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Endangered Species: The Non-Human Narrator and Planetaryity in the Novel of the Twenty-First Century

Kazuo Ishiguro's narrator in *Klara and the Sun* (2021) and Richard Powers's *Bewilderment* (2021), are two novels published at a time where the cry for environmental responsibility has reached fever pitch, and during a pandemic that has challenged social and economic structures throughout the world. Ishiguro and Powers have been nominated previously for the Man Booker Prize and International Booker Prize in fiction, respectively, making them important global literary figures. Both novels are set in times where ecological collapse has become an inevitability, and where humans adapt to new environmental demands by either creating AI that provides services, as is the case in *Klara*, or developing technologies that seek to combat disease, as in *Bewilderment*. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding the protagonists, both novels center around questions of what it means to be human and what it means to belong: to belong to a family, a nation, a species, nature. Largely, the narrators arrive at such crucial questions as they explore and experience grief on a planetary level, and it is the novels' scope of planetaryity that will be central to this paper. What is planetaryity? What are the actors in its construction and deconstruction, and what space(s) do humans occupy, even while they themselves sense their own status as 'endangered species' encroaching. Narrated from the perspective of an AI (*Klara*), and from the perspective of a grieving widowed husband (*Bewilderment*), and published at such a pivotal decade of human history, the novels under question seek to represent and animate new subjectivities and the narratives that stem from these spaces.