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From farmer to market : the rhetorical construction of farmers in the local food movement.

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FROM FARMER TO MARKET: THE RHETORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF
FARMERS IN THE LOCAL FOOD MOVEMENT

By

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B.A., University of North Carolina at Asheville, 2009

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences of the University
of Louisville in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

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A Thesis Approved on

April 17, 2013

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my grandfather, Theodore Triantis, for his devotion to helping plants and people grow.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis director, Dr. Stephen A. Schneider, for reading my work and meeting with me each week. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Glynis Ridley and Dr. Lisa Markowitz, for their helpful feedback. Thanks, also, to Carson Leach for his unending support.

ABSTRACT

FROM FARM TO MARKET: THE RHETORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF FARMERS IN THE LOCAL FOOD MOVEMENT

Hannah V. Harrison

April 17, 2013

This Master's Thesis explores the rhetoric of the local food movement, a so-called "lifestyle movement." Though the movement for environmentally sustainable agriculture in America has its twentieth century roots in the late-1960s and 1970s Cultural Revolution, the interest in alternative food and farming practices has become widespread in the last decade. Within food movement scholarship, few studies consider the rhetorical construction of the farmer in contemporary American culture. My thesis examines the ways in which rhetorical constructions of farmers in contemporary food literature contribute to participation in the local food movement. More specifically, my thesis questions how rhetoric regarding small-scale sustainable and local farmers persuades consumers to buy locally-produced meat and vegetables. In addition to textual analysis, I examine three local sites situated in Louisville, Kentucky: Douglass Loop Farmers' Market, Harvest restaurant, and Hillbilly Tea restaurant. I consider the ways these sites—and a recent Dodge Ram television commercial—draw from the trope of the farmer established in American literature and constitute what Jenny Edbauer terms "rhetorical ecologies" that contribute to social movement participation.

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INTRODUCTION

A recent television commercial for Dodge's Ram model truck engages the image of the contemporary American farmer. Building from the 2013 Super Bowl's patriotic momentum, Dodge took advantage of the event to air an advertisement that manipulates a highly recognizable American trope. The commercial features a two-minute montage of images of farmers and farmlands. An excerpt from "So God Made a Farmer"—a speech that radio broadcaster Paul Harvey delivered to the Future Farmers of America Convention in 1978—plays as photographs of rustic and hearty farmers fade in and out. Millions of Americans viewed the commercial's debut during a nationally-broadcasted event that garners high levels of patriotism (indeed, few tropes are more emblematic of the United States than the rugged, Jeffersonian American farmer, but football might be one of those tropes.) The public exposure for commercials during the Super Bowl is obvious, but why did Dodge chose to take advantage of a traditional symbol of Americanism—the image of the farmer—this particular year? Why the farmer in 2013?

Dodge's Super Bowl ad is remarkably restrained—even subdued—compared to typical advertisements for a heavy-duty (and, notably, hyper-masculine) pickup truck. Paul Harvey's distinctly mid-twentieth century American Midwestern accent adds to the rustic aesthetic of the advertisement (not to mention the widespread popularity of the conservative radio show host himself.) The fact that the refrain from the now famous speech—which reads more like a poem—is "So God made a farmer" indicates the fact

that many Americans do indeed see the farmer as representative of some degree of mediation between human experience on Earth and a spiritual realm of being. In fact, while the opening image of the commercial is a solitary, black beef cattle in the middle of a snow-covered pasture, the very next shot cuts to a modest, austere church in the middle of a wide, flat yard. The opening line of Harvey's speech corresponds with the image of the (undeniably Protestant) church: "And on the eighth day," an obvious allusion to the creation story laid out in Genesis. Here, Harvey establishes the connection between farmers, other people, and God by extending the creation story to include an eighth day. The role of the farmer is so singular and significant in God's plan for mankind that he (and I do intentionally use this gendered pronoun) is given his own special day devoted to his creation. The implication is that farmers are a special kind of people with a special relationship to God.

The line that immediately follows describes what God did on the eighth day. In the commercial, Harvey's line, "God looked down on his planned paradise," corresponds with the image of a homestead and barn buildings in the middle rows upon rows of perfectly ploughed terrain. The implication is that manipulation of nature is not only a human activity, but also part of God's plan for the world. The role of the farmer facilitates God's meticulous planning on Earth. The line resolves with "[God] said 'I need a caretaker,'/ So God made a farmer." The overarching idea here is that man's orderly manipulation of the natural world is part of God's plan for his earthly creation, and that God ordained the farmer in a manner not unlike the way the church ordains a priest to do God's work. The sanctified role of the farmer is to maintain and pass down God's planned manipulation of nature through the farming tradition on earth. The farmer is

God's chosen steward. And the Dodge commercial would further have its audience believe that the farmer is the humble and obedient—if not submissive—follower of God's plan for him. Several of the images used throughout the commercial include farmers praying alone on the farm, in church pews, or with their families around the dinner table.

After a litany of chores and tasks the farmer endures, Harvey's speech ends with the promise of a new generation of God's caretakers inheriting the earth: "Somebody who would . . . laugh and then sigh, and then reply with smiling eyes when his son says he wants to spend his life doing what Dad does." This line positions the farmer as not only the chosen mediator between man, nature, and God, but also a mediator between past and present. The line implies that the lineage of farmers is a tradition that binds generations. And not only generations of families, but also generations of Americans. The commercial concludes with the unspoken line "To the farmer in all of us." This line clearly expresses the extent to which Dodge is aware of the metonymic qualities of the farmer in American life and culture despite the fact that we've not been an agriculturally-based economy for generations and in spite of the fact that, though the image is enjoying renewed power and that young people are starting farms to some extent. It also shows that Dodge recognizes that many of its potential customers are not farmers themselves, but the rhetorical implication is that we can and do all identify with farmers because we are all Americans.

Though the commercial does show a handful of images of minority and female farmers, the predominant image is of the middle-aged and older white male. Additionally, the land represented by the commercial predominantly includes large tracts of land cut

into rows by tractors; the large-scale industrial farm with its square miles of monocropped land maintained under heavy-duty machinery (like, of course, a Dodge Ram.) These are not images of alternative farmers like the enigmatic Joel Salatin in Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* or the unexpected Lusa Maluf Landowski in Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*. The farmers in Dodge's Super Bowl ad are arguably different from the family farmers iconized in Wendell Berry's fiction, though their similarities are evident as well. The images in the commercial are distinctly of a certain type of farmer—the conventional one.

The farmer(s) in Dodge's 2013 Super Bowl commercial represent American values that the automobile company would have us believe are also embodied in its Ram model truck and in its brand more generally. In this way, we can understand the image of the farmer performing compelling rhetorical work, both metonymically and indexically pointing at values that can be applied broadly to a traditional American way of life, as well as values associated with specific contemporary lifestyles. In literature and in advertising both, the image of the American farmer functions as a mediator between numerous paradigms and lifestyles, but my analysis will focus on three dichotomies: rural and city life; the past and the present; human "nature" and spiritual realms. In the example of the Dodge Super Bowl ad, all three of these dichotomies (and others) are present; however, the most evident is the latter mediation. By human "nature," I mean mundane, worldly existence that characterizes much of human life: work, family, and community, especially. By "spiritual," I mean the more abstract characteristics of human existence often associated with a higher power: purpose or a "calling," morality, faith and devotion to God—and in the case of the Dodge ad, a distinctly Christian God. The visual

representations of farmers and the narration that accompanies those images in the advertisement are unequivocally Christian. Other representations of farmers in literature and in the local food movement are also spiritually symbolic, though not always or necessarily definitively Christian in origin.

As the makers of Dodge Ram would have Super Bowl viewers believe that their truck embodies the values represented by farmers displayed and described in their advertisement, so too, does the rhetorical construction of farmers in the local food movement target a particular audience with a distinct set of American values and lifestyle preferences associated with farmers and food production. Though both types of farmers—conventional farmers most often associated with industrial agriculture represented by the Dodge advertisement and alternative farmers active within the local food movement—are metonymical in that they represent a traditional American way of life, they are indexically distinct in that the type of farmer points to a set of values associate with different lifestyles (values that are often politically opposite).

The trope of the farmer (the broadly conceived image of an individual who works the land to make a living) functions in American culture metonymically at the same time as it works indexically. The farmer represents traditional American ideals about a traditional American way of life—one of rugged independence, fortitude, humble simplicity. If the metonymic trope of the farmer represents these and other traditional American values, then the specific type of farmer operates to index more specific—and increasingly complex—differences in American lifestyles (lifestyles both directly and indirectly tied to agriculture.) The indexicality of the farmer is more readily apparent when we consider different kinds of farmers and agricultural practices—conventional,

industrial, organic, sustainable, etc.—and the patronage associated with them. The small scale, local, sustainable, and organic farmer—the kind of farmer most frequently represented or invoked by the local food movement—represents not only a style of agricultural practice but also a distinctly American lifestyle for patrons of the farmer (as do industrial agriculturalists and their supporters.)

When we consider the trope of the farmer as metonymically and indexically meaningful, we can see how the farmer functions as a mediator between disparate sociocultural values. As metonymy, the trope of the farmer indicates binaries that exist, and mediates between them. I'm especially interested in the ways the trope of the farmer mediates such binaries as past/present, city/country, and humanity/nature. When we consider the farmer as indexical, the image of the farmer points to expressions of identities and lived experiences in the human social world. The concept of social frame alignment—which I will return to in more depth in chapter 2 of my analysis—can be useful in considering the means available to individuals as they interact with (or do not interact with, as the case may be) farmers in their everyday lives. The local food movement is a particularly compelling social phenomenon through which we see rhetorical constructions of farmers represented in literature and in the world.

It's no question that food and a myriad range of interests and issues surrounding food are hot topics today. From culinary television shows—even an entire television network devoted to food—to governmental and grassroots efforts to fight the obesity epidemic—championed most recognizably, perhaps, by First Lady Michelle Obama—it appears as if everyone, everywhere has something to say about food these days. And not only is food a popular point of conversation across the country, but the buzz about how,

where, and who produces food is growing louder. The look and feel of quaint country life is created at venues ranging from grocery store chains, to local restaurants, to high-end event caterers. Agricultural lifestyles and the farmers who live them—a lifestyle that for the later-half of the twentieth century, especially, people have been migrating away from in multitudes—are suddenly no longer ignored. Farmers are celebrated in local communities and their image is nationally exploited to sell everything from yogurt to pickup trucks. . An evident theme in the literature about food is the need for increased “awareness” about agricultural practices (and the treatment of livestock.) In both fiction and non-fiction, authors, journalists, and activists are exploring—and, I would argue, actively constructing—the image of the farmer. Food writers diligently go about the task of exposing some facet of the complex web that is our modern food system.

Often, the impetus for greater transparency about the contemporary (global) food system exists in these texts because the desire that audiences realize (and act upon) the “symbiosis” of human life and the natural world, to use Michael Pollan’s term. The hope—the ultimate aim of food writers’ rhetorical engagement with symbiosis—is that once people become aware of their role in the food system, individuals will treat one another, non-human animals, and the planet with greater respect, stewardship, and compassion. Pollan writes that “What’s wrong with eating animals is the practice, not the principle” (328) (a statement that seems to respond to Peter Singer’s principled *Animal Liberation*). The practice of our food system is screwed up and causing problems that range from obesity to the inhumane treatment of animals.

The notion of compassion is closely related to the rhetorical trend I notice about exposing and bolstering connections between humans and the planet. People’s

compassion for one another is mirrored in their treatment of land and non-human animals. Even though the majority of people in the modern world consider land and other animals to be potential property that exists for human use, many people spend a lot of time and energy acting and speaking with compassion for each other, non-human animals, and the environment. In this context, spiritual undertones pervade the rhetoric about food, its production, and its consumption. Food production and the act of eating can be considered a sacred activity.

In this sense (and in other ways I will describe), I see the farmer in local food rhetoric functioning as a mediator. The farmer mediates between the mundane act of eating—one of the most basic fundamentals of survival—and a just and moral life, often derived from spiritual and religious sources. Thus, the farmer also connects and facilitates a sense of identity for other individuals. People who see themselves as part of a symbiotic web of life on earth are in some cases compelled to support farming practices that appear more conscientious and compassionate than others. These practices are often rooted in what has now become an “alternative” agricultural tradition, but what was once—before modern industrial agriculture—the predominant farming technique. “Organic” farms often—though certainly not always—employ practices not so different from those used in the 19th centuries and before: diversified crops, manual weeding and harvesting, even tilling the earth using livestock instead of tractors. Like a priest, the small-scale farmer—both as an image and as a practitioner—(re)connects people to values and practices that have been losing ground since the advent of industrial agriculture.

Consequently, in local food rhetoric, the farmer is also treated as a celebrity. The farmer is celebrated because s/he is the urban community’s link to a morally sound

lifestyle that takes other sentient beings and the environment into consideration. The celebrated small-scale local farmer functions as a link between mundane urban life and a life that is more pure, natural, divine, timeless. We cannot all be preachers, but (at least for some privileged eaters) being close to the farmer appeases some of guilt over the complex, consumer-driven realities of our everyday lives. Like modernist forays into “the great outdoors” as an escape from the drudgery of city life, consumers flock to farmer’s markets (flocking might be optimistic) as a way to (re)connect with a simpler, more wholesome existence (without actually having to live the life).

Despite the burgeoning visibility of farmers in contemporary American culture and the growth of “Food Studies” as an interdisciplinary academic field, relatively little has been discussed regarding the image of the farmer in academic scholarship. In social movement studies broadly and rhetorical criticism more specifically, the rhetorically powerful and exigent image of the farmer has been somewhat overlooked. Though there are plenty of opportunities for thinking about rhetoric and social movements if one chooses to analyze conventional farms, practitioners, and patrons, my analysis will focus on the rhetorical construction of the small-scale, sustainable (if not also organic) farmer, the type of farmer most frequently associated with the local food movement. It is my aim to consider the role of the farmer in the local food movement as a rhetorical tool for identity construction and social movement participation in contemporary American culture.

The first chapter of my analysis includes a discussion of several popular works of literature often associated with the local food movement. These works are composed by individuals who see themselves as not only creative thinkers and serious investigative

journalists, but also activists and participants in the local food movement. Wendell Berry has been a prominent proponent and outspoken leader for small farmers—or family farmers, as he prefers to call them—for decades. In this thesis, I focus my analysis on his novel, *The Memory of Old Jack*, in order to lay the foundation for how the image of the farmer mediates the dichotomies I described in this introduction. I also draw from some of Berry’s seminal essays on food, farming, rural life, and American culture to inform and enrich my discussion. Following in Berry’s footsteps, Barbara Kingsolver merges her fiction with her lived experience. Kingsolver is a bestselling author who lives on a small farm with her family in rural Southwestern Virginia. Her foray into investigative journalism, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, chronicles her family’s experience eating a strictly locally-sourced diet for an entire calendar year. My analysis of her novel, *Prodigal Summer*, focuses on several of the main characters in the text, especially young farmer Lusa Maluf Landowski, in order to explore some of the complexities associated with the dichotomies I’ve established for the purposes of my analysis.

My analysis in chapter 1 also explores the image of the farmer in non-fiction texts that engage the local food movement. Michael Pollan’s seminal text, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, was nearly sensational when it was published in 2006 and continues to be evoked and critiqued in food studies and local food movement conversations still today. Like Pollan, Eric Schlosser’s *Fast Food Nation*, stirred a national debate about the contemporary globalized food network. My analysis of both of these texts, though, will focus predominantly on their descriptions of two enigmatic, real-life farmers—Joel Salatin in Pollan’s text and rancher, Hank, in Schlosser’s—to show how the authors

construct the image of the small-scale, sustainable farmer that is widely celebrated in the local food movement.

In the second chapter of my thesis, I will make my own contribution to the local food movement by analyzing materials collected from local restaurants in Louisville, Kentucky. Most notably, Harvest is a local venue that touts as its main selling-point the fact that they source 80 percent of their menu items from within one hundred miles of their location in a hip strip of revitalized buildings on Market Street in what's become known as the "NuLu" district of downtown. Indeed, Harvest is as locally-grown as many restaurants aspire to be; the business is the brainchild of a local farmer, features farmers' portraits as their décor, and even hires farmers to staff the floor during the off-season. Another Louisville restaurant, Hillbilly Tea, is also be part of the conversation in chapter 2, as well as discussion of critics of the local food movement. James McWilliams' *Just Food* directly responds to Pollan and the local food movement, claiming that buying local may not be the most viable solution to the world's environmental problems. Most interesting for my purposes, McWilliams critiques specific rhetorical features of the movement. Likewise, Berry Glassner's *Gospel of Food* argues that the food movement's preoccupation with eating is doing more harm than good, that we should more-or-less eat, drink, and be merry (a philosophy which flies in the face of the symbiosis Pollan and others so desperately wish Americans would recognize and respond to responsibly.) In analyzing materials from "on the ground" in one local community that's actively engaged in the national movement to make food more local, I hope to illustrate how the image of the farmer established in texts informs the movement, and vice versa.

CHAPTER 1: THE TROPE OF THE FARMER IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

As investigative journalist Michael Pollan enjoys a moment's rest "in the middle of an impossibly green pasture" (123) at Joel Salatin's Polyface Farm in the Shenandoah Valley, he reflects upon the work, the land, and the man in front of him. Joel Salatin, "the tall fellow . . . in the broad blue suspenders and the floppy hat" (125) appears before Pollan's eyes as "a happy shepherd" whose "broad-brimmed straw hat did more than protect his neck and face from the Virginia sun" (125). Salatin's unusual method of farming—a method Pollan spends a week observing and experiencing—is inspired by and depends upon rhythms evident in the ways animals (especially herds of cattle and flocks of birds) survived in the natural world.

Not only does Salatin's Polyface Farm mediate between man's world and the natural world—"a grassy middle landscape, suspended as it is halfway between the wilderness of forest and the artifice of civilization" (124)—the farmer himself exists somewhere between Jeffersonian notions of the American pastoral tradition and our present industrialized agricultural system and consumer-driven culture. As Pollan explains, Salatin's garb represented the farmer's identity, "[i]t declared a political and aesthetic stance, one descended from Virgil through Jefferson with a detour through the sixties counterculture" (125). All at once, Salatin's farm and his own image (as it is constructed through Pollan's perspective) mediates between the past and the present, between civilization and wilderness. The farmer in Pollan's text indexes a lifestyle and

set of values embodied in the small-scale, sustainable agriculturalists that are associated with the local food movement.

In Salatin's appearance—as well as in his agricultural practices—Pollan's readers are encouraged to recognize elements of the local food movement and, perhaps, their own values as well. These values—“independence, sufficiency, even ease” (125)—are in stark contrast to industrial agriculture. As Pollan explains, “a feed company cap emblazoned with the logo of an agribusiness giant would have said labor, would have implied (in more ways than one) a debt to the industrial” (125). But Salatin—and small scale, independent farmers like him—represent the alternative to the conventional lifestyle, the industrial form of food production, and to some extent, the politics and institutions that promote them. And though Salatin's appearance and his agricultural practices—“family” farming, as Wendell Berry calls them—harken back to a seemingly bygone era, Pollan shows through Salatin that “the old pastoral idea is alive and, if not well exactly, still useful, perhaps even necessary” (125). Pollan shows through his presentation of Salatin in *The Omnivore's Dilemma* that the small-scale, sustainable agriculturalist, “family” farmers associated with the local food movement mediate between past and present in such a way that renders their practices and values as more than mere nostalgia, but a viable alternative to industrial agribusiness.

The trope of farmers is not only powerful in fiction. In non-fiction, authors use an image of the farmer that contributes to the trope of the farmer experienced in the local food movement. In non-fiction literature as well as fiction, authors construct farmers that function as indexical mediators between an abstract image of the farmer and the values a

farmer represents. In both Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* are each examples of investigative journalists interrogating the industrial, globalized agricultural system in contemporary America. Each weaves narratives about farmers based in personal experience and built from personal relationships with them. Though Schlosser discusses the life of a cattle rancher—referred to by his first name, Hank—the rhetorical construction of identity is as evident as Pollan's description of Joel Salatin, a sustainable farmer in the mountains of southern Virginia. And each of the alternative farmers in these non-fiction works similarly contribute to the metonymic and indexical power of the farmer in American culture as the fictional characters created in both Berry and Kingsolver's texts. Together, these four texts demonstrate the mediation between American lifestyles and values that farmers represent today in the local food movement.

Schlosser's New York Times Bestseller, *Fast Food Nation*, explores the precarious power of fast food in American popular culture. In chapter 6, "On the Range," he details the life of a cattle rancher in Colorado Springs at the close of the twentieth century. Schlosser's immediate impression of Hank is that he's a real American cowboy, despite the claim that Hank "was too smart to fit any stereotype" (133). Though Hank drives a Dodge minivan, Schlosser goes on to describe Hank's dire financial situation, and argues that ranchers like Hank "are the ones who live the life and embody the values supposedly at the heart of the American West. They are independent and self-sufficient, cherish their freedom, believe in hard work" (145). As Schlosser puts it in a statement prescient—if not somewhat snarky—in regards to many of the young farmers today, Hank "was not a wealthy, New Age type playing at being a cowboy" (134). Hank's

family eked out a living on their herd of cattle and the land on which they roamed. Through Schlosser's description of Hank, his lifestyle, and his family, readers are presented with a farmer who mediates between the past and the present, the urban and the natural world, and human and spiritual imperatives.

Pollan and Salatin both admit the apparent nostalgia of "grass farming," as Salatin's practice is so-called. Compared to the practices of industrial agricultural, Salatin's "rotational grazing" techniques must appear quaint because he refrains from using imported feed and chemicals to raise cattle. He is not plugged-in to the complex system of industrial agribusiness that now dominates the global market. Instead, Salatin relies on local knowledge about farming in the region and close observation of his own fields and herds, as well as cues from the natural world, to grow cattle. But as Salatin demonstrates and Pollan testifies, Polyface Farm is not "simply a throwback to preindustrial agriculture" (191). Salatin calls his farming techniques a "postindustrial enterprise" (191). Through intensive management, organization and planning, Salatin's farm produces enough grass to feed his cattle "while improving the quality of the land" (191). Though his farm appears on the surface to be a return to the family farming glorified in Berry's prose—Salatin's family does, indeed, live and work together on their land—in fact, Salatin mediates between past American pastoral ideals and practices while protecting the local land and culture of the present. Further, in Salatin, we see an optimistic approach for the preservation of small, local, sustainable agriculture into the future. In the "grass farmer" Salatin, we see a way forward toward the "happy ending"

that rancher Hank in Schlosser's text was not fortunate enough to witness during his lifetime.

Schlosser's presentation of Hank mediates between past and present. Schlosser claims that "as the rancher's traditional way of life is destroyed, so are many of the beliefs that go with it" (146). These beliefs are firmly established through an indexical way of life associated with farmers and ranchers, and perpetuated through the rhetorically metonymic representations of them in literature and language. Schlosser even refers to this rhetorical construction as "[t]he code of the rancher" (146), and argues that—at the time when he wrote *Fast Food Nation*—the values associated with ranching "could hardly be more out of step with America's current state of mind" (146), one driven by capitalism and consumerism. Though the local food movement attempts to respond to the hyper-consumerism Schlosser bemoans, it's still evident that the farmer functions to mediate between a perceived American past and the current state of American culture in regards to consumption. Schlosser argues that the land small farmers and ranchers care for represents "a tangible connection with the past, something that was meant to be handed down to children and never sold" (146-47), much like Berry's conception of the family farmer presented in *The Memory of Old Jack*. Tragically, that chain between the past and present (and future, no doubt) was broken in Hank's family when Hank committed suicide in 1998 in part, Schlosser surmises, because of the pressures of continuing an independent cattle ranching operation in the face of agribusiness and real estate developers (146). It seems a small consolation that perhaps the rhetorical power of Schlosser's text—and the documentary film it inspired—contributes to the growing participation in the local food movement fifteen years after Hank's death.

Schlosser's construction of Hank and description of independent ranching lifestyle in general also contributes to the mediation between urban and rural life. As Schlosser explains, Hank believed that "good ranchers did far less damage to the land than city dwellers" because they lived with it in their daily lives (134). It's just this kind of mediation that patrons of local farmers seek. Urbanites hope to reduce their carbon footprint by purchasing locally produced food not only because it travels fewer miles, but also because they believe the small and independent farmers and ranchers act as true stewards of the land, unlike their industrial counterparts. Schlosser explains that Hank wanted him to understand "the difference between his form of ranching and 'raping the land'" (134), a crime readers realize is attributable to industrial and conventional agriculturalists. Like Joel Salatin, Hank managed his herd and protected the environmental integrity of his land using methods "inspired by the grazing patterns of elk and buffalo herds, animals who'd lived for millennia on this short-grass prairie" (134). The real-world potential for mediation of the farmer between civilization and the natural world is evident in this statement. In fact, without small-scale farmers and ranchers, mediation between past/present, city/country, and humans/nature would not occur at all.

Like Schlosser's construction of Hank, Michael Pollan's representation of Joel Salatin in his popular text, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, constructs a farmer capable of mediating between perceived dichotomies. Pollan's representation of Joel Salatin in *The Omnivore's Dilemma* constructs the idiosyncratic, independent, relatively young farmer frequently associated with new generations of farmers and the local food movement. On the one hand, he represents the new face of farming, the hope that proponents of local agriculture put their faith in. And it's just this kind of political and cultural appeal that

participants in the local food movement seem to respond to. As we will see in the following chapter, the look of local food restaurants can be as compelling as the socially-conscious meals they serve. At the same time, we can see in Salatin—and in Pollan’s presentation of him—the “family farmer” that Wendell Berry brings to the forefront in his fiction and essays. Furthermore, Pollan’s own philosophy regarding food and the local economy follows in Berry’s footsteps. Indeed, Pollan has credited Berry as his strongest influence.

Pollan is not the only contemporary author to take up the cause championed by Berry. Barbara Kingsolver’s career is even more closely following Berry’s. As a novelist, Kingsolver has written more than one text that engage the cultural and political dynamics of food and environmental stewardship. Like Pollan (and others), Kingsolver has also made her own contribution to investigative journalism regarding food with her text, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, which chronicles a year when she and her immediate family committed to eating strictly local food.

A wealth of creative works of fiction exist from which one might choose to examine the trope of the farmer and how it operates rhetorically in contemporary American culture. Perhaps the novel that first comes to mind is John Steinbeck’s classic, *The Grapes of Wrath*. Written during the height of the Great Depression in 1939, the novel squarely confronts the darker—indeed, devastating—effects of industrial agriculture on the American food system, its landscapes, and its people.

Edward P. Jones’s Pulitzer Prize winning and more recent text, *The Known World* (2003) engages the complexities of agrarianism and race during the Reconstruction Era in the United States. Other texts—most notably Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987) Alice

Walker's *The Color Purple* (1983)—grapple with slavery, the post-Civil War American South, and rural, agrarian life.

Other authors treat Appalachian agrarian and rural culture. Charles Frazier's best seller from 1997, *Cold Mountain*, concerns, in part, the rural Appalachian homestead during the Civil War and, ultimately, the restructuring of class in the rural South during and after the war. Forrest Carter's semi-autobiographical text, *The Education of Little Tree*, confronts white racism against indigenous—Cherokee, to be specific—culture in rural agrarian Appalachia. Ron Rash's novels are frequently situated in Western North Carolina—*The World Made Straight*, *One Foot in Eden*, and *Serena*, to name a few. Rash's texts deal with both historical and contemporary issues in the region, ranging from the degradation (and struggle for preservation) of what were once old growth forests due to the lumber industry of the 1920s and 1930s (*Serena*) to the cultivation, trafficking, and violence associated with marijuana production in the region (*The World Made Straight*).

These texts all raise compelling insights into the promises and perils of rural agrarian economic, social, political, and cultural life. However, none so directly create and engage agrarian issues and—most significantly for my purposes, especially the image of the farmer—to the extent that Wendell Berry and Barbara Kingsolver's works do. Despite the compelling issues raised by the aforementioned popular and acclaimed texts by numerous reputable authors, my motivation in selecting Wendell Berry's *The Memory of Old Jack* and Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer* is partially inspired because of those two authors' activities—indeed, identities—beyond their considerable contributions as authors of fiction, and in part due to the ways I see their texts in relation to one another. Wendell Berry, not only due to his fiction but also because of his essays and

public engagements, is revered as the grandfather of the local food movement. Barbara Kingsolver, likewise, has written works of nonfiction, including her monograph, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, that appear to follow the lead that Berry's authorial persona instigates.

And even in Wendell Berry's corpus—which revolves around the fictional rural Kentucky town of Port William, a predominantly agricultural community—no text so directly grapples with the development of the rhetorical role of the farmer in a rapidly transforming twentieth century American cultural context as does his novel, *The Memory of Old Jack*. Old Jack is constructed and positioned by Berry in such a way that he represents the binaries I discuss in my analysis. Because of his historical vantage point—born at a time when, having lived long enough, Old Jack can remember pre-industrial agriculture and the family farm as it was before the influence of mechanized agribusiness. Old Jack's lifespan positions him to mediate between past and present traditional American values, values that changed because of changes in the American food system, values that I think attract some participants to the local food movement as it is mediated and indexed by the farmer. Berry's intense development of Jack's psyche and detailed account of the changes Jack witnesses in his home community position the main character and the novel itself to engage with the trope of the farmer and construct the farmer as rhetorically capable of mediating changing relationship between rural agrarian and modern urban life and culture, and between human civilization and the natural world.

Similarly, Barbara Kingsolver's novels often espouse implicit—though none-too-subtle—sociocultural and political agendas. But nowhere in her oeuvre does she engage directly with agrarian communities as she does in *Prodigal Summer*. In the novel—

published in 2000, a year before Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* and six years before Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*—several characters dramatize different styles of farm life associated with different farming practices that range from staunchly organic orchards to the wanton use of pesticides. Much like Wendell Berry's characters in Port William, Kingsolver's novel weaves in and out of the lives of several main characters, each connected to a rural farming community in a Southern Appalachian valley. From the perspective of Lusa Landowski, readers witness the tensions between country folk and urbanites, traditional farmers and newcomers. The vantage of Garnett Walker explores the tension between conventional farming practices popularized during the twentieth century and sustainable-organic growers, represented by Nannie Rawley. Through intertwining these characters' ways of life, Kingsolver explores various ways in which farmers act as mediators—or struggle with mediating tensions—in their local communities.

Wendell Berry's fiction imagines the lives of people in a small, family farm-based community, Port William, Kentucky. His novel *The Memory of Old Jack*, published in 1974, is prescient of many issues currently being taken up by the local food movement in the United States. It follows the life of Jack Beechum, spanning the middle nineteenth through twentieth centuries—a crucial time in the development of American farming practices and national culture. In Old Jack's life, readers are privy to the tensions mediated by the image of the farmer—between the past and the present, between rural and urban life, and between man and his place in the natural world—that are so evident elsewhere in pastoral literature and the local food movement.

In literature about small scale farmers, the farmer functions as a mediator within the local community. For both Wendell Berry and Barbara Kingsolver, their fictional characters are intimately connected with the local land, economy and culture. The narrator in Berry's *The Memory of Old Jack* and the protagonists in Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer* mediate between past and present (traditional farming practices, conventional agriculture of the 20th century, and new strategies in farming), between city and country (for Berry's Old Jack, between small family farms and townspeople, for Kingsolver between the local farming community of Egg Fork and larger markets outside Southern Appalachia), and as mediators between consumers and producers. In their non-fiction essays, the authors grapple directly with the role of the farmer in late-20th and contemporary American culture. Likewise, Michael Pollan, James McWilliams and other authors (Eric Schlosser, Barry Glassner) discuss the role of the farmer in the local food movement and in American cultural imagination and reality.

Metonymy & Indexicality: The Role of the Farmer in Identity Construction

In Wendell Berry's *The Memory of Old Jack*, farmer Jack Beechum acts as a mediator between the past and present. Born in 1860, Old Jack is 92-years-old in September of 1952. Over the course of a day, his mind wanders between the present moment and the past, bearing witness to the changes that have transpired over the course of nearly a century in his small town community, Port William, Kentucky.

As Old Jack stands on the porch of the hotel in Port William, the rising sun covers him in light. His wandering mind renders him "empty of himself as a public statue" (4), and he becomes a vessel that transports readers from the present moment to decades past.

From the onset of his novel, Berry recognizes the role of the farmer as a metonymic mediator for the community in which he lives and works. Old Jack functions as a link to the community's past (and, more broadly, a link to an American way of life that is steadily declining). As the community dwindles throughout the first half of the twentieth century—more and more families lose their farms or move to cities to pursue a different way of life—Jack remains as a relic that mediates between city life and rural farming traditions. He also represents a moral way of life, embodying characteristics that Americans associate with their farmers—independence, fortitude, humility, sacrifice.

Jacob Dickerson explores the ways in which people's identity is constructed through the rhetorical concepts of metonymy and indexicality. In other words, people and place become referents to one another through a discursive relationship between the people who live in certain place. Dickerson uses the example of New York City's Five Points neighborhood during the nineteenth century and its representation in popular cinema to illustrate his conception of metonymy and indexicality. He shows that the identity—specifically, the reputation—of the people who lived in the neighborhood began to match that of their living conditions, resulting in “an indexical style of discourse . . . arose from a strong metonymic relationship in which the neighborhood came to be synonymous with the people who lived there” (406). People in rural farming communities experience a similar relationship between their identity and their communities. In Berry's text—and in Kingsolver's as well—farmers mediate the relationship between individuals and their identity and collective identity, most apparently in the ways they negotiate past and present, city and rural culture, and human

relationships with nature. For Berry, the family farmer represents a people and a culture that is morally upright and quickly disappearing.

Dickerson's application of Burke's metonymy and Pierce's indexicality to the Five Points neighborhood can also be a useful way of understanding the local "celebrity" of the small farmer. When people began to call for reform in the Five Points neighborhood, they began to sympathize with and even celebrate the inhabitants as "heroic and patriotic" (406). Dodge's 2013 advertisement that debuted at the Super Bowl is an excellent example of this phenomenon of metonymy and indexicality, and how it changes (or indicates a change in) peoples' perception of and regard for farmers. Though farmers have not been denigrated as the inhabitants of Five Points were in the nineteenth century, the rhetoric about local farming and agriculturalists in general has been that they are the neglected, forgotten backbone of the American economy, and a significant contribution to the formation of American national identity. The Dodge commercial recognized the growing regard for farmers in the U.S. right now and seized the moment to make a statement about their trucks and the American farmer.

Past & Present

Berry writes that though it is "the first cool morning of September, 1952, he is not there" (8). Old Jack's nephew notices him from across the street, "standing on the hotel porch like the monument of some historical personage" (9). Not only do readers encounter the change in the life and community of Old Jack but other characters in the novel experience him as a witness and a link to the past. He functions as a monument to a by-gone era, the impending end of that era made all the more immediate through Mat

Feltner's concern about his uncle's recent mind-wanderings. Berry narrates that the community feels that Old Jack "is going away from them, going into the past that now holds nearly all of him. And they yearn toward him, knowing that they will be changed when he is gone" (10). The passing of Old Jack represents a dying way of life, a way of life so profound that the people in the community understand their own identity to be intimately tied to it.

Metonymy can often be associated with metaphor in that a metonym is contingent upon something else. However, as Dickerson indicates, metonymy can also have another function. "[A]s the metonymic relationship becomes more firmly established, the connection between the two objects can take on a more ontological character, allowing for a firmer, indexical link between objects and language. An indexical relationship allows for language to have a much more direct impact on the object to which it refers" (406), and thus, the rhetorical concepts of metonymy and indexicality are useful in understanding how identity is formed based on living in and belonging to a community. Jack's role in the community is indexical in that he points to the values and identity associated with a people and a place, with a particular way of life, that can only be found in small family farming communities.

We also see the ways in which Old Jack mediates between past and present because he functions as a mentor to younger men and farmers in the community. His role as a mediator is both abstract and practical. Elton Penn, for example, Jack thinks of as a son. "He has become the last keen delight of Old Jack's life—the inheritor of his ways" (41). Though Jack leaves his farm to Elton Penn upon his death (217), his bloodline is broken. The Beechum family farm survives thanks to Jack's relentless struggle to keep it

during his own lifetime. Nevertheless, the farm survives beyond Jack's own life in the hands of another family. Jack's awareness that the traditional farming way of life into which he was born is ending is evident in his reflections about Andy Catlett, his great-great nephew. When Andy bids farewell to Jack before leaving to pursue higher education, Jack thinks to himself that "he has come to an end in this boy. When Andy Catlett turns and leaves he will step away into a future that Old Jack does not know and that he cannot imagine" (156). In contemporary America, there is a fear that no one will be left to inherit and continue the traditional way of life represented by farmers like Old Jack. This anxiety is expressed in Berry's fiction through Old Jack and the community he lives in. Berry's fiction and non-fiction alike argue that part of the role of small local farmers is to protect the tradition of small scale farming from the faceless threat of industrial agriculture.

Wendell Berry explicates the kind of farming he eulogizes in his fiction in his essays on farming. In "A Defense of the Family Farm," for example, Berry claims that the family farm is easily defended as it is "a part of the definition of one's own humanity" (31). He defines the "family farm" in part based on "longevity in the connection between family and farm" (34). Thus, we see the farmer as one chosen to carry out the connection between the present and the past, tradition and progression. Also like a priest, the farmer represented in Berry's writings (both fiction and non-fiction) is a vessel for good on this earth. Berry sees family farming as synonymous with good farming, "farming that does not destroy either farmland or farm people" (33). He claims that the ideas of family farming and good farming are inseparable because of "a law that is well understood, still, by most farmers but that has been ignored in the colleges,

offices, and corporations of agriculture” (33). For Berry, small farmers mediate between these forces because they know that land used by humans must be treated with intimate knowledge and care because “it is true that familiarity tends to mitigate and to correct abuse” (33). The family farmer cannot deny his calling—which is rooted in his family’s American tradition—any more than a priest could deny his mission in the face of God. And Berry claims that “though the economic return might be reduced, the *values* of the family-owned and family-worked small farm are still available both to the family and to the nation” (33, emphasis in original). This “availability,” I would argue, is recognized by consumers and actualized in their local communities through the image of the farmer.

Barbara Kingsolver’s novel takes a more positive approach to changes in farming practices. Perhaps Kingsolver is able to reconcile traditional farming techniques with the threat of industrial agriculture because she wrote her story during a time when the local food movement was beginning to gain recognition at the turn of the twenty-first century, whereas Berry’s novel, written in the 1970s, appeared during a time in which farmers and their way of life was being largely ignored—if not rejected—by the American public and public policy. Whatever the case for their differences in approach to the transition between traditional family farms and newcomers to agriculture, Kingsolver’s Lusa Landowski represents new challenges and changing potential for farmers and their communities. She mediates between past and present at the same time as she attempts to reconcile urban and rural lifestyles.

Lusa presents a new technique and focus for her husband’s family farming practices in that she changes the Widener farm from its traditional cash crop—tobacco—to a goat farm. Lusa becomes a mediator between local traditions and the demands of a

changing agricultural world. She responds to the consumer demands that had been ignored in the local community at the expense of many families losing their farms. Instead of focusing solely on the local traditional staple of tobacco and seasonal produce, she targets markets beyond their local region.

Kingsolver also explores the ties to family heritage through Lusa's character. Reflecting on her husband's sixty-acre farm, Lusa narrates, "The family cemetery was up behind the orchard. The Wideners' destiny was to occupy this same plot of land for their lives and eternity, evidently" (33). Here, we see a similar tie to family tradition and birthplace—the family farm—that is expressed in Berry's work. But when her husband dies suddenly and unexpectedly, Lusa is forced to grapple with life on the farm in a way she'd never anticipated. Instead of selling the land and homestead she'd inherited not a year after her marriage, Lusa learns how to cope with her farm and her community. Drawing from her Arabic heritage, Lusa turns what was once primarily a tobacco and cattle farm into a goat farm with the intention of selling the meat to markets in east coast cities like New York during times of high demand, like Id-al-Adha, Orthodox Easter and Passover (160-61). Jones argues that "Kingsolver has Lusa think like a bioregionalist, rather than an agri-industrialist, and in so doing highlights current problems in agribusiness practices, which ignore bioregional differences in favor of supposed universal solutions" (86-7). Instead of limiting herself and her farm to the strict conventions that had until the twentieth century sustained the region, Lusa negotiates the boundaries between local agricultural traditions and the demands of small scale farming in the face of industrial and globalized agriculture.

City & Country

The tension between Old Jack and his wife, Ruth, represents the tension between country life—based on farming—and city life—which revolves around commerce and professional trades. Ruth and her family, the Lightwoods, become “town people” (54) after her father leaves his farm and opens an only moderately successful hardware business. When Jack marries Ruth, he “usurped the place of some well-educated young minister or lawyer or doctor” (54) and Ruth is never able to fully accept him because he came from “a tradition that she had renounced, or that had been renounced for her before her birth” (57), a tradition that Berry calls “sufficiency to himself, of faithfulness to his place” (57). In this tension between traditional agricultural life and urban middle class, Berry reveals both his nostalgia and cynicism about agricultural life. Not only is Berry critical of industrial agriculture and large scale farm operations, he is also critical of city life. Berry positions the small farmer as between these two lifestyles, or perhaps, entirely outside of them both. Family farming—what was once the tradition for which most of his work expresses an intense sense of loss and nostalgia—becomes an extreme alternative lifestyle during the course of Old Jack’s lifespan, a life that happens to span the rise of industrial, mechanized farming in America. Indeed, Berry shows that the farmer is a threat to mainstream life, both conventional farming as well as urban life—in that he threatens his own urban housewife “with what seemed to her his wildness” (58) and his willingness to farm and remain “comfortable within the conditions of his life” (57).

In Kingsolver’s novel, when Lusa Maluf Landowski marries Cole Widener, both Lusa and her new family are forced to reckon with the cultural divisions between urban and rural life in their farming community in a valley of Appalachia. Lusa, a PhD in

etymology, “was already known as a Lexington girl who got down on all fours to name the insects in the parlor rather than squashing them” when she moved into her husband’s home on their family’s farm (39). Her husband’s family stereotypes her as an impractical urbanite, devoid of common sense despite her education. For Lusa, the cultural shock of farm life is no less acute. As Jones observes, “Kingsolver breaks down simplistic oppositions between natives and non-natives, preparing readers to see the beneficial nature of the human exotic that she introduces in the character of Lusa Maluf Landowski, an urban intellectual with ancestral roots in Poland and Palestine and a family religious heritage of Judaism and Islam” (85). In other words, Lusa represents a new kind of farmer in an agricultural community that is Anglo-Saxon Christian and based on cash crops.

Ultimately, Berry shows that the city and the country cannot be reconciled, represented with the stillborn death of their only son (59). Even in the moments following their son’s death, the two cannot reconcile their differences. As he stands at the foot of her bed where she lies recovering, neither of them reach out to one another. Berry writes that if Ruth “had acknowledged then a need that he could have answered” or if Jack himself “had the grace of the forbearance to have gentled and humbled himself then” their lives might have been different (62). Instead, they become more distanced than ever before, leading separate lives though they live under the same roof and share the same land. Likewise, Berry feels the small farmer and the city dweller are at an impasse under late capitalism and globalization due to fundamental differences in how people live their lives and function in their communities.

The satisfaction that Old Jack has in his youth, in his life before his ill-fated marriage to a woman from the town, the satisfaction he derived from working his family's land is in direct contrast to neoliberalism represented by Ruth and her family's background. "He did not want to . . . come up in the world," (65) as those from the city have ambition to do. And the fact that he was satisfied within his limits is offensive to Ruth; despite himself, he is stirred to defy her judgment. But, as Berry shows, his attempts to reconcile his relationship with her are to no avail. Likewise, attempts to reconcile the small farm with the expectations and mechanisms of neoliberalism can only end in disappointment and grief. Berry writes that these expectations include: "that no place may be sufficient to itself, but must lead to another place, and that all places must finally lead to money; that a man's work must lead not to the health of his family and the respect of his neighbors but to the market place, to that deference that strangers yield to sufficient cash" (65). This is one of Berry's major quarrels with city life and townspeople; greed and waste.

Nevertheless, Jack begins to behave in obedience with his wife's subtle demands because due to his lack of self-esteem in the wake of his son's death and failing marriage, "to stand again he may need the whole world for a foothold" (65). Jack begins a scheme to expand his family farm to include a tract of land of approximately one hundred acres adjacent to his farm. Berry engages now with the myth of the American dream, "the idea that the two of them would better themselves" (66), that Jack would be a great landowner with the respect and admiration of townspeople and with progeny who would become "even more wealthy and respected than their parents" (66).

Man & Nature

Ironically, all of Jack's promise diminishes and devolves upon his marriage. The Sunday he meets Ruth is a brilliant and promising spring day. As he makes his way to church, he is free, independent, joyous, confident. "He is in the service of nature" (42), he is at harmony with himself and with the natural world, largely because of his success at bringing back to life his family's farm in spite of his father's failure. "The service he is going to," writes Berry, "he has already arrived at" (42). The farmer here represents a spiritual oneness between man and nature, a place of nirvana. But that harmony is quickly thrown out of balance on that very day when Jack first sees Ruth and desires to conquer more than himself. Ruth—who represents the excesses of city life for Berry—makes Jack desire more than what he has, what has been given to him. That desire results, eventually, in the disappointment of his marriage, the conquest and failure of more land, and the ruin of his family farm, at least for a time. But the purpose of this passage remains clear and more potent due to what follows. Berry shows that the family farmer has the potential to be a spiritually enlightened being, so long as he remains on the land he was born to, and in harmony with it. Berry also shows that greed is the ultimate downfall of even strong and righteous men.

Through Jack's desire to placate his wife and meet her expectations by expanding the original acreage of his family farm, Berry is able to show how the small farmer is ruined by greed in American culture. Jack competes with Sims McGrother, "a big talker and a waster" who "was hard on himself and on his men and on everything he touched—a roughness that he loved to brag about" (69). In this farmer, we see the corruption that is represented by farming large swaths of land (McGrother farms six hundred acres with the

help of his two sons and “several families of Negroes” [69]). On the one hand, he almost seems like a calloused city banker. Indeed, Jack recalls that “He loved to handle cash” (69). At the same time, he seems to represent the kind of farmer Pollan describes in *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, the conventional farmer whose reputation is no longer built on the respectable independence, hard work, humility and gentility represented by Jack and other small farmers in Berry’s novel, but is instead predicated on how much he produces, on the quantity of his yields, not the quality of his life’s work.

Jack’s desire for the land—and subsequent competition with his neighbor—is not entirely a response to his disappointments in his marriage and relationship with his wife. Jack also has a desire to redeem the land that had fallen into disuse. Jack also felt that “he must rescue and preserve it and secure its triumph” (72) from the threat of a greedy, harsh man like McGrother. Unfortunately for Jack, his competition with McGrother comes at a great cost. Though he wins the land and starts to revive it for agriculture, the expansion is ultimately doomed to failure. He hires a hand to help with the additional work, Will Wells.

Perhaps the culmination of the three dichotomies I’ve been discussing in Berry’s work is represented through Jack’s relationship with his hired hand, Will. Though the two work well together at first, Jack “had destroyed his old independence” (76), which Berry believes is the vitality of the small family farm. For a moment, it seems as if the acquisition will help reconcile Jack and his wife, who sees it as his opportunity to move up in the world through “overseeing the work of other men” (79); instead, that very thing becomes the downfall of the endeavor. Jack and Will are unable to negotiate not only their racial difference, but also the fact that one man is unavoidably subjected to the other

as a result of their arrangement. Though the dynamic fits within the construct of neoliberalism, for Berry, it is impossible to live in harmony when one man is master over another. Will cannot call his work his own, he cannot reconcile “his knowledge that his labor formalized and preserved no bond between himself and the place; he was a man laboring for no more than his existence” (81). For Berry, the work of the farmer puts him in harmony with the land if it is his own. After a fist fight between the two men three years after Will had first been hired to live and work on Jack’s newly acquired land, Jack realizes that “They cannot be reconciled, for no real peace ever existed between them, and they are far off in history from the terms and the vision of such a peace” (84). This statement again reveals Berry’s own deep nostalgia and dreadful cynicism about the change in agricultural practice going on during the turn of the century in rural America.

When Will leaves the farm, Jack is unable to maintain it on his own. He is forced to sell the land to the very man he had hoped to save it from, Sims McGrethor. This represents for Berry the fact that the small farmer is at a severe disadvantage in late capitalism and in the face of the industrial agricultural shift in America. Essentially, Berry is saying that the small farmer cannot compete because the system is not constructed in a way that allows for him to do so; the system is inherently the opposite of the conditions under which the small farmer can flourish. Jack, in his rage over the loss of the land to McGrethor, instigates a fight on the very day the transaction is sealed. That night, he awakes to the sound and sights of his barn burning to the ground.

In Kingsolver’s text, relationships between farmers and the land are highly politicized and spiritually distinct, as well. Kingsolver explores the tension between conventional farming and organics through two neighbors, Garnett Walker and Nannie

Rawley. Garnett represents the mainstream turn toward modern industrial agriculture while Nannie represents the progressive return to traditional agriculture, what Garnett refers to as “primitive shenanigans” (82). The two argue back-and-forth, initially over the placement of a sign posted by Nannie on Garnett’s property that declared the ditch by the road across their land as a “NO SPRAY ZONE.” When Garnett objects that the herbicide sprayed on his land wouldn’t destroy her apple orchard and Nannie replies that it jeopardizes her organic produce certification, Garnett decides he’s had enough. “Success without chemicals was impossible. Nannie Rawley was a deluded old harpy in pigtails,” he thinks, and attempts to take down the sign. As he’s doing so, a snapping turtle grabs hold of his boot and in his toil, Garnett begins to believe he’s having a stroke. Nannie Rawley rescues him, and though the two continue their bickering through an epistolary back and forth, Garnett begins to see his nemesis in a different light. Through these two characters, Kingsolver is also able to play with stereotypical spiritual tensions between the politically conservative right and the liberal left; Garnett a devout fundamentalist, Nannie an atheist.

Despite these rhetorical themes, it’s evident that farming is not “natural,” nor is it timeless or unchanging. (It’s relatively young practice in the course of human development and also changes practices throughout the centuries.) In the introduction to *Just Food*, James McWilliams claims that the local food movement suffers from pervasive nostalgia about farms and farm life. He argues that this nostalgia is misguided and blind to history. Agriculture, he points out, is far from natural. It’s a taming manipulation of the natural, wild world. Though nostalgia is indeed pervasive in food

literature, I've also noticed that author's engage with the fact that agriculture is not natural. Michael Pollan's discussion of Joel Salatin's small-scale, sustainable enterprise—Polyface Farms—shows Pollan engaging with the idea that farming is indeed a manipulation of natural processes; however, Pollan highlights the fact that Salatin works *with* natural rhythms instead of against them as industrial agriculture does. The fact that Pollan explores not only factory farms and a sustainable farm, but also with hunter/gathering evidences the fact that Pollan recognizes varying degrees of environmental manipulation in food production.

McWilliams also argues that nostalgia prevents us from developing truly environmentally sustainable food production practices on a global scale. I wonder if his perspective—his insight that nostalgia is pervasive especially—is not overblown. I also wonder if he is overlooking the power of nostalgia. Perhaps it is indeed inaccurate, but in this case, do the ends not justify the means? If people are inspired to purchase locally produced food or even produce some amount of their own food in home and community gardens because of nostalgic sentiments, is that necessarily a bad thing for the global food system? Furthermore, though I take his point that local markets are not the solution to the problems that plague the global demand for inexpensive food, is it not a viable option in many local communities?

In light of McWilliams' ideas and my own interest in the “connectivity” aspect of local food markets, I wonder if McWilliams' perspective is not oversimplified. The fact that people want to be more engaged with the places and individuals that produce their food appears to be a constructive, not destructive desire. People's involvement in the local food movement shows a desire to reconnect with the environment, which in many

cases, leads to a greater commitment to environmental protection. And it appears possible that there exist multiple ways of engaging in everyday practices that take environmental protection into consideration. These choices are often based on the context and communities in which individuals live.

McWilliams' introduction does not address the other motivations people have for eating locally produced food. Not every locavore is concerned principally for the environment. Some are concerned for their own health and eat locally organic produce. Obviously, the imperative for eating organic does not mean one must eat locally as well. Supermarkets are filled with industrial organic that comes from far and wide. Again, I'm drawn to this notion of being connected to the place, and perhaps for some people, the *people* who produce food. Perhaps some are more invested in contributing to the local economy than they are in environmental sustainability. People with economic interests in mind may choose to eat local organic or conventional produce and meat. Others may simply like knowing their farmers, which again brings up the notion of nostalgia as the impetus for eating locally and growing food.

Literature that engages the pastoral—and images of the farmer, particularly—contributes to the role of the farmer as a mediator between past and present, urban and rural, and man and nature. Authors like Wendell Berry and Barbara Kingsolver have established the farmer as representative of distinct lifestyles that are intimately connected to an American way of life. As a result, we can examine the metonymic and indexical function of the farmer in not only literature, but also contemporary American culture. Nowhere is the rhetorical power of the farmer more evident than in the current local food

movement. The following chapter will explore several specific sites wherein we witness the rhetorical role of the farmer in identity construction that leads to participation in a social movement. Drawing from the sociological concept of frame alignment, my next chapter will demonstrate how the rhetorical concepts of metonymy and indexicality discussed in the preceding chapter contribute to social frame alignment and participation in the local food movement that is currently gaining traction across the United States.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

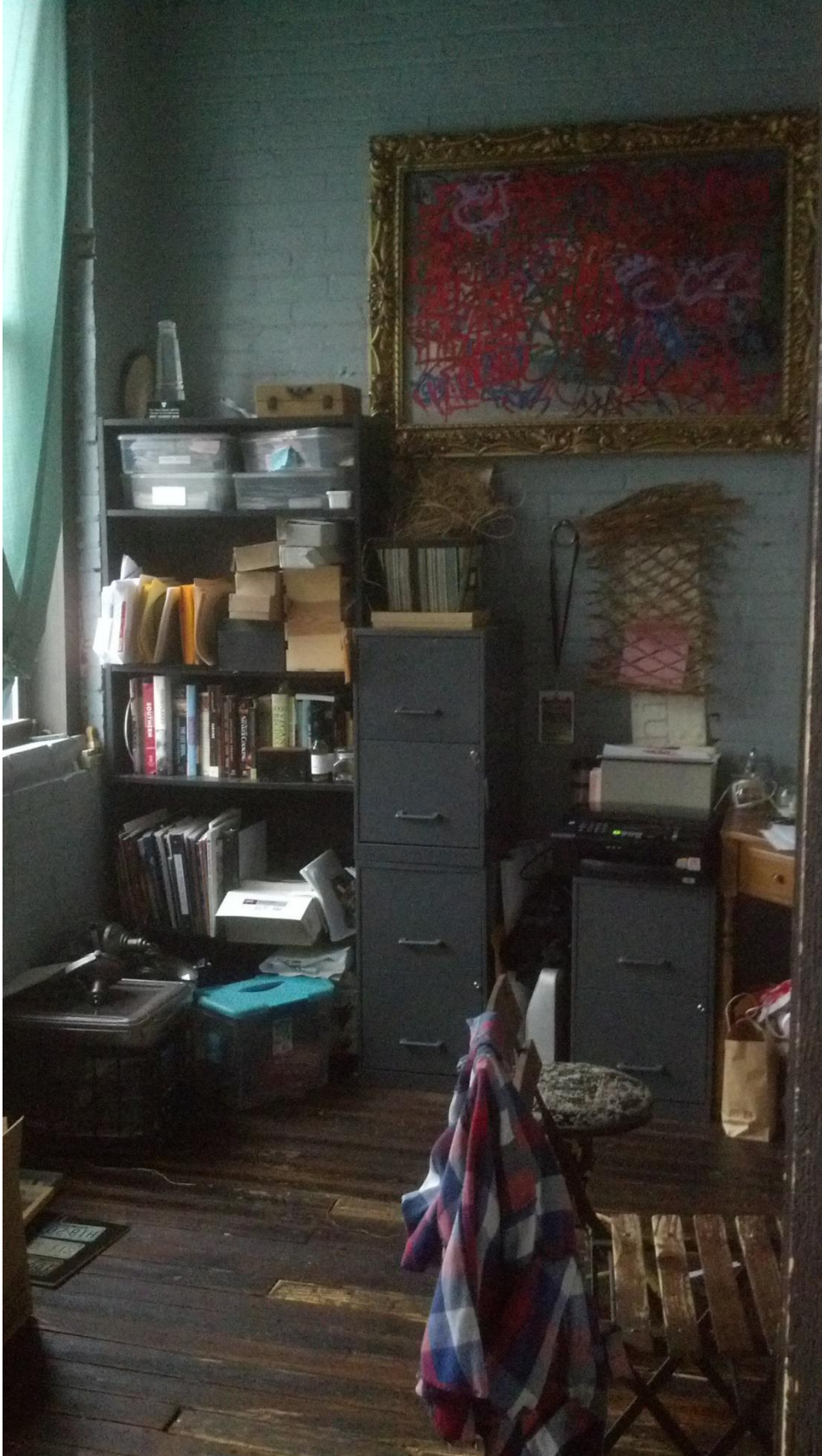


Figure 9



Figure 10

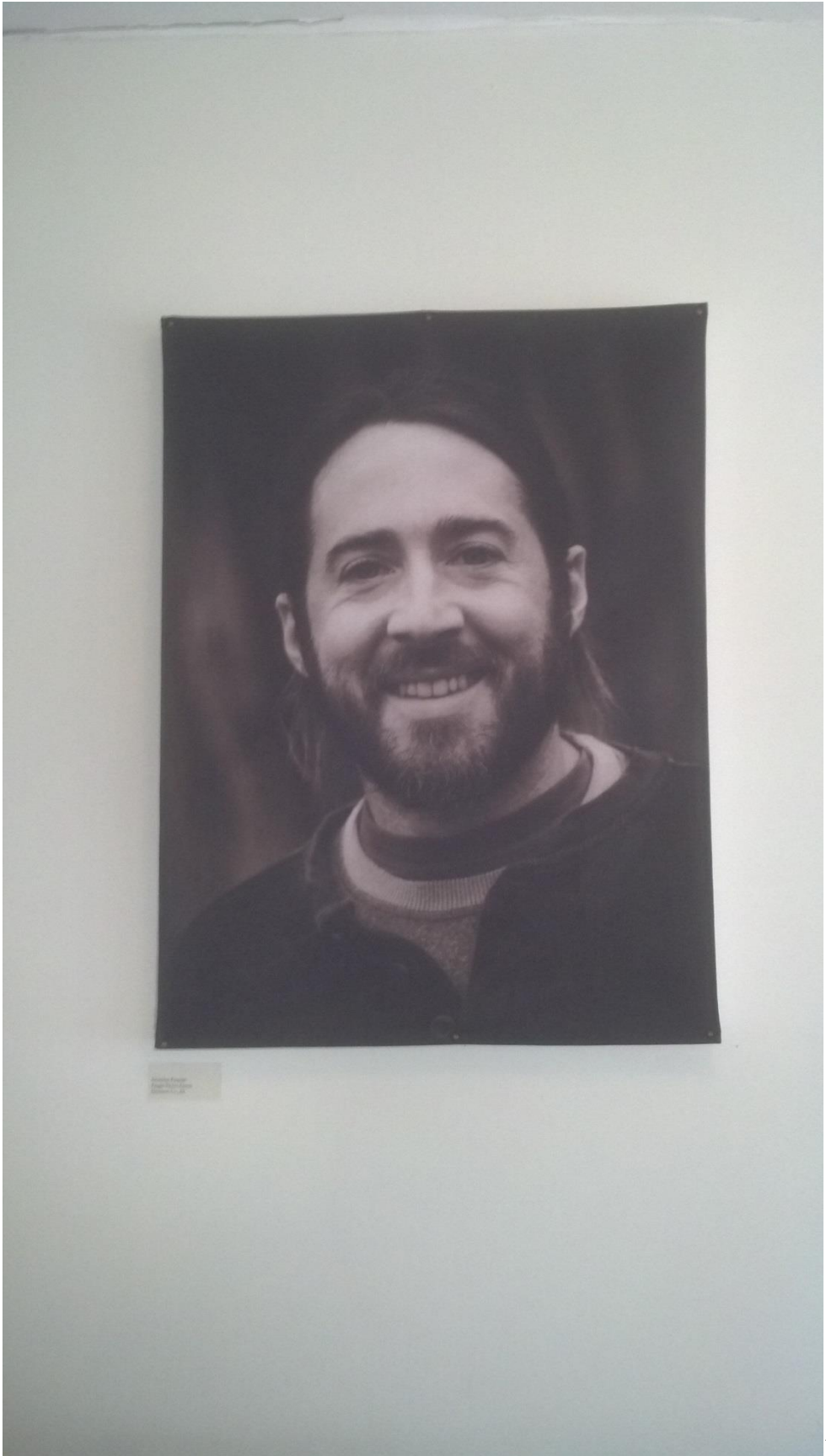


Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14

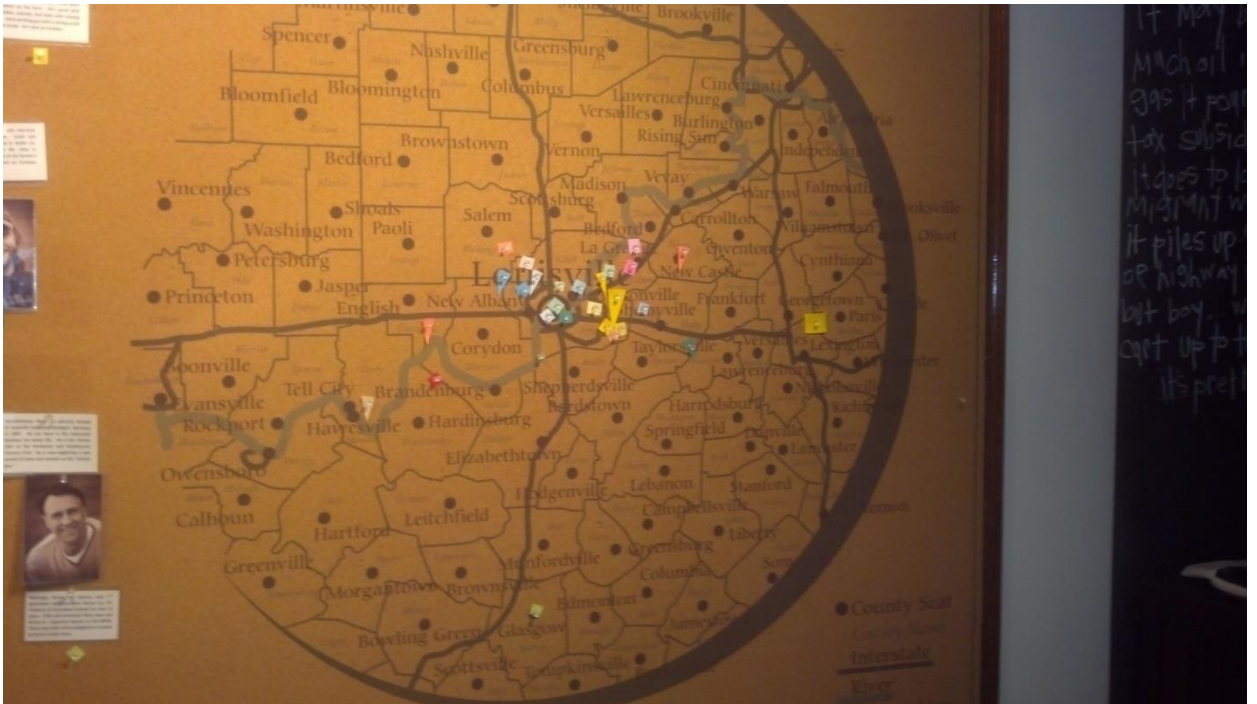


Figure 15

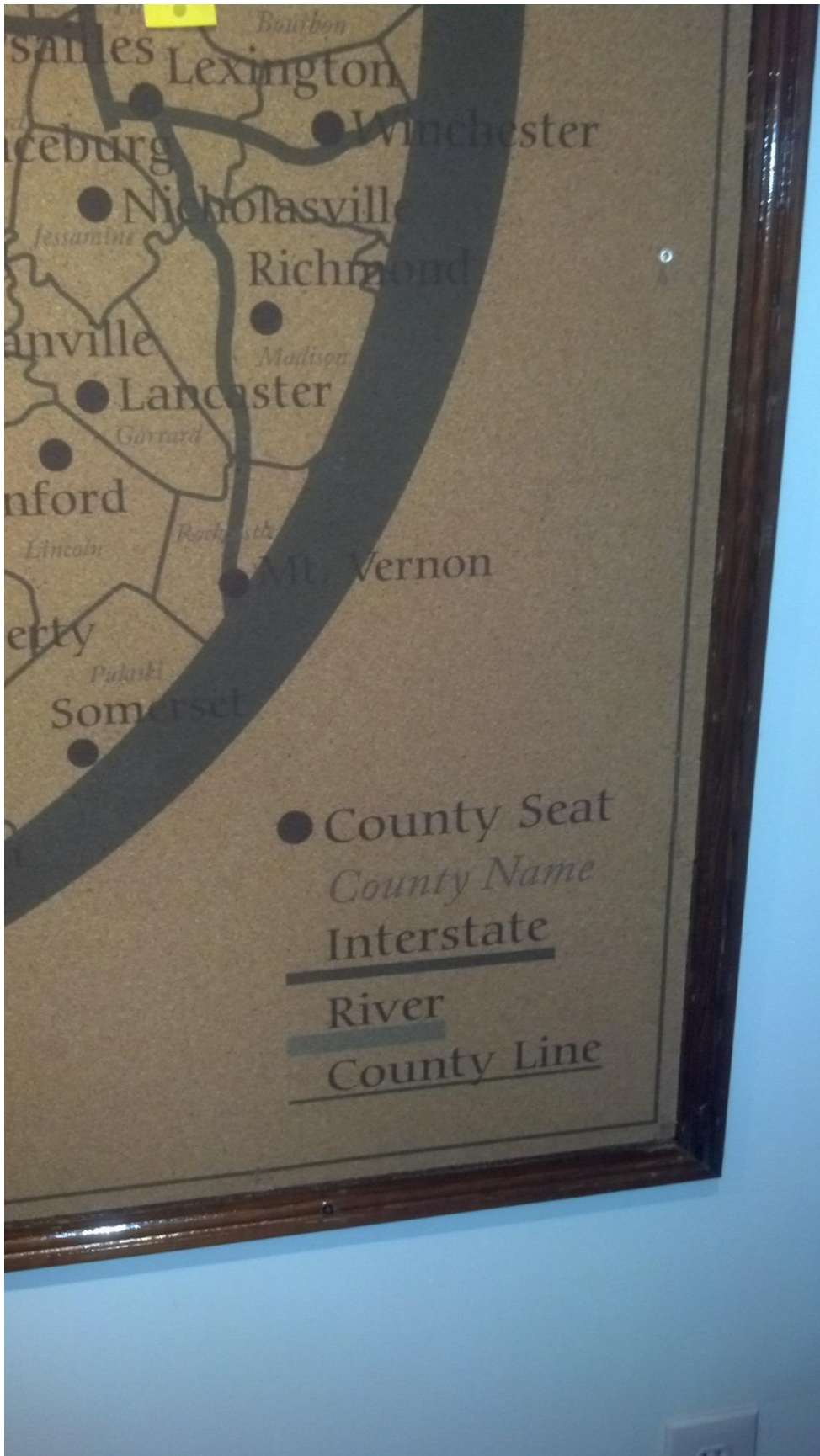


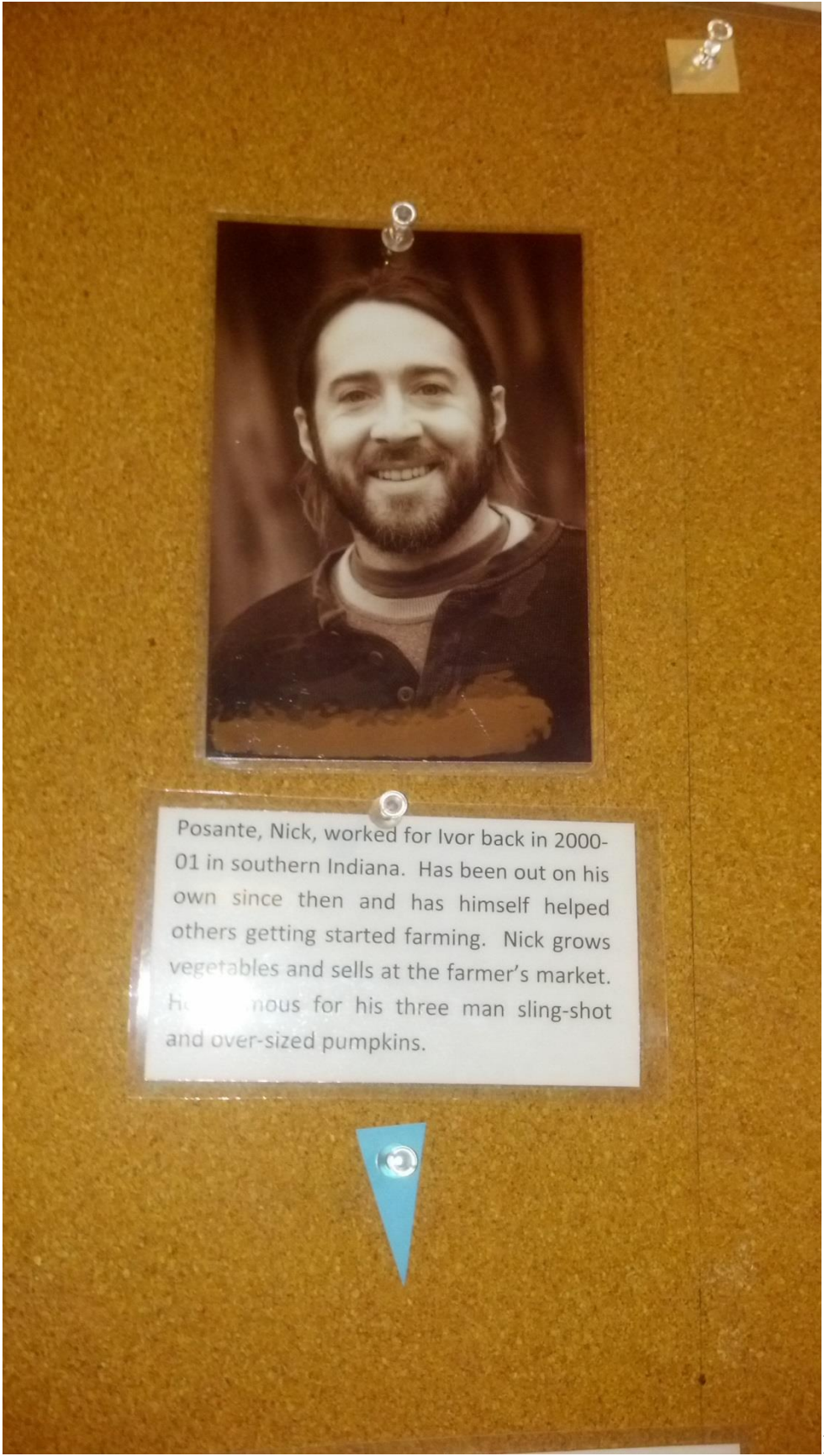
Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Posante, Nick, worked for Ivor back in 2000-01 in southern Indiana. Has been out on his own since then and has himself helped others getting started farming. Nick grows vegetables and sells at the farmer's market. He is famous for his three man sling-shot and over-sized pumpkins.

Figure 19

CHAPTER 2: THE FARMER IN THE LOCAL FOOD MOVEMENT

The Douglass Loop Farmers' Market on a Saturday morning during the late March of a long winter is not the colorful, bustling, brimming market that it is during the regular season. The grey sky, winter coats, and sparse tables comprise a somewhat underwhelming scene, especially for the opening day of the 2013 season. Nonetheless, market patrons wandered the loop with their dogs, strollers and reusable grocery bags in tote and smiles on their faces.

I was especially pleased to see Adam Barr, a farmer who I'd met a few weeks ago at Nick Posante's recently-acquired homestead. I met Adam on a blustery afternoon when we helped Nick put the plastic covering over his newly-constructed greenhouse. The task should've taken a couple hours at most, but as our luck would have it, the wind picked up right around the time we unrolled the plastic. It took four experienced farmers and one enthusiastic volunteer the better part of the afternoon to wrap the would-be parachute around the greenhouse. The precision required to complete the tedious task reminded me of making beds with other maids at the B&B I worked for during college. Adam, in particular, awkwardly adjusted and readjusted the plastic lining with an eye for perfection I thought more fitting for a sculptor than a farmer. Apparently, the unusual afternoon was still fresh in Adam's mind, too. He immediately recognized me and remembered me by name when I approached his produce stand. Adam asked if our mutual friend had sent me the picture documenting Nick's most recent farming blunder—a tractor rendered

immovable in the sticky Indiana mud. Sadly, Nick had not sent me that shot. Perhaps he'd like to keep his reputation for mishaps to a minimum as he's no longer a "rooky farmer" among the small but vibrant community of young farmers in the area around Louisville.

Nick's experience stretches back about a decade to when he joined a now well-established local celebrity of a farmer, Ivor Chodkowski, as an apprentice at Field Day Family Farm. As a tenant of land that was protected under "grandfather" laws despite its incorporation into the Louisville Metro area, Ivor has been operating Field Day Family Farm for over a decade. In April 2011, Ivor opened Harvest, a restaurant the sources 80 percent of its menu from within 100 miles of Louisville. Like Nick and Adam, Ivor is one of the younger generation farmers with whom market patrons can interact at either the Douglas Loop or Bardstown Road Farmers' Markets on Saturday mornings during the spring, summer and fall.

In Old Jack's memories, he renders Ben Feltner (Mat's father and his brother-in-law who acted as a mentor and father figure from the time he was eight-years-old) as "A large, gentle man with the beard and eyes of a patriarch . . . a widely respected farmer and citizen. He has a provident, retentive mind, the exacting judgment of a stockman, a brief, dry wit" (Berry 6). This image is not unlike the farmers we see represented at markets across America today. At the Bardstown Road Farmers Market in Louisville, Kentucky, for example, even some of the younger farmers retain a friendliness in their stately reserve. Perhaps scruffy and sunburned, many of the farmers' good looks and humor show through their gritty fingernails, long hair and unshaven faces. Even Old Jack fondly remembers his youthful good-looks: "Oh he was something to look at then! He admits it

now with a candor too impersonal to need modesty . . . He looks back upon himself as he was, exulting in his great strength, indulgent of his eagerness and desire” (36). For many reasons—which I will discuss in more detail in the concluding chapter of this thesis—the image of the farmer represented in Berry’s (and others’) texts represents the kind of farmer people want to connect with when they visit local markets and patron Farm-to-Table restaurants.

My own relationship with farmers in the Louisville area is more extensive than many market patrons; however, the basic desire to have a more intimate connection with the food I eat and the people who produce it is presumably what drives me and others to farmers’ markets. Concerns about America’s (global) food system and how it is connected to our communities and individual identities are echoed in the local food movement; consumers fear the inevitable changes brought on by globalization and industrial agriculture. People see globalization as a threat to local community life. In the small farmer, a connection to traditional American values like industriousness, neighborliness, fortitude, simplicity, and gentle masculinity seem preserved.

We can see the mediation farmers enact between the binaries I explore in chapter 1 happening—to varying degrees—in various sites on the ground. From neighborhood farmers’ markets to Whole Foods Markets to Walmart’s Neighborhood Market grocery store chain, elements of the local food movement are steadily becoming increasingly visible in contemporary American culture. Though the most direct dietary choice for consumers most heavily invested in the local food economy would be to support CSAs or purchase food at neighborhood farmers’ markets, people are often able to buy local even at conventional food stores. During the prime growing season in several of Louisville’s

Kroger locations, for example, prominent produce displays feature locally-sourced fruits and vegetables with signage that includes the location—sometimes even the name of local farms—of the produce’s origin. One particularly compelling site where images of farmers and farm life do mediating work in the local Louisville community is at Farm-to-Table restaurants like Harvest and Hillbilly Tea.

In what remains of this chapter, I explore the ways in which the binaries I discuss in chapter 1 exist and are mediated by farmers and images of rural agricultural lifestyles in the context of local Louisville farmers’ markets—the Douglass Loop Market, particularly—and two of Louisville’s most popular downtown local food restaurants, Harvest and Hillbilly Tea. Since each of the binaries I’ve identified exist in each site but to varying degrees, I will focus my discussion of the past/present binary in the context of the farmers’ market. At the farmers’ market, the binary between past and present is especially felt because of the form of economic and social exchange at the market. Indeed, the very word “market” in this context conjures up century old images of trade. In considering city and country, I’ll examine the rhetorical construction of farms and farmers at Harvest because of the ways in which Harvest successfully mixes an uptown chic dining experience with an explicit connection to the farmers and rural communities from which their upscale menu is sourced. Hillbilly Tea is a useful site for developing the connection I see between man and nature at Farm-to-Table restaurants because of the ways in which the restaurant incorporates domestic décor associate with images of the “family” farmer, the type of farmer Berry, Pollan, and even Paul Harvey present as the most morally righteous type of farmer.

In order for people to be motivated to participate in a social movement, they must relate to the cause championed by activists in the movement. According to Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford, “frame alignment” must occur in order for individuals to be persuaded to action. Frame alignment refers to the meaningful connections individuals make between their own identity and collective interpretive orientations such that “individual interests, values, and beliefs” are “congruent and complementary” with the “activities, goals and ideology” of a group (464). Thus, for social movements to garner active members it is imperative that individuals move beyond sympathizing with a cause to aligning their beliefs with a movement’s core values and collective activities. On an individual level, identification convinces people to see themselves and their values enacted in movement. When people align themselves within a frame, they are more likely to participate in collective action.

The local food movement is arguably more sociocultural than political, despite inevitable overlaps. Thus, the local food movement is more aptly termed a lifestyle movement than a traditional social movement, one that would involve collective action in the form of direct action like voting and social protest. Thus, it is important that potential participants in the movement connect their own values and identities with recognizable images—images that are perhaps more covertly rhetorical than the might otherwise be constructed for the purposes of a traditional social movement. In the local food movement, metonymic tropes of farmers present in the literature discussed in chapter 1 function more specifically as an indexical images capable of mediating dichotomies so that people can identify—for myriad personal reasons—a social frame that encourages them to participate in the movement.

Douglass Loop Farmers' Market

At the Douglass Loop Farmers' Market on any given Saturday during the warmer months of the year, dozens of people wander a small parking lot, stopping to pick up and inspect dirty produce or quaint Mason jars of jam. Farmers back up their trucks and station wagons to tables stacked with unwashed produce presented in baskets or simply laid on the tables under the cover of tailgate tents. Banners declare the name and location of the farms as hopeful farmers smile beneath them. Produce prices and specials are scrawled on whiteboards and chalkboards, some more artfully than others. Sometimes farmers use buzzwords from local food rhetoric—"humanely raised" or "organic" for example—to attract customers; others draw rustic pictures to accompany the names of the herbs and flowers offered on the table that week. More weekends than not, a couple musicians break out their acoustic instruments and open their guitar cases for tips, adding to the joyful feel of the scene. Even local businesses—from Heine Brother's local coffee roasters to Mama's Hip sustainable parenting store—are represented at these two farmer's markets.

Across the country, people patron farmers' markets like Louisville's Douglass Loop Market even Saturday during the growing season and, in some cases, every weekend of the year. At markets like these, farmers indulge people in what could perhaps be considered a sense of nostalgia by some perspectives. For example, some farmers still take only cash tender despite the ubiquity of electronic methods of payment like mobile credit card readers. Many farmers are willing to barter (my partner has been known to trade his homegrown habañeros for produce that's more difficult to grow in a container,

like carrots and garlic) or negotiate quantity and price. Small scale local farmers are also often willing to trade volunteer labor for produce (indeed, during the summer months, I hardly spend money on food because I spend a few hours a week working with Nick at Finger Picking Farms instead.) Economic exchanges such as these seem—and in fact, are, in many contexts—relics of a bygone era. Nonetheless, these exchanges happen every week at the farmers’ market. Farmers and farmers’ markets are uniquely positioned in our contemporary fast-paced, faceless, consumerist economy to mediate between capitalist forms of exchange and slower-paced, relationship-centered forms of trade.

I would argue that patrons of local farmers’ markets and participants in the local food movement more generally are interested in fostering these kinds of relationships with people who are active and significant forces in what makes their local communities unique. In an increasingly isolating modern world—one where so much of our time is spent face-to-face with screens as opposed to with other human beings—participants in the local food movement find it refreshing to interact with some of the people who are responsible for producing food. Farmers markets—in their appearance, the nature of economic exchange, and the nature of social interactions—provide a space where people engage with farmers who mediate the divide between a time when community life was more central, more immediate, and slower and the present. They do so in a way that is not exclusively nostalgic but practice and optimistic. People who visit farmers at markets like Douglass Loop are participating in this facet of the local food movement because they are willing and hopeful to see this way of life protected against the threat of monopolizing agribusiness in the future.

Farm-to-Table Restaurants in Louisville

When Michael Pollan sits down to a dinner with Joel Salatin's family in Salatin's eighteenth century brick colonial farmhouse, he experiences a vague sense of familiarity. He realizes he's sitting in "exactly the sort of farmhouse kitchen—wood-paneled and decorated with all things quaint and hearth-like . . . that countless kitchens in American suburbs and sitcoms have been striving to simulate at least since World War II" (202-203). But, as he notes, Salatin's family farm—like Hank's family-owned ranch—is not nostalgic or ironic; it's genuine. Their surroundings as well as their meal is the real deal, the lived-experience that participants in the local food movement strive to tap into as they purchase locally-sourced produce and meat, or dine in local restaurants serving food from nearby farms.

The Farm-to-Table (also known as "Farm-to-Fork") component of the local food movement is especially vibrant in Louisville, Kentucky, where many restaurants in the trendy "NuLu" district of downtown are buying from local farmers, ranchers, even local craft brewers and bourbon distillers. In the social world, restaurants function similarly as fiction and non-fiction texts concerned with the role of the farmer in contemporary America. In these sites, the local farmer (or, at least in some cases, the local farm) becomes a central "character" in restaurants selling local food. Obviously, part of the function of the farmer in this context is a marketing tool—instead of relying solely on a recognizable (perhaps corporate) brand name, local restaurants engaged with the local food movement sell their products and construct their image based largely around the incorporation of local produce and meat. Farmers are featured prominently in some cases—to the extent that they nearly become "celebrities" in that their image and their

product is celebrated to the point of face and name recognition—but are only tangentially hinted at in others—the name of a local farm might only be mentioned like a liner note on the menu.

In the context of Farm-to-Table restaurants, the farmer functions primarily as a mediator between consumer and producer, providing diners with a sense of participation in the movement. Patrons are encouraged to indulge in their sense of belonging and positive contribution-making in the local community even beyond the economic aspect of their dining experience. Not only are consumers supporting a local business and local farmers, but they are building a community that has care and concern for other community members.

In the digital age, perhaps the first place a tourist or even a member of the local community might visually encounter a Farm-to-Table restaurant is online. Both Harvest and Hillbilly Tea restaurants explicitly point toward farms and farmers on their websites. Harvest’s homepage includes a mission statement that pledges to “source at least eighty percent of our food from farmers and growers which are within a 100-mile radius of the city.” The statement goes on to declare that “[t]hese are not just ordinary farmers . . . these are people who we consider custodians of the country side . . .” Harvest is fully aware of its role in the local community and the broader mission of the local food movement to facilitate the mediation that farmers perform for people living within the city. They offer a place for city people to reconnect with the land through the food they eat, and they capitalize on the farmers’ role as a mediator between civilization and nature’s bounty, specifically as “custodians” of the environment. Though the relationship between man and nature that the local farmer mediates is apparent at Harvest, the ways in

which the image of the farmer functions to mediate between city and country lifestyles is most pronounced.

Importantly, Harvest draws a distinction between the farmer epitomized in the advertisement and the farmers they purchase food from to sell in their Farm-to-Table restaurant. In this way, we can see the metonymic image of the farmer as it is constructed for different—often opposite—cultural and political audiences. Since the farmers in these different contexts are associated with different sociopolitical identities, they function not only as metonymic figures, but furthermore as indexical indicators of distinct social groups. The farmer in the Dodge Ram commercial predominantly focuses on conventional farmers working in industrial agricultural settings and appeals to more conventional, mainstream audiences. Harvest, on the other hand, exploits the image of the small-scale farmer. The restaurant beckons patrons who seek to participate in the rapidly spreading but still arguably “alternative” lifestyle of local, sustainable, organic.

Harvest further attempts to foster a sense of participation in the local food movement by hosting frequent events at the restaurant. One such series of events from June of 2012 invited people to meet the farmers whose food is featured on the menu on four separate occasions at Harvest’s location downtown. Hosting social events between Louisville Metro urbanites and the farmers who live around but outside the city in small town agricultural communities position Harvest, in some ways as the mediator between town and country. But even when farmers aren’t physically present in the restaurant, their images certainly are (see Figs. 10-13, 18-19)

Inside the physical restaurant, the connection that Harvest attempts to foster between patrons and local farmers is all the more apparent. The weathered faces of

farmers smile down at restaurant patrons (see Figs. 10, 12). Their gritty look indicates to patrons the conditions of their work, outside, close to nature. The farmers appear to genuinely fit the image described in works of fiction and non-fiction by Berry, Kingsolver, Pollan, and Schlosser in that they are rugged and rustic, while at the same time, they harbor good-humored smiles. The faces of the farmers on the walls at Harvest appeal to patrons' sensibilities about how farmers are supposed to appear, especially in that they look like people who day after day spend their time working outside, manipulating the natural world in order to provide their communities with wholesome good. Thus, the face of the small farmer becomes a mediating image for urban local food restaurant patrons and nature, as well as the rural world outside their metropolitan community.

On the back wall at Harvest, a bulletin board features even more photographs of farmers. These smaller frames of the large portraits that adorn the walls are complete with the farmers' names, the names of their farms, and biographical descriptions of their involvement in the local food network around Louisville (see Figs. 13, 18). These descriptions foster the notion that patrons of Harvest are connected with the people who produce their menu items. The descriptions of the farmers' activities in the local community, in particular, help establish the specific form of mediation each farmer performs between city and country in the region. A circular map of Louisville and surrounding counties in both Kentucky and neighboring Indiana is pinned with brightly-colored flags in the location of each farm that corresponds to the portraits and descriptions alongside the map (see Figs. 13, 15-18). The map further highlights for patrons the mediating capacity of farmers between the city and the country, between

man's world and Earth's bounty. The restaurant's designers and decorators are obviously aware of the indexical associations diners make between farmers and local restaurants that serve locally-sourced menu items. It doesn't take much to recognize the rhetorical presentation of the farmer's capacity as mediator between city and country life when one looks around at Harvest.

Not unlike Harvest, Hillbilly Tea is another local restaurant that entices patrons who visit their website to enter their physical space, also located in downtown Louisville, by pointing to local farmers on the page that features their menu items. Featured entrees are accompanied with headlines like "from the field" and "from the creek." The final headline of the online menu reads "we source locally from" and is followed by the name of seven nearby farms (though their exact locations or distances from the restaurant are not immediately evident). Perhaps because they are trying to avoid directly competing with Harvest—whose tagline is "A Locally Grown Restaurant"—and distinguish their niche as Appalachian-inspired tea and cuisine, Hillbilly Tea's references to local farmers is more muted than Harvest's website. Nevertheless, the aesthetics and atmosphere inside the physical restaurant indisputably resonates with the rhetorical construction of the local food movement.

Hillbilly Tea incorporates elements of the rustic farmhouse feel Pollan describes in his portrayal of Joel Salatin's kitchen. Seating accommodations for guests include a motley assortment of wooden chairs, booths, and tables (see Figs. 2-3, 6-7). Modest watercolors of landscapes including barns decorate the walls. Cans of tea are arranged on shelving on one wall and in the display case at the register, accompanied by a seemingly random assortment of antique knick-knacks like a shaving brush and a genuinely-iron

clothing iron (see Fig. 1). Upstairs, a ladder stretches toward a recessed skylight, mimicking a barn and hayloft (see Figs. 3-4, 7). Next to it sits an old wooden rocking chair draped with an earthy-toned, croqueted throw (see Fig. 5). A long picnic table awaits larger parties in a corner of the open floor-plan (see Fig. 6). Toward the back of the room, more tea canisters are on display next to a modest, make-shift kitchen that includes an ice-machine and an industrial sink (see Fig. 8), presumably for the convenience of servers. Even the manager's office retains the chic-but-quirky aesthetic of the establishment; with stacks of papers and a flannel shirt tossed casually across a rickety wooden chair, it looks more like a cozy home office than the typically tucked away closet-turned-offices of many restaurants I've seen (see Fig. 9). These items give the restaurant a distinctly homey feel, one that is strategically constructed to be reminiscent of the farm and homestead.

The aesthetic at Hillbilly Tea cultivates a domestic feeling associated with homesteads of family farms. In this way, the closeness of the farmer's lifestyle to the elements of the natural world that surround the farm and its work are preserved. One could even argue that the tea—arguably the main attraction for patrons to the restaurant—draws the patrons' focus to the leafy, earthiness of this Farm-to-Fork establishment. Though farmers are not as pronounced at Hillbilly Tea, their lifestyle certainly is (even more so than at Harvest). It's this simplistic, humble lifestyle that so much of the rhetoric of the local food movement pivots around that makes Hillbilly Tea an important site for considering the rhetorical construction of the farmer in the local food movement.

Harvest's explicit visual representations of farmers and Hillbilly Tea's rustic décor make patrons feel like they are an integral component of the local food system, like they're connected to the food, farming, economy and culture that surrounds where they live and work. It's not only cynical but also inaccurate to consider these Farm-to-Fork style-restaurants guilty of simply abusing a marketing gimmick to attract visitors. Participants in the movement, despite its trendiness, are attracted to restaurants like Harvest and Hillbilly Tea because they deliver products and an atmosphere that's transparent about from who and from where their menu items come.

CONCLUSION

People's motivations for participating in the local food movement are as varied and diverse as each individual. Some participate because it's a hip and trendy scene. Restaurants that engage with elements of the movement—like Harvest and Hillbilly Tea—often pop up in “up-and-coming” neighborhoods or in urban downtown areas undergoing revitalization that are also closely located to cultural centers and upscale shopping districts. It's cool to be in and be seen in those trendy parts of town because one's presence there demonstrates the fact that one is “in the know” about something that's going on around town and, more broadly, in contemporary American culture. Still others might participate in the movement because the nearest neighborhood farmers' market is a sheer matter of convenience. Other eaters claim fresher food—food that has been produced close to where they are eating it and based, perhaps, on the growing season of the region—simply tastes better.

Other individuals participate because of a more earnest desire to contribute to social change. Many locavores claim their motivation for eating at locally-sourced restaurants and/or buying produce from local farmers' markets is based in their concern for the environment. Such participants might see eating locally as a way to reduce their carbon footprint because the locally produced, seasonal food they eat travels fewer miles than out-of-season tomatoes from Argentina, for example.

Other locavores are motivated because of the perception that by eating locally, they are directly contributing to the vitality and diversity of their local community. Participants interested in the local food economy hope to foster a sense of community—one unique to the particular city or region in which they live and work—in the face of (seemingly faceless) industrial agriculture and globalization.

In the case of the local food movement, perhaps because there exists no cohesive identity issue at the heart of a social injustice, the shape of the movement is even more tenuous than it is with traditional social movements. In fact, the definition of the term “local” is widely ranging and broadly contested. Some scholars and activists argue that “local” food should be determined based on food miles, including numbers that range from 100 miles (as is the popular measure) to 400 miles (the distance used in H.R. 2419.) But eating locally is not necessarily or exclusively about the reduction of individual consumers’ and/or producers’ carbon footprints. Other scholars contend that in order to be associated with food movement activities, “local” constitutes an interaction between the producer and the consumer. This relationship necessitates relative proximity between producers and consumers in everyday life in many instances, a closeness that results in a reduction of food miles. But at the same time, a tourist or visitor to a local community can still be participating in the movement when he or she patronizes a restaurant that serves local food despite the fact that he or she does not actually live in that community. I don’t believe that the local food movement can or should be distilled into one or a few elements; nevertheless, I’m interested in how one potent and recognizable image associated with the movement—the image of the local farmer—is used to persuade people to

participate in the local food movement, regardless of their particular, individual notions for doing so.

It is not my intention to assert that the local food movement is an entirely unified movement. Ultimately, I would argue that people's various motivations for participating in the local food movement do not necessarily need to be in agreement with one another in order for them to still be considered participating in the movement. Perhaps in attempting to define a social movement in the context of a lifestyle movement like the local food movement, it might be helpful to consider Jenny Edbauer's argument regarding rhetorical ecologies.

Jenny Edbauer's article "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecology" provides a useful framework for understanding the complexity of the use of rhetoric in a social movement, especially a social movement grounded by lifestyle choices as opposed to the social issues of identity politics. Edbauer explains that traditional conceptions of rhetorical situations that pivot around audience, text, and rhetorician obscure the complexities of rhetoric's discursive qualities in public spheres (20). Instead of focusing on rhetorical situations as fixed, she argues that "rhetorical ecologies" are a more accurate way of thinking about social movements because the model exposes the "fluidity of rhetoric" (20). Edbauer uses the "Keep Austin Weird" phenomenon—a slogan that became the indicator, indexical, in fact, of a broader lifestyle movement aimed against corporate domination in Austin, Texas—to demonstrate how "[r]hetorical ecologies are co-ordinating processes, moving across the same social field and within shared structures of feeling" (20). The same could be said about the local food movement. Because people have many motivations for

participating in the movement and do so in various ways and to different degrees—potentially making the movement appear in many ways to be fractured—it’s important to recognize the fact that the various manifestations of the movement—from buying shares in Community Supported Agriculture to dining out at locally-sourced restaurants to volunteerism among farm-to-school outreach programs—are different components of the same broader social movement aimed at promoting consumption of local foods and culture.

Edbauer points out the fact that even when opponents that are antithetical to the aims of the movement adopt elements of the movement, they are still participating and propogating the rhetoric of the same movement. In the case of the “Keep Austin Weird” movement, Cingular, a cell phone service provider and multi-national corporation, coopted the phrase, changing it to “Keepin’ Austin Weird” (18). Though the aims of the movement to promote local businesses and preserve the local uniqueness of the city are entirely opposite of Cingular’s monopolizing business-model, the rhetoric used falls under the umbrella of the same movement. Likewise, in the case of the local food movement, Dodge’s 2013 Super Bowl ad coopted the image of the farmer that has been constructed by the local food movement in order to garner support and participation in the movement. Nevertheless, Dodge’s nationally-broadcasted ad is still a part of the rhetoric of the local food movement and indicates the presence and rhetorical power of the movement through its very usage of the image of the farmer.

The fact that the local food movement is not clearly based in the social justice issues surrounding a “single” identity marker like race, gender or even class—as, perhaps some might construe them, the feminist or LGBTQ movements are fundamentally

constructed—does not mean that the local food movement is not intricately linked to issues of identity that include these markers. For example, some people are interested in participating in the movement because of the perception that small scale local farmers are better situated to treat farm laborers more fairly than industrial farmers—farms that frequently hire migrant workers for unfair wages. The push to promote healthy lifestyles often confronts issues of class and race as outreach programs—like Louisville’s Food Literacy Project, to provide a local example—visit low-income schools and neighborhoods in an attempt to combat urban “food deserts” and childhood obesity. Furthermore, I would argue that the movement is not merely a trend because of the complex ways in which it is present in many social settings but yet focuses on the ways in which food issues impact peoples’ quality of life.

One might argue that the local food movement is not even a movement because, in addition to its lack of a discrete emphasis on what constitutes “local” and the range of reasons for participation in the movement, the movement is not a “traditional” social movement in the sense that it does not explicitly involve community organizing and direct action. However, I would argue that direct action in the form of traditional social movements—sit-down demonstrations, strikes, picketing and the like—are not the only types of activities that can be considered social movements. For whatever reasons—from the taste of the food to concerns about individual well-being and community culture—people do engage in the social movement when they buy—or make for themselves—locally produced food. Of course, folks have been gardening and buying food from local farmers for generations, to be sure. But the fact is—illustrated, ironically, by the use of the image of the farmer in Dodge’s recent Super Bowl commercial—that the movement

has gained a visibility and a popularity that cannot be denied and should not be ignored. Furthermore, despite the various participants and their myriad motivations for participation in the local food movement, the movement does have recognizable features. The movement is *not* industrial agriculture, the movement is *not* big organic. It's rooted in the small-scale, "family" farm that Wendell Berry's fiction so richly describes.

There are a myriad of reasons why a person would chose to participate in local food movement. I'm interested, for the purposes of this exploration, in exploring the feelings associated with the local food movement's ability to foster a sense of community and connection between individuals whose relationships are otherwise obscured by industrial agribusiness. As Edbauer and others explain, a city is a permeable site. Indeed, I think participants in the local food movement recognize this on some level. For them, the farmer—and the act of fostering a closer connection with the farmer—represents a "site" wherein they can move between the confines of the city and the country. Likewise, the small farmer in particular, reconnects people with a sense of the past—albeit an idealized sense of the past. The farmer thus becomes a sort of vessel, a mediator, capable of transcending time and space in a way that could be considered spiritual because of that very notion of transcendence. Indeed, the movement—in whole or in part—appears to provide a way for people to transcend the conditions of modernity that otherwise factionalize individual experiences. Perhaps it's a farce, but it's one people are buying into and one that—apparently—has the potential to create the kind of change many people are interested in, change that puts individuals back in touch with the people, places, and natural world that immediately surrounds them.

The presence of the farmer in Dodge's Super Bowl commercial—or for that matter, on the walls of Harvest's physical restaurant or in Hillbilly Tea's online menu—does not necessarily mean that people are solely motivated to purchase products because a farmer is being used to sell them. Nevertheless, I think the farmer can be understood as indexical in certain contexts because of other elements, like the fact that the food at Harvest is overwhelmingly locally sourced. The term “local food movement” is overarching and obscures many of the complexities within and surrounding it. Yet it's recognizable—especially, I think, because of the rhetorical construction of the farmer as an indexical mediator between what could otherwise be conceived as binaries (if not opposites)—so recognizable, in fact, that a major American truck manufacturer is exploiting images associated with the local food movement (in this case, the image of the American agrarian).

In my opinion, the fact that the image of the farmer has the ability to sell not only food, but now also automobiles in a highly-visible platform like the Super Bowl, indicates the fact that in 2013, the local food movement has established an influence that extends beyond the realm of food and even beyond the realm of alternative lifestyle movements. The ability of the farmer as a powerful image to sell cars in 2013 begs the question, why the farmer? Not only is the movement gaining mainstream visibility, but one of the particular images it uses appeals to the audience's emotions in a particular way. The image of the farmer, as I've demonstrated in the examples of both fiction and non-fiction texts described in Chapter 1, has powerful pathetic appeal because of the trope of the farmer as an individual who occupies a special place in American contemporary life—a position of mediation between certain aspects of modern life. The

emotional appeal that the farmer serves to index that relates to the local food movement is the desire to connect with one's local community. One way to do this, among many of course, is to buy locally, including one's diet.

Perhaps individuals feel a desire to support the farmer because they see him as answering a calling—much like a priest—despite the difficulty, the exclusion from mainstream life, the uncertainty and risk. We desire to support the local farmer because he bravely steps up to a challenge that the rest of us can only imagine. And perhaps we want to support this calling because it is an answer to the past. The farmer carries the burden of an “American tradition” that would be lost without him. Old Jack describes his own calling in these terms. “It was as if he went to his fields in the spring, not just because *he* wanted to, but because his father and grandfather before him had gone because *they* wanted to” (38). Without the farmer to take up this burden, any hope our diverse population has at “an American way of life”—already fraught with complexities before the threat of globalization took hold—will disappear. Old Jack “was answering the summons of an immemorial kinship; he was shaping a passage by which an ancient vision might pass once again into the ground” (38).

This passage also intimates the desire we have to reconnect or stay connected with the trials of human existence that have sustained us to this point. To pay homage to the men (and women?) who for centuries tilled the earth, manipulated nature in a way unique to humans among all other creatures on this planet. The small, local farmer pays homage to that distinct human characteristic but, unlike the industrial and conventional farms, he does so in a way we see as non-threatening to the environment and non-threatening to ourselves. The industrial agriculturalist allows machines and chemicals to

stand in for the work formerly done by humans and animals; though both types of farmers manipulate the natural world, one does so in a way that threatens the agency of his own species while the other pays respect to those who came before him through his actions (and solidifies a need for more like him to follow in the future.)

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Schlosser, Eric. *Fast Food Nation*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2001. Print.

Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation: The Definitive Classic of the Animal Movement*. New York: Harper Collins, 2009. Print.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Hannah Virginia Harrison

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Education

M.A. in English, Rhetoric and Composition *University of Louisville* May 2013
B.A. in Literature and Language *University of North Carolina at Asheville* Dec 2009

Academic Honors and Awards

Graduate Dean's Citation, University of Louisville, May 2013
Graduate Teaching Assistantship, University of Louisville, 2011-2013
Henry James Review Fellow, University of Louisville, 2012-2013

UNC Asheville Department Honors: Distinction in Literature, Dec 2009
UNC Asheville Laurels Scholar, Academic Merit Scholarship, 2005-2009
Alpha Kappa Delta (AKD) International Sociology Honors Society, 2007-present

Scholarly Presentations

“Playing Games with Zora Neale Hurston: Ethnography, Place, and Persuasion” at Louisville Conference in Literature and Culture Since 1900. University of Louisville. February 2013.

“Sicilian Rhetoric vs. Athenian Philosophy: The Role of Hellenistic Ethnicity in Plato's *Gorgias*” at Kentucky Philological Association. Morehead State University. March 2012.

“A Space for Graduates: Promoting the Writing Center to the Graduate Community” at Southeast Writing Center Association Conference, Eastern Kentucky University. February 2012.

Grants

University of Louisville

College of Arts & Sciences Graduate Student Union (Research & Travel Funding), 2013
University Writing Center (Travel and Registration Funding), 2012
College of Arts & Sciences Graduate Student Union (Travel Funding), 2012

Teaching Experience

University of Louisville, 2011-2013

English 101: Introduction to College Writing
English 102: Intermediate College Writing
Writing Center Consultant, 2011-2012 (invited for summer 2012)

University of North Carolina at Asheville, 2008

LSIC 179: Liberal Studies Introductory Colloquia (Teaching Assistant & Student Mentor), 2008

Academic Service

University of Louisville

Executive Officer, UofL English Graduate Organization, 2012-2013
Member, Rhetoric Reading Group, 2011-2013
Member, Theory Reading Group, 2012-2013
Secretary, UofL Arts & Sciences Graduate Student Union, 2011-2012
Volunteer, Watson Conference, 2012

Professional Development

Editorial Assistant, *Henry James Review*, 2012-2013
Social Media Coordinator, Egerton & Associates, P.A., Greensboro, NC, 2010-2011
Marketing Intern at Roanoke Island Festival Park, NC Government Intern Program, 2009
Editorial Intern, Lark Books, Asheville, NC, 2009

Memberships

Modern Language Association, 2013
Rhetoric Society of America, 2012-present
University of Louisville English Graduate Organization, 2011-2013

Graduate Coursework

Rhetoric of the Civil Rights Movement (Seminar in Cultural Studies), Animal Studies, Contemporary Literary Theory, The Work of Ethnography (Seminar in Rhetorical Studies), Language and Culture (Seminar in Linguistics), History of Rhetoric I (Classical-Enlightenment Rhetoric), Writing Center Theory and Practice, Introduction to English Studies, Teaching College Composition