. So Mark refuses to admit that the woman who is taking care of him is his own sister. Although the "Karen" looks and acts like his sister, he insists that she is an impostor, even a CIA agent. The narrative of the novel mainly focuses on the three main characters, Mark, Karen, and Web, and the narration of the event is mainly presented in the context of the Platte River through their own cognitive process. It explores the issues of neuroscience, cognitive science and ecology, and expresses the author's own ecological concept and beautiful vision of the harmony between man and nature. From the perspective of Marx's ecological philosophy, this paper attempts to interpret Richard Powers' ecological thoughts by analyzing *The Echo Maker*, so as to further enrich the study of American ecological literature.

The Supremacy of Nature

Ecological nature is based on the ecology in the holistic world, which emphasizes the harmonious development of man, society, and nature. Under the condition of the contemporary ecological environment which has become increasingly serious, ecological nature is helpful to correctly understand and deal with the relationship between nature and human beings, and try to reach a new kind of harmony. In fact, compared with the traditional view of nature, the ecological nature pays more attention to the integrity, organicity, sustainability, and harmony between man and nature of the ecosystem, which is the positive development of the traditional view of nature and development, and the contemporary form of nature. Anthropocentrism is a traditional view of nature, which advocates human primacy and subordination of nature to human beings. The ecological nature advocates the primacy of nature, opposes the anthropocentrism, and pays much more attention to the harmony and integrity between human being and nature. Anthropocentrism originated from the Bible. It advocates human beings are the representatives of God, and everything in the world is managed by human beings. Therefore, it is natural for human beings to manage and conquer nature. Just like what Cutler thinks that the Judeo-Christian idea of man as the center of nature dominates our thinking. So man sees himself as the master of all matter on earth, and believes that everything on earth—living and inanimate objects, animals, plants, and minerals—even the earth itself was created specifically for man (Gartner, 1983, p. 120). Thought is the forerunner of action. It is precisely under the influence of anthropocentrism that human beings lose the right attitude towards nature and treat nature roughly for their own interests. As a result, the relationship between human and nature becomes increasingly tense and the living environment of human beings deteriorates day by day, which also seriously threatens the survival and development of human beings. Therefore, the correct understanding of man and nature becomes particularly important. Marxist ecological philosophy thinks that man is the product of nature, people only live by nature, and people cannot surpass nature. Engels once pointed out in dialectics of nature that at every step we must remember that we rule nature, not as conquerors rule foreigners, not as men who stand outside it, but rather as we belong to it and are in it, together with our flesh, blood, and brains. From this we can see that nature is the basis of human existence, human is only a small part of nature, and human must love and protect nature. There is no doubt that although man is intelligent, he still has a natural dependence on nature. This dependence is reflected in two aspects: First, the materials of human life are directly provided by nature, which assumes the functions of the objects and materials of labor; second, the natural world is the external environment for human

existence, which assumes the function of ecology (Du, 2011, p. 40). According to Marx, the external environment is represented by geological conditions, geographical conditions, and climatic conditions, such as air, water, soil (including the development mode of soil, regardless of the nature of soil and determined by physical conditions), sunlight, as well as waterfalls, rivers, forests, coal, etc. This also shows that Marxism is not only concerned with social development, human liberation, and other issues, and does not care about the natural and ecological environment. In fact, Marxist theory contains abundant ecological philosophy theories, which play an important role in promoting the harmonious development, symbiosis, and common prosperity between man and nature, and establishing an ecological civilization society. We have the responsibility and obligation to dig deeply into the ecological philosophy thought in Marxist theory and make good use of these theories to guide ecological practice.

On the one hand, Marxist ecological philosophy emphasizes that people have a dependence on nature and nature also has its own development law. On the other hand, it also explicitly pointed out that human has subjective initiatives, and he can act on nature through labor. To some extent, he can transform and affect the nature. Human beings can understand, adapt to, and use the laws of nature in various ways to serve human beings, but they must not violate the laws of nature. We must respect nature and the laws of nature in its influence and transformation. If human beings do not respect the laws of nature and abuse their so-called "power", they will be "retaliated by nature". Human plans that are not based on the great laws of nature will only lead to disaster. All of these have rung the alarm bell for mankind. We must also carefully examine our own behavior, correctly understand the status of nature, and maintain harmony with nature

In *The Echo Maker*, Powers expressed his love for nature and hoped that human being could live in harmony with nature through the description of sandhill crane, Platte River, and other natural landscapes. At the very beginning of the novel, Powers presents the reader with a beautiful picture of nature that makes one linger on:

Cranes keep landing as night falls, Ribbons of them roll down, slack against the sky. They float in from all compass points, in kettles of a dozen, dropping with the dusk. Scores of *Grus cdnadensis* settle on the thawing river. They gather on the island flats, grazing, beating their wings, trumpeting: the advance wave of a mass evacuation. More birds land by the minute, the air red with calls.

A neck stretches long; legs drape behind. Wings curl forward, the length of a man. Spread like fingers, primaries tip the bird into the wind's plane. The blood-red head bows and the wings sweep together, a cloaked priest giving benediction. Tail cups and belly buckles, surprised by the upsurge of ground. Legs kick out, their backward knees flapping like broken landing gear. Another bird plummets and stumbles forward, fighting for a spot in the packed staging ground along those few miles of water still clear and wide enough to pass as safe.

Twilight comes early, as it will for a few more weeks. The sky, ice blue through the encroaching willows and cottonwoods, flares up, a brief rose, before collapsing to indigo. Late February on the Platte, and the night's chill haze hangs over this river, frosting the stubble from last fall that still fills the bordering fields. The nervous birds, tall as children, crowd together wing by wing on this stretch of river, one that they've learned to find by memory.

They converge on the river at winter's end as they have for eons, carpeting the wetlands. In this light, something saurian still clings to them: the oldest flying on earth, one stutter-step away from pterodactyls. As darkness falls or real, it's a beginner's world again, the same evening as that day sixty million years ago when this migration began.

Half a million birds-four-fifths of all the sandhill cranes on earth-home in on this river. They trace the Central Flyway, an hourglass laid over the continent. They push up from New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico, hundreds of miles each day, with thousands more ahead before they reach their remembered nests. For a few weeks, this stretch of river

shelters the miles-long flock. Then, by the start of spring, they'll rise and head away, feeling their way up to Saskatchewan, Alaska, or beyond.

This year's flight has always been. Something in the birds retraces a route laid down centuries before their parents showed it to them, AND each crane recalls the route still to come.

Tonight's cranes mill again on the braided water. For another hour, their massed calls carry on the emptying air. The birds flap and fidget, edgy with migration. Some tear up frosty twigs and toss them in the air. Their jitters spill over into combat. At last the sandhills settle down into wary, stilt-legged sleep, most standing in the water, a few farther up in the stubbed fields. (Powers, 2006, pp. 3-4)

Powers has deep feelings for nature and expresses his heartfelt love for nature. The Platte River in Nebraska described by him is long and quiet, flowing slowly. The river is shaded by green trees, where groups of sandhill cranes perch. People on both sides also breed, work, and live here, forming a harmonious and beautiful natural ecological picture. Here, snow and ice, cold fog, river surface, studs, fields, low-lying swamps, willows and cottonwoods with new buds emerging, interlacing riverbanks, branches covered with white frost, sand dune cranes stretching thousands of miles, etc., as a part of mother nature, are a harmonious ecological system and also the external environment for human survival, playing an important ecological function. These ecological functions provide geographical and climatic conditions for human survival, including soil, air, water, and rivers. The earth is a huge organism, consisting of the biosphere, atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and soilosphere which constitute an inseparable ecosystem. The overall balance and coordination function of this system enables the existence of life; at the same time, organisms affect the environment by altering their growth and metabolism, through photosynthesis, absorbing carbon dioxide, releasing oxygen, and other activities. So everything on earth plays its part in the ecosystem, maintaining its continuity and stability. As an important member of nature, human beings have their own thinking, and subjective initiative. They can use their labor to change and influence nature, and they should have a sense of humility and awe towards nature. Albert Schweitzer proposed the influential ethical idea of reverence for life, arguing that reverence for life always compels the individual to interact with and feel responsible for all life around him (Chen, 2003, p. 32). Here, the concept of reverence for life advocated by Schweitzer refers to a kind of awe for all life, not only for human life, which is also the correct attitude that human beings should have towards nature. But humans, for their own good, tend to forget this. In order to grab more profits, the developers represented by cash prepared to build crane viewing facilities and amusement parks, which would further strain the water supply of the Platte River and bring greater danger to the survival of sandhill cranes, which Powers did not want to see.

In the novel, Powers expresses such a view through the protagonist, environmentalist Daniel: All things are universally connected, the value of any life is unique and irreplaceable, and the harmony of the whole world is the survival of human beings. This coincides with the viewpoint of Marxist ecological philosophy on the universal connection of things, and also reflects Powers' thought of paying attention to the law of natural ecology and advocating ecological harmony. Daniel thinks: "No one is on a separate path. Everything connects. His life, yours, hers, his friends'....mine. Other..." (Powers, 2006, p. 72). "Of course there are forces bigger than us" (Powers, 2006, p. 73).

Of course, Karin also feels: "forces so big that our paths mean nothing to them" (Powers, 2006, p. 73).

Therefore, it can be seen that all things in the world are interrelated and cannot exist in isolation. Human beings are only a small part of nature. Only by correctly understanding nature, loving and protecting nature can we create a beautiful and harmonious ecological environment and build a sound ecological civilization society. Barry Commoner, a famous American biologist, ecologist, and educator, put forward the ecological law in his famous book *The Closed Cycle*. The first law is that everything is related to everything else (Commoner, 1997, p. 25). Each component of the ecosphere does not exist in isolation, but is closely connected. They support and influence each other to maintain the balance and stability of the ecosphere together. Problems in any one of them will bring impacts on the ecosystem. He thinks the ecological network is an amplifier, as a result, as by little chaos that occur in one place could produce a great influence, which will spread far away and delay for a long time (Commoner, 1997, p. 30). Building crane viewing facilities and amusement parks on the beautiful Platte River seems to be for the convenience of tourists and the rich life of residents. In a short period of time, it may not have an impact on the local ecological environment, but as time goes by, the increase of tourists will inevitably lead to an increase in water consumption, which will threaten the survival of sandhill cranes and further imbalance the local ecosystem, causing greater environmental problems. As for Powers' view on connection, Sun Jian pointed out that in Powers' mind, the universe is a complex and dynamic ecosystem, in which everything is related to other things and the rupture of any node will bring disastrous effects (Sun, 2015, pp. 166-167). Houser also believes that the interconnectedness expressed in the novel links humans and non-humans together (Houser, 2012, p. 400). This connection is an undeniable feature of the ecosphere and a law of the operation of nature. Human beings are just a link in the earth's ecosphere and have neither the power nor the ability to transcend the ecosphere. If human beings ignore the interconnections of nature and wanton destruction of the laws of nature, they will surely be punished.

Defamiliarization Between Man and Nature

Before the emergence of human beings, nature existed and developed according to its own laws, and the overall appearance was orderly and harmonious. There were no environmental problems such as river pollution and air pollution. With the development of society and human civilization and the improvement of human cognitive ability, human beings have more means to extract benefits from nature and satisfy their desires, which has resulted in some serious consequences. Marx pointed out that "the whole development of civilization and industry has always played a great role in the destruction of forests, in contrast to the conservation and production of forests, simply do not play a role" (Marx, 1972, p. 272). Gradually, human beings lose their reverence for nature, and take the exploitation, conquest, and slavery of nature for granted, thus forming the anti-ecological thought of anthropocentrism. Jewish-Christian in particular reinforced this idea, and it was widely broadcast. White thought that Judaism and Christianity regarded human and nature as completely different beings, and human was the master of nature, not its members. Human being is created by God in his own image, and he has a soul and can be saved by God. There is no doubt that man is superior to other forms of life, which exist only for the benefit of mankind (White, 1996, pp. 6-14). Man's dominion over nature was unconditional and unalterable, and this became all the justification that Christians and Jews need for the free plundering of nature (Nash, 1999, pp. 107-108).

In *The Echo Maker*, Richard Powers expressed his love for nature, his yearning for harmony between man and nature, his deep worry about estrangement between man and nature, and his fierce opposition to anthropocentrism represented by Karsh. The Platte River, a mile wide and an inch deep, provides source of life for the region's people, plants, and animals. It is home to sandhill cranes, which roost, turn, and fly far away. But human activities have brought great changes to the Platte River. People have built a large number of dams on the river to provide irrigation water for agriculture. A large number of water resources have been consumed, and the river flow has been decreasing, only a quarter of that before the dam was built. The novel vividly depicts the seriousness of the loss of water flow: Every drop of water has been used eight times by the time it arrives here. But even in the face of this extreme water shortage, local developers like Karsh are still trying to make money by building facilities to view cranes and so-called nature-themed water parks to take advantage of people's curiosity and desire for the cranes' natural landscape. The establishment of these scenic spots and water amusement facilities will further strain the water supply of the Platte River, and the minimum survival needs of the dune group cannot be met. This will pose a serious threat to the survival of sandhill cranes, which may lose their homes or even become extinct, which will damage the local natural ecosystem. There is no doubt that this will also pose a serious threat to the overall interests of the local ecosystem, which runs counter to the earth ethics thought advocated by the famous ecologist Leopold: to protect the harmony, stability, and beauty of the biological community (Leopold, 1949, p. 262). It even goes against the Marxist ecological philosophy of the harmonious unity between man and nature. Powers sharply criticized the anthropocentric behavior of alienation between man and nature. He used Karin's words to express his satire and condemnation on the disregard for the survival of other members of nature and the destruction of natural ecosystem:

For an instant, as the hearing turned into instinctive ritual, it hit her: the whole race suffered from Capgras. Those birds danced like our next of kin, looked like our next of kin, called and willed and parented and taught and navigated all just like our blood relations. Half their parts were still ours. Yet humans waved them off: *impostors*. At most, a strange spectacle to gaze at from a blind. (Powers, 2006, pp. 347-348)

Powers believes that humans who are alienated from nature, like Mark, and suffer from Capgras Syndrome because sandhill cranes are as much a part of nature as humans are. Sandhill cranes and humans should be close relatives, blood relatives, just like Mark and Karin brother and sister are the closest relatives, blood relatives. Mark lost his memory, and did not know his sister Karin. Humans also suffer from the disease, lost their memory, and did not know sandhill cranes are our blood relatives. This is because humans, in order to grab more profits, have taken actions that destroy the ecological environment and threaten the survival of sandhill cranes by taking them as a profit-making tool.

As the river dries up or flows elsewhere, the living environment deteriorates, and the other species of nature, the "blood relatives" of human beings, suffering from environmental degradation and human cruelty, still hard return here and pass by. Although the nature here is scarred and lifeless, they still have a deep attachment to mother nature. And though they will still face the threat of human beings, they will return, as described in the text: "The river would dry up, go elsewhere. Three or four surviving decimated species would drag here annually, not knowing why they returned to this arid wasteland. And still we'd be trapped in delusion" (Powers, 2006, p. 348).

Yes, as other species represented by sandhill cranes have a deep concern and attachment to the family members of nature, should not human beings who are "the soul of the universe" deeply reflect on their thoughts and behaviors and "still indulge in delusion"?

The Reconciliation Between Man and Nature

Since the Industrial Revolution, with the change of production mode and the progress of science and technology, human beings have been using more and more means to meet their own life and needs. As a result, they have taken more and more wealth from nature and caused more and more serious damage to nature. Many environmental problems have appeared. How to resolve the contradiction and opposition between man and nature, so that the natural ecosystem can develop in an orderly and healthy way, and the reconciliation between man and nature can be achieved, has become a problem that many insightful people around the world are trying to explore. Jonathan Bate raised a question in his book: "Where on earth did we start the wrong way?" (Bate, 2000, p. 24) Cheryll Glotfelty thinks that human beings are part of problem (Glotfelty, 1996, pp. xx-xxi).

In order to achieve the reconciliation between human and nature, human beings must have a correct understanding of their position in nature, take sensible and sustainable measures, respect nature and treat nature well, so as to realize the true reconciliation between human and nature. In this process, human beings have their own mind and thought, and can give full play to their subjective initiative to reconcile with nature. Respecting and treating nature well requires two considerations. One is respect for the laws of nature. Marxist ecological philosophy emphasizes the objective existence of natural laws, which is not dependent on human will, but can be realized by changing the form of the realization of natural laws if conditions are met. The developers represented by cash in the novel plan to build crane viewing facilities on both sides of the Platte River and a large water park in the desert. They did not consider the Platte River ecosystem, violated the laws of nature, and would inevitably bring threat to the natural ecosystem. Undoubtedly, it will also endanger the survival of mankind itself. The second is respect for nature and kindness to non-human species. Humans, like other species, are equal members of the natural family. When human beings disregard the life value of nature and recklessly compete with them for survival resources, other species of nature will face the crisis of destruction, and the extinction of human beings will not be far away. But nature can continue to exist and develop according to its own laws without human existence. Powers expresses his admiration for nature and his deep concern for human fate in his novels:

Extinction is short; migration is long. Nature and its maps will use the worst that man can throw at it. The outcome of owls will orchestrate the night, millions of years after people work their own end. Nothing will miss us, Hawks' offspring will circle above the overgrown fields. Skimmers and plovers and sandpipers will nest in the thousand girdered islands of Manhattan. Cranes or something like them will trace rivers again. When all else goes, birds will find water. (Powers, 2006, p. 443)

This is Powers' enthusiasm for nature. He also expresses the worship of the powerful force of nature. Although human is intelligent, he is small and insignificant in nature. Human beings should maintain a humble attitude towards nature, respect nature, protect nature, respect, and treat other species in the world.

In the novel, Powers is disgusted with and opposed to the expansion of materialistic desire, consumption binge and extravagant material pursuit in modern society. He advocated a simple life attitude, believed that human beings should give full consideration to the balance of natural ecosystem, advocated to meet the basic

material life, opposed to consumer culture. Human beings should simplify their material life as much as possible to relieve the pressure on the ecosystem. The environmentalist Daniel in *The Echo Maker* is the representative of Powers' ecological thought. As we all know, the United States is a "country on wheels", but as a modern American, Daniel is a bit of an anomaly. He did not own a car, a very common computer, even own a television, and he had nothing but two suitcases. And surprisingly, Daniel is "probably the only man in North America who still USES a handkerchief to wipe his nose". He used hot water for bathing, which was a luxury for him. He used warm water to scrub dishes, and his meals were very simple. Here's a description of Karin and Daniel going to a restaurant:

...Daniel dining out: like a Calvinist minister at a rave. He wagged his head, whistling. "Eight dollars for a plate of beef and broccoli? Can you imagine, K.?"

The entree was the restaurant's loss leader. She batted down and waited.

"Eight dollars is a lot of money to the Crane Refuge."

With matching grants and good management, they could buy and retire a square inch of marginal farmland. The waitress came to tell them the specials. The list of slaughtered fish, flesh, and fowl crucified Daniel. (Powers, 2006, p. 261)

Even at Ben's cheap restaurant, where a plate of cauliflower steak costs only eight dollars, he would rather spend the savings on environmental protection than on a less-than-normal lunch. They ended up ordering bean and winter noodles, and a shredded cucumber that the restaurant had left off the menu for him. This is in sharp contrast to the luxury consumption of big fish, big meat, famous bags, famous watches, and branded clothes. If more people in the modern world could learn from Daniel and practice simple living, it would greatly reduce the snatching of nature. And the natural ecosystem will be repaired more quickly, and the reconciliation between man and nature will be realized.

Ecological literature is the result of estrangement between man and nature and deteriorating environment. It is the literary reflection of ecological writers on the relationship between man and nature. It shows their sense of ecological responsibility to mother earth as a part of nature and their deep concern for nature and human destiny. The key to easing the estrangement between man and nature and solving the increasingly prominent environmental pressure and ecological crisis lies in human beings. Only when human beings have a certain ecological awareness can they change their attitude towards nature. In the process of getting along with nature, they will respect and care for nature to maintain the harmony, stability, and beauty of the whole natural ecosystem. In *The Echo Maker*, Powers expresses the importance and urgency of establishing ecological consciousness. He hopes that more people will have ecological awareness and stop treating nature as a resource pool that can be obtained at any time. Instead, they should respect and protect nature. In the novel, the developer, the crane refuge and management office, and the townspeople hold hearings on issues such as the allocation of water shares and the establishment of crane scenic spots. Although environmentalists are well prepared to state the possible consequences of the developer's actions on the sandhill crane, the Platte River and the local natural environment, local residents, lacking ecological awareness, have been duped by the developers' rhetoric and have ignored the environmentalists' advice. Instead, they endorsed proposals from developers to put the local natural ecosystem at risk. Daniel has a strong sense of ecology, and he loves the nature in which he lives. As the keeper of the crane management institute, he tried his best to protect the Platte River and the natural environment on which the

sandhill cranes live. He lost the battle with the developer and left the crane administration, but went on to continue his environmental crusade in Alaska. His behavior also deeply affected the people around him so that they gradually establish ecological awareness, into the great cause of environmental protection. In the process of taking care of Mark, Karin was deeply hurt because she was not recognized by her brother. However, she still decided to stay in Kearney as the keeper of the Crane Management Institute and continue the protection of sandhill cranes. What is more moving and gratifying is that Mark began to read some ecological works, and also deeply realized the importance of establishing ecological awareness.

Conclusion

Marxist ecological philosophy holds that human beings are products of nature, like other non-human beings, are products of nature. Human beings depend on the nature for life, and the nature has an indisputable priority for human beings. *The Echo Maker* is an excellent ecological novel. The fate of sandhill crane—the echo maker—urges people to think deeply about the relationship between human and nature. Through this novel, Power expresses his strong criticism of anthropocentrism and his expectation of harmonious coexistence, symbiosis and common prosperity between man and nature. Human beings can only create a good ecological environment by understanding their position in nature, maintaining a sense of humility, respecting and caring for nature. At the same time, thinking determines action. Human beings must establish ecological awareness and take the initiative to change their way of life, not to interfere too much with nature. Only when humans have a real ecological concept and a correct understanding of their own ecological needs, will they strive to explore how to maintain benign interaction with nature and establish a harmonious and stable earth community.

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